

The 952nd MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB MINUTES

The 952nd meeting of the Brodie Club was held on Nov. 21, 2000 in the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories of the University of Toronto.

Chairman: Jean Iron

Recording secretary: Sandra Eadie

Attendance: 17 members and five guests

GUESTS:

Glenn Coady, guest of Sandra Eadie

Peter Kotonen and Marc Johnson, guests of Jock McAndrews

Helen Juhola and Charlotte Turnbull, guests of George Bryant.

BUSINESS:

Bill Carrick accepted membership fees, \$10 from regular members, \$15 for families and \$5 for corresponding members.

Claire Muller, who was unable to attend, passed on the request that the minutes of the previous meeting be amended to note: C. Muller moved and Jim Rising seconded that the December meeting always fall on the second Tuesday instead of the third, passed. Minutes were approved, moved by Rising, seconded by Ann Falls.

Jennifer Young said how appropriate and special it was to see William Brodie's silhouette profile on the minutes. Bruce Falls hoped that people won't send club mail to the old Royal Ontario Museum address. Carrick said that he still was in possession of many sheets of the old Brodie Club stationery featuring the profile.

COMMITTEE REPORT

A committee of interested members met at the home of Claire and Bernard Muller to discuss the disposition of the Brodie Club archive material. C. Muller and Carrick had already culled some things that had no relevance to the club and what remained were 79 years of material in chronological order. The material includes some minutes, announcements, observations, and correspondence. Two copies of Hubert Hartfield Brown's illustrated botanist's collecting diary from 1930s are a highlight as well as material from the Brodie Club's fight against Jack Miner, who, in the early 1930s, advocated the slaughter of all raptors on sight.

Since the meeting, C. Muller has taken the material to the ROM library where Julia Matthews, the librarian, was pleased to receive it. It is now available for research to anyone interested. C. Muller and Eadie will be completing the finder index for all the presentations and they hope to work on a finder index for the other material as well. After the committee meeting, Eadie showed the material to Glenn Coady of the Toronto Ornithological Club who found several useful Toronto bird area records for the Toronto sightings data base. Claire and Bernard Muller, Bill Carrick, Jennifer Young, Hugh Currie and Sandra Eadie attended the meeting.

SPEAKER:

George Bryant, as member, needed no introduction.

His topic was: Around The World in 120 Days: Natural History on Seven Continents

Bryant entertained the club with slides of highlights from his round-the-world cruise. His ocean voyage touched seven continents. The ship left Piraeus, Greece, Nov. 19, 1999 and returned March 19, 2000. This trip was the cruise company's first. The first two trips were such good bargains that the company ran out of money and the third trip had to be cancelled in the middle with the guests flown home from Tahiti. Bryant felt very lucky to have had the opportunity to spend so much time at sea—approximately 98% of the time was on the water! The group was extremely well traveled. Someone had been on 12 round-the-world cruises. There were 400 passengers, 170 crew and 30 education and entertainment staff.

The cruise started in the Aegean sailing through the Straits of Gibraltar to Fort Lauderdale. Later, they passed through the Panama Canal at night. Usually cruises do this during the day, so passengers can experience the canal. But the ship was slow (maximum speed 16 knots) and they were continually trying to make up time in various ways. In fact, they were only able to make 28 of the 33 promised stops and many stops were shorter than originally planned. Some passengers got very upset every time the ship skipped a port.

On Dec. 11, about 200 km into the Pacific, off Panama, two Tennessee Warblers came on board. Bryant was not optimistic about their fate since they were still so far off course.

For a whole day, as they sailed off Peru in the Humboldt current, they were in the middle of the anchovy fleet. Slides showed nets and fishing boats extending in the distance as far as the eye could see. Several species of boobies and petrels, along with Franklin Gulls and huge Peruvian Pelicans were recorded.

We saw spectacular photos of glaciers entering the fiords of on the south coast of Chile. The bottom of the glacial ice was deep blue from compression, which removed all the air bubbles. The ship traveled through the fiords for four days with a pilot to avoid the rough open ocean. One picture showed a striking demarcation between clear salt water and glacier water, which was cloudy with suspended material from the glacier.

There was no population on the shoreline. Parts of the coast were barren; and were eroded and sculpted. Because of the rough weather, they not able to land for several days here. Once they were out of the fiords into rougher water, they saw sheathbills and Giant Petrels.

Chile has three species of fox, one at a Magellanic Penguin colony was a diminutive Chilean Fox.. Bryant was surprised to find that Lesser Rheas, a bird related to Emus and ostriches were common at the tip of Patagonia.

When the ship arrived at the Antarctic Peninsula, each passenger had only had 45 minutes on land because of time constraints and limited Zodiac numbers. The ship was not equipped to work efficiently in extremely cold water (7 degrees below zero Celsius) and heat could not be maintained in the cabins. Some passengers developed pneumonia; many more were uncomfortably cold. They visited the Chinstrap Penguin colony where Bryant also saw a couple of Gentoo Penguins in the colony.

Other fauna seen were Antarctic Terns, Weddell seals, leopard seals, southern bottlenose whales, the males with melon-shaped heads, and carrion-eating Giant Petrels.

They sailed for five days to Easter Island which has a population of 3,000. The island is an extinct volcano. It's about five hours flying time from Chile. Chimango Caracaras were abundant. The famous heads of Easter Island (Moai) originally all faced the ocean. They all have long fingers, long ear lobes and top knots. They are found at several locations on the island. There are still very many moai in various stages of completion in the volcanic quarry where nearly all the moai were sculpted.

From Easter Island, they sailed for eight days to New Zealand non-stop, seeing almost nothing except water. Our speaker was happy enough with that. One of the people on the boat understood about how great circle routes are shorter than a straight line route and when he noticed the ship's unchanging course, he pointed it out to the navigator. Afterwards, Bryant noticed that the course changed to the great circle route which required continual shifts in course.

Eventually, they reached Africa and landed in Mombassa. Bryant went to Tsavo National park where Fringe-eared Oryx, Defassa waterbuck, Open-billed Storks and red-dust stained elephants were highlights. Olive Baboons are considered vermin there. Bryant found that Kenya has gone very much downhill since he was last there 20 years ago. The road from Mombassa to Nairobi is so pot-holed that the transports drive in the ditches. There is little employment and many so-called jobs--about 7,000 in Mombassa--involve making arts and crafts for tourists.

Finally, they reached the Suez Canal. It took a fascinating full day to transit the canal. The canal has no locks-boats proceed in convoy and pass at an extra wide place in the middle. Many gull species including White-eyed and Slender-billed Gulls were observed here.

The show ended with slides of the green flash, a phenomenon that many be seen just as the last bit of the sun goes beneath the horizon. Uninterrupted horizons at sea meant that the green flash was seen several times.

Jim Bendell thanked the speaker.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS:

Glenn Coady had copies of the Greater Toronto Area Bird Checklist and Reporting Guidelines – 2000 available for sale for \$8. Recently published by the Toronto Ornithological Club and written by Glenn and Roy B.H. Smith, it is on the verge of selling out. More than a checklist, it contains extensive research and detail on the 390 species of birds recorded in the GTA. Recognizable forms, date ranges, peak numbers and peak dates are listed and there is a long list of references. To buy, contact the TOC c/o Glenn Coady, 60 Mountview Ave., #604, Toronto, Ontario M6P 2L4, \$8.00 + \$2.00 p.p. Or phone 416-763-0137 or e-mail glenn.coady@swchsc.on.ca to reserve one.

Marc Johnson said that Algonquin Park is looking for young naturalists between the ages of 15 and 25 for next summer. The positions involve such things as informing the public about the natural history and operations of the park, working in the book store and museum, leading walks and giving slide shows. Contact Marc at work at (416) 946-7391 or at home (416) 921-1968 or by e-mail at johnson@botany.utoronto.ca. The pay is from \$7 to \$16 an hour depending on age and experience.

Rising noted that there have been almost no birds at Go Home Bay recently.

Jock McAndrews said that at the Red Cloud Cemetery prairie north of Brighton there has been an extraordinary blue-stemmed grass growth this year caused by a plentiful rain. If the fire department is able to take the time, there will be a huge, very hot burn in the spring to get rid of woody growth and maintain this unique Ontario prairie.

Eadie saw a Merlin near Dufferin Grove Park near Dufferin and College. Coady remarked that we should watch out for breeding Merlins in Toronto.

Bendell said redpolls and Rough-legged Hawks have arrived in the Ottawa Valley.

Fred Bodsworth said a number of dead water birds have appeared on Lake Erie near Port Burwell: loons, Horned Grebes and Red-breasted Mergansers. He expects the cause is botulism.

Young recommended *The Tulip* by Anna Pavord, 1999, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York. It describes the migration of the tulip from Turkey through Europe to Holland and reproduces beautiful old colour plates. There are even tulips named Toronto orange and Toronto. The book has a good chronology.

Carrick talked about how he has been working on introducing Trumpeter Swans since 1984. Using eggs from Alaska they have been nesting near his place in the Rouge Valley. Over the years he has watched as the numbers gradually increased with some setbacks. The other day he saw 8 Trumpeter Swans together in the air at the same time. It made it all worthwhile to see the results of their efforts..

Rouge Park is the world's biggest urban park. It is so large because the land that was intended for the Pickering Airport has been turned into park land, a very lucky turn of fate. Carrick is going to donate the buildings on his leased land to the park.

Carrick read from corresponding member David Sherry's letter about his work on bird behaviour at the University of Western Ontario.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on Dec. 12, one week earlier than usual to avoid conflict with Christmas, at 8 p.m. in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories. This will be the Christmas meeting. Members are invited to bring a variety of non-alcoholic Christmas cheer and seasonal goodies.

The speaker will be Chris Darling of the Royal Ontario Museum who will speak on: Good old natural history: Four vignettes of insect behaviour.