

MINUTES OF THE 925th MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

8 p.m., 18 November 1997

The meeting was held in Room 432, Ramsay Wright Building, University of Toronto.

Chair: Jock McAndrews.

Secretary: David Hussell

Attendance: 15 members and 12 guests

Doug and Joan Sadler, guests of the club

Trudy Rising, guest of Rising

Mary Boswell, Dan Kozlovic, guests of Bruce and Ann Falls

Kirsten Burling, guest of Ron Scovell

Sid Daniels, guest of George Bryant

Alexandra Eadie, guest of Oliver Bertin

Ernest and Sylvia Du Vernet, guests of McAndrews

Bernard and Claire Muller, guests of Carrick

Announcements.

McAndrews invited members to attend the ROM Research Colloquium, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Thursday 20th November and a lecture by Desmond Collins on the Burgess Shale fossils at 7.30 p.m. on the same day.

Rising announced that the 926th meeting of the Brodie Club will be held on Tuesday 16 December 1997. Dan Koslovic will speak on interactions of House Finches and Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Guest Speaker

Bruce Falls introduced the guest speaker, Doug Sadler. Doug served in the British Army in World War 2. He came to Canada in 1950. Doug is a naturalist and a former President of the F.O.N. He has written several books and over 2000 columns for the Peterborough Examiner. He has many awards, including an Honorary Doctorate from Trent University. Recently he worked with Dr. Howard Savage on a book documenting the birds in archaeological sites in Ontario - the subject of his talk tonight.

Doug got started on his "Birds in the Ground" project in 1983 when he was working on his book on the birds of the Kawartha Lakes and wondered whether there might be prehistoric sources of information. This started an association with Howard Savage, who asked him if he would be interested in compiling all records of birds from Ontario archaeological sites; and lead to much labour and frustration.

Information was available from many sources, including ROM, National Museum of Canada, Zoological Information Centre in Ottawa, universities and government departments, including consultant and contractor reports, etc. but most of it was not readily available. The intention of the book was to compile all references and make them readily available.

Many factors influence presence of archaeological sites and survival of bird remains, including the culture of the people, climate, trade and soil acidity.

Archaeologists' interests and methods also affect the number of sites and records of birds. There are relatively few sites in northern Ontario.

The earliest fossil records go back to 50,000 years B.P. in caves in the Hamilton area. The earliest human sites are from the Archaic period, 3,000 years B.P. in the Rice Lake area.

The book contains maps showing locations of records of 128 species, including a Carolina Parakeet in a London site. Species that appeared to be more widespread than currently included Sandhill and Whooping Cranes, Raven (south of the shield), Wild Turkey, Passenger Pigeon, Common and King Eiders, Red-necked Grebe, and Trumpeter and Tundra Swans. Species that seemed less common than expected were American Coot(1), Common Moorhen (1), Kestrel(1), American Robin (a few), American Woodcock(2), Black-bellied Plover (1), cormorant (1), Bobolink, Great Gray Owl (1) Killdeer (only 1, at Moosonee), Wigeon (mostly in the north), Gadwall (none in the south) and Red-shouldered Hawk. Species found nearby in adjacent states, but not in Ontario, include Common Nighthawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pied-billed Grebe, Turkey Vulture, California Condor, Virginia Rail or Sora, and Solitary Sandpiper.

Publication of the book is uncertain. It should be useful to archaeologists, but is not suited to an academic audience because text is written in popular style, though believed to be consistent with the scientific findings.

McAndrews asked if the book contained records of birds in effigy. Sadler responded that there was a pipe showing flamingos at Grimsby; also a loon. Pottery showed bird shapes.

Trudy Rising asked what was the smallest bird found. Sadler: Ovenbird.

Michael Boyer asked what bones are most significant and useful. Janet Cooper said all bones were useful for identification.

Alexandra Eadie asked if Petroglyphs were included as a source. Sadler: no. Identification of birds uncertain: may be cranes or herons.

Bruce Falls asked if any White-throated Sparrows or Meadowlarks were found. Sadler: Yes and yes.

Bodsworth asked how far bird parts might have traveled by trade. Sadler said he thought that if birds became valuable (e.g. for medicine) they might be carried long distances, but most were probably eaten where killed and not traded.

Sylvia Du Vernet asked why the Hamilton Bay area revealed oldest material. Jock McAndrews replied that the Kelso Cave had birds mineralized in clefts in the rock. It was a matter of chance and the right conditions.

Oliver Bertin commented on use of animals for totemic and medicine purposes that he had seen in a witchcraft museum in England.

Ken Abraham thanked the speaker and said he looked forward to seeing the book in print.

Members Notes and Observations

McAndrews visited Koch's Cave in Hastings Co. The ROM is excavating bones from a sealed deposit 7,000 - 10,000 years B.P. according to radiocarbon dates. Fossil bones include bats, bear, raccoon and boreal vole. No bird bones so far but there is much yet to excavate. Bodsworth said that Harold Hitchcock had banded bats in that cave in the late 1940s; he thought there was a paper about it in the Canadian Field-Naturalist.

Bryant described seeing Bermuda Petrels during a recent trip to Bermuda. On Nonsuch Island, David Wingate has several artificial and natural nest burrows equipped with trap doors above the nest cavities. Incubation of the goose-sized egg takes 40 days; fledging after another 80 days.

Scovell reported that a female Summer Tanager had returned to a feeder in Toronto for the second winter.

Janet Cooper asked if anyone had information about a Chilean Flamingo in Ottawa. Scovell said that it was an escapee that had eluded capture. Hussell said that photographs of it had made the front page of the Ottawa Citizen on 2 successive days last week.

Meeting adjourned at 9.45 p.m.