

THE 949th MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB
MINUTES

The 949th meeting of the Brodie Club was held on May 16,2000 in the Ramsay Wright building of the University of Toronto.

Chairman: Norma Martin

Recording Secretary: Oliver Bertin

Attendance: 11 members and one guest

Isabel Boardman, guest of Bernard and Claire Muller

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- The Ontario Archaeological Society returned \$200 to Jock McAndrews for distribution to club members who had donated funds to defray the cost of publishing "Birds from the Ground: The Record of Archaeology in Ontario." The volunteer-run society had decided it had neither the staff nor the resources to produce the book and cancelled publication last month.
- Mary Boswell provided notes on Deception Island, the fascinating sunken volcano that she visited during her tour of Antarctica last winter.
- Bertin reported a new first for the Brodie Club. The post office refused to deliver at least one set of minutes last month because it was considered overweight. Any member that did not receive their minutes should contact him at 585-5394 and he will send out another copy -- with the required 75-cent stamp!
- Claire Muller reported that the authorities at Point Pelee National Park were contemplating destruction of the park administration building. She wondered whether the Club should appeal to the authorities to keep the building as a camping spot for members of the Brodie Club and other worthies.
- The Club received a letter from R. Shaw, Regional Director of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, in response to a Club petition mailed last month. The petition was sent to Ontario Premier Michael Harris, Environment Minister Dan Newman and Municipal Affairs Minister Tony Clement. Mr. Shaw said that: "Protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine is important to the Ontario government." He said developers are required to conduct detailed scientific investigations to ensure they recognize the significance and sensitivity of the moraine. A copy of his letter is attached.
- Club member Dr. William Rapley DVM, executive director of biology and conservation at the Toronto Zoo, has invited members to spend their annual field day behind the scenes at the zoo starting at 10 am on Sunday, June 11. Members were asked to meet in the atrium. To get there, take Meadowvale Road north from Hwy 401. Turn left on Old Finch Ave. and left into the service complex on the north side of the zoo. The guard at the control station will direct members to the atrium.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved with minor amendments.

SPEAKER:

As a member, Bill Carrick needs no introduction. He gave an illustrated talk on the history of wildlife film-making.

A HISTORY OF WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Wildlife photography got its start in the 1920s, with a trio of early naturalist-explorers. As a child, Carrick remembered Carl Akeley, a taxidermist with the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and later with the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Akeley pioneered a method of applying the skin of an animal to a finely molded replica of the body to create realistic museum displays. He adapted the motion-picture camera for use by naturalists and made the first motion pictures of gorillas in their natural habitat. He helped establish the Virunga National Park in Congo, where he died in 1926.

Carrick also gave credit to Martin Johnson, an explorer who accompanied Jack London on his voyage of the Snark. Later, Johnson and his wife, Osa, filmed African wildlife and head-hunting cannibals in the South Pacific. They travelled to the Solomon and New Hebrides Islands, to Borneo and Africa, doing wildlife documentaries for the American Museum of Natural History. After Martin died in 1937, Osa produced four more films and wrote a large number of books with such catchy titles as "I Married Adventure" and "Four Years in Paradise."

Those films were made largely for museum people and for research, and culminated with a series for the Audubon Society which ran a series of popular wildlife documentaries before the age of television, in the 1940s and 1950s.

Wait Disney started doing wildlife documentaries about that time under the misnomer True Life Adventures. They may have been great films, but Carrick said they were sometimes closer to fantasy than to fact. That is especially true of the famous shot of lemmings tumbling off a cliff in one of the early examples of mass suicide. "It was all fiction," Carrick said.

Carrick showed the Club excerpts from four famous wildlife documentaries. The first showed scenes of Grey Owl, the famous Englishman turned Indian who became an immensely popular hero of conservation during the 1930s. One claim to fame was his marital history -- he married three Indians and two Caucasians. He also wrote a number of very popular books, including the autobiographical "Pilgrims of the Wild" and a children's story, "Sajo and the Beaver People."

He became such a well-known tourist attraction that the Canadian Pacific Railway filmed a promotion of him, his third wife and his beavers at his log cabin in Prince Albert National Park where he was a warden. That film shows him calling beaver to his log cabin, adjoining the beaver house at the water's edge. The CBC made a collage of many of these films in the 1970s, including shots of former prime minister John Diefenbaker visiting the cabin.

Carrick visited the set of the famous Disney lemming film, but he did not take part in the actual filming. That's just as well because, as Carrick said, the film "gets worse and worse." There are lovely shots of jaegers, ravens and ermines pouncing on hapless lemmings against a painted backdrop, and beautiful shots of the Arctic Ocean with crazed lemmings swimming out to sea accompanied by a sonorous dialogue that includes such purple phrases as "mass suicide," "fatal journey" and "rendezvous with destiny."

The film may not have been an epic of science, but it was a marvel of film-making. It was filmed a long way from the Arctic Circle, in the Canmore YMCA, just outside Banff National Park, and the wonderful shots of the Arctic Ocean were really filmed on a 30-foot cliff face overlooking Lake Newell in southern Alberta.

The lemmings were real, but they were caught by the local kids in Churchill for 25 cents apiece and flown to Alberta, where they were held in a garbage can. In the famous scene of the lemmings tumbling over the cliff, they were really being tipped out of the garbage can, just out of view of the camera. And the lovely shot of dead lemmings floating on the placid sea as the sun set, really showed dead lemmings that had died in captivity on the movie set. They had been tossed in the freezer just in case they might be needed later.

Much later, Ellis Vision filmed Carrick motoring across Ontario's Lake Scugog in his speedboat with Canada Geese flying beside him, and an ultralight aircraft flying with Trumpeter Swans. In an oft-told story, Carrick discovered that geese did not have to be imprinted from birth. They would follow boats and planes on their own.

The Israeli government commissioned a wonderful documentary on aircraft bird-strikes called "Flying with the Birds" that gave the film-makers a great opportunity to take some amazing shots of birds in migration.

The film was designed to illustrate a significant problem for military and civilian aircraft in Israel. An estimated 15 million birds of 280 species fly through Israeli airspace every year, second only to Panama, creating havoc for jet pilots. These birds come from three flyways -- east from Europe, south from Russia and west from Afghanistan -- and funnel down through Israel on their way to the Horn of Africa. They include Cranes, Pelicans, Falcons, song birds, White Storks and Lesser-spotted Eagles. Many of them are a nuisance to aircraft because they are large and heavy birds that fly at very high altitudes. They float very high on the thermal currents and then glide down to the next thermal, where they rise once more.

The Israelis tried to work out their flight patterns using a motorized glider. They discovered that buzzards fly between 2,000 and 6,000 feet high, and storks fly up to 80 kilometers an hour. Some species stay close to the Mediterranean Sea while others fly down the Jordan River. Their solution was to plot the path of the birds when they could and tell the fighter pilots to fly around them.

The Israelis use a variety of methods to keep birds away from airport runways. They play pre-recorded distress calls to the gulls, they use model airplanes to dart around the birds and they paint falcon scarecrows onto revolving windmills.

QUESTIONS:

- Carrick noted that some birds can fly extremely high. One example is the Bar-headed Goose which has been reported at 35,000 feet above Nepal.
- Carrick decided to train birds to follow his boat to make it easier to film them in flight. He found they would follow fast motorboats and slow aircraft. With that behind him, he decided he could teach them to migrate by leading them with an ultralight aircraft along a predetermined route.
- It took three years to discover that the plane he was using simply flew too fast, 60 mph, for the birds to keep up. He tried a 30-mph pusher-plane and this was ideal. With boats, he tested groups of birds, some imprinted and some not, and he found little difference in their behaviour. This convinced him that he didn't need to imprint. Many years later, he led Trumpeter swans on a 700-mile migration route from Sudbury to southern Indiana.

The speaker was thanked by a chastened Norman Martin, who said he believed whole-heartedly in the lemming film when he first saw it 40-odd years ago.

NOTES & OBSERVATIONS:

- Claire Muller provided an update on the war between the chickadees and sparrows in her back yard tree, mentioned last month. She said the war continued for another 14 days. The sparrows were so determined to stake their territory that they kept dropping nesting material into the hollow tree, even though they could not enter through the tiny hole that Bernard Muller had cut. Chickadees dive-bombed the sparrows, leading to at least three dogfights. Eventually, both sides gave up, and abandoned the nesting hole. Muller reported two weeks after the meeting that the chickadees had returned to the nest and appeared to be sitting on eggs. There was, as yet, no sign of the sparrows.
- Alexandra Eadie reported seeing a melanistic - a completely black - Ruddy Duck in the Blenheim sewage lagoon, near Chatham.
- Ron Scovell reported that over the years he has seen several white-phase birds, including a Red-tailed Hawk with a pink tail on Carden Plain, east of Lake Simcoe; a Bank Swallow at 50-Point Sewage Lagoon, on the south shore of Lake Ontario near Beamsville; and a Double-crested Cormorant near Oshawa.
- Scovell said he saw few birds at Point Pelee the previous weekend because of high winds in the area. He saw only 12 species of warbler in two days, a Mississippi Kite three times, 12 Avocets (a big drop from the 47 he saw one year), a Chat and a Connecticut Warbler.
- George Bryant saw a Tennessee Warbler and a Scarlet Tanager in Toronto's High Park, a place that was swarming with birds the day of his visit. He also saw a Pine Marten in Algonquin Park, his first marten.
- Ron Tasker saw lots of warblers in High Park and an unprecedented number of warblers near his home in Toronto's Rosedale neighbourhood.
- Eadie visited Long Point and saw a Snowy Egret. She has come across a dramatic website (<http://www.intellicast.com/LocalWeather/World/UnitedStates/Northeast/NewYork/Buffalo/BaseReflectivity/>) which uses the Buffalo radar station to track birds migrating at night. She was surprised by the number of birds that migrate after dark.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.

THE NEXT MEETING:

The annual field day will be held on Sunday, June 11 at 10 am when Rapley will offer a behind-the-scenes tour of Toronto Zoo.



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Environment

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May 4, 2000

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Brodie Club Members
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Dear Members:

Thank you for your letter of April 18, 2000, to the Honourable Tony Clement, former Minister of the Environment, regarding the need to protect the Oak Ridges Moraine. I have been asked to respond on behalf of our new Minister, the Honourable Dan Newman.

Protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine is important to the Ontario government. Since being identified as an area of provincial interest, much effort has been put toward the protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine. In our review of development proposals and municipal planning documents, we apply the *Implementation Guidelines for the Oak Ridges Moraine Area of the Greater Toronto Area*. The guideline requires developers to conduct detailed scientific investigations into such things as the ground water and surface water. The intent of the guideline is to ensure that proponents and planning authorities recognize the significance and sensitivity of the Moraine and that appropriate planning decisions are made.

Thank you for advising the Ministry of the concerns of your club.

Yours truly,

R. Shaw
Regional Director

c: Premier Mike Harris

BRODIE CLUB

The annual field day was held June 11, 2000 at the Toronto Zoo at the invitation of member Bill Rapley, executive director of biology and conservation.

Attendance: 14 members and 18 guests

Ed and Barbara Welch, guests of Fred Bodsworth;

Jill Cameron-Huff, Addy, Carter and Sally, guests of Don Huff;

Isabel Boardman and Jeff and Yolanda Stewart, guests of Claire Muller;

Julia Riley, guests of John Riley;

Eleonora Bertin, Heather Anne Campbell, Peter Auckenthaler, Alice, Janet and Barry Blackwell, guests of Oliver Bertin;

Jeff Stewart and Yolanda Van Grootel

Rapley and his staff offered a fascinating, 6.5-hour tour of the behind-the-scenes workings of the zoo. Members were escorted through the workshops, graphics and machine shops, the nutrition and horticultural centres and the animal hospital.

The members were offered a tour of the zoo on a zoomobile, and a chilly picnic lunch in the Simba Safari Lodge overlooking the rhinoceros habitat. That was followed by a walk in the pouring rain through the Africa, Indo-Malaya and Malayan Woods Pavilions, and the Conservation Connection Centre. The highlights of the afternoon included a peek inside the elephant house, the staff preparation areas underneath the Africa Pavilion, the construction project that will soon become the Gorilla Rainforest Exhibit and a behind-the-scenes look at the tropical fish exhibit before returning to the administration building for a warming coffee.

Following the tour, Bill Carrick offered Rapley \$300 to help with the zoo's work. The funds included \$200 in member donations collected that day and \$100 from club funds.

The 950th meeting 19, 2000 in Room 432 of of the University of Members are invited to the summer in the field	of the Brodie Club will be held on Sept. the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories Toronto. This will be a members' night. offer their notes and observations from or at home.
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