

## THE BRODIE CLUB

The 917th meeting of the Brodie Club was held in Room 430, Ramsay Wright Building on Dec. 10, 1996.

CHAIRMAN: Jim Rising

SECRETARY: Michael Boyer

ATTENDANCE: There were 12 members present and Pat Davis, guest of Bill Carrick

This was members' night. We had four entertaining speakers on diverse and interesting topics. All speakers gave slide presentations.

J. Bendell - Observations on spruce and ruffed grouse in the Gogama area.

J. McAndrews - The Hiscock Mastrodon, site in upper New York State.

H. Currie - Birdwatching during the goose migration at James Bay, 1996.

W. Carrick - Work in progress on training cranes, geese and swans to follow aircraft, boats and ground based wheeled vehicles.

JIM BENDELL - described some ongoing research work on site preference by spruce and ruffed grouse during the summer of 1996 in the Gogama area west of Timmins. A preponderance of each species, occupy distinct habitats in the forests of this area, spruce grouse preferring young, medium aged Jack pine, ruffed grouse the old conifer - broadleaf climax forest. The effects of predation were examined using artificial ground nests and chicken eggs. While extensive predation by black bears, squirrels, foxes and perhaps raccoons and skunks was recorded, significant intersite differences were not observed.

Egg weights collected as part of the data revealed that egg weights increased under Jack pine forests while losing weight in the mixed forests. The results were statistically significant, eggs apparently equilibrate with their immediate surroundings i.e. microclimate. Bendell proposed that this may be an important factor in successful rearing.

Concluding on another topic, J.B. illustrated and discussed the lost art of skidding logs by horse on his forested land. Logs, stacked and left to rot, when distributed through the forest, he proposed might promote a more equal balance and distribution of forest insects, particularly ants, many of which might play a role in the control of harmful pests such as white pine weevil

An interesting discussion followed, particularly on the significance of weight changes in eggs. Eggs lost weight continuously following exposure if not controlled and the rate or variation in water loss is undoubtedly critical for successful development.

J. McANDREWS - described past and present activities at the Hiscock site, an archeological excavation dated 10 to 12,000 B.P., in the U.S. about halfway between Buffalo and New York. The site, a large cattail marsh, located in an open field has been studied extensively by both American and Canadian investigators. J. McAndrews has the task (in progress) of studying the palynology of the 1m. peat layer. Below this layer the cobble stratum contains a large collection of disarticulated mastadon bones and teeth, embedded with remnants of macerated white spruce twigs and leaves. The animals apparently browsed on spruce, a feed source not commonly used by mammals.

Other mammal bones have also been discovered, wapiti and possibly giant black bear, but no mammoth bones have been exposed. Human artifacts of similar age found on site included fluted points, probably not used as weapons. They may have been used by early nomadic peoples visiting the area to scrape or clean skins.

The dig is continuing. It employs up to 200 people on a volunteer basis and interested workers would be welcome.

A discussion followed. Of particular interest to the audience was the reason for such a large accumulation of bones on the site. J. McAndrews concluded that in the absence of evidence of predation by humans or others the site probably met the requirements of a large number of animals, many of which died there from natural causes.

H. CURRIE - took us visually through slides to Netitishi Point on Hannah Bay, 35 km east of Moosonee, to observe the goose migration during the last week of October and early November 1996. The five ornithologists were transported from Moosonee by helicopter and lived in a hunting cabin overlooking a vast expanse of tidal flats.

Following the tide out they could observe water and shore birds closely. The spectacular migration of 30,000 Brant Geese in flocks of 100 to 500 was at its peak. Many migrating ducks were also observed, including scoters, mallards, pintails and mergansers. Among raptors; gyrfalcons, snowy owls and bald eagles were recorded. Shorebirds were common, particularly black-bellied plovers and dunlins. Landbirds; pine grosbeaks, redpolls and Bohemian waxwings in flocks were observed around the cabin. Some rare visitors were spotted as well, fulmars and Ross' goose, but the hoped for black guillimot failed to appear.

Among other comments, we congratulated the intrepid five for roughing it in the north at such an unpredictable time of year.

BILL CARRICK - our last speaker described the events leading up to the creation of the successful film 'Fly Away Home'.

He also described his current work at a private air-field training Trumpeter Swans, Sandhill Cranes and Canada Geese with light aircraft, ATV's and automobiles.

An experiment with imprinted and non-imprinted Trumpeter Swans on Lake Scugog led him to conclude that imprinting is not necessary to induce swans to follow boats.

Sandhill Cranes can be imprinted more readily than either geese or swans and may prove a good research surrogate for the rarer Whooping Crane.

Carrick showed a number of slides of cranes, geese and swans following a car along a runway. Although all three birds were in the air at one time, only a crane and a swan were pictured together.

An informal discussion of this and the other topics followed over coffee and baking brought by the members. In all a most enjoyable evening.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT: 10:30 PM

**NEXT MEETING:**

The 918th meeting of the Brodie Club will be held Jan. 21st in Room 430 in the Ramsay Wright Building, University of Toronto - St. George and Harbord. Room opens at 7:30 - Meeting starts 8:00 PM

**SPEAKER:**

Dr. David Wedin, Department of Botony, University of Toronto has agreed to address the Brodie Club on Jan. 21st. His title is: "Prairies and Savannas: threats from global change".