

THE
BRODIE
CLUB



ROYAL ONTARIO
MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

THE 964TH MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

The 964th meeting of the Brodie Club was held on Tuesday, February 19, 2002, in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories at the University of Toronto.

Chairman: Michael Boyer
Secretary: George Bryant
Attendance: 20 members and 6 guests

Business Meeting

The minutes of the 963rd meeting on Jan. 15, 2002, were adopted.

Claire Muller proposed Dr. Ann Fowle for membership in the Brodie Club. Her biography is attached.

Introduction of Guests

Ann Fowle, guest of Claire Muller
Isabel Boardman, guest of Claire Muller
Charlotte Graham, guest of Ron Tasker
Betty Speakman, guest of John Speakman
Lori Nichols, guest of Mary Boswell

Announcements

Claire Muller discussed and circulated a copy of an excerpt from Edward O. Wilson's "The Future of Life" printed in a current Scientific American. In it, the author analyses population stress in China and environmental implications.

Presentation

Bruce Falls introduced members, Ron and Mary Tasker, who provided a slide presentation of a Northwest Passage cruise taken August 6-15, 2001. Mary first discussed the itinerary and history of Greenland. From Ottawa, they flew directly to Greenland and boarded their vessel, Akademik Ioffe. This was a Russian ship originally built to spy on submarines. Sublet by Peregrine Adventures of Australia, the ship's capacity was 100 passengers. They were reminded that it was not a cruise ship but an expedition vessel-Arctic travel always being unpredictable. The ship had a 1" ice-hardened hull and the itinerary included daily landings by Zodiac inflatable boats at ports. First stop was Itallinut, (population 121), a little village with the only non-biting flies they experienced. At 100 km. north of the Arctic Circle, Sisimuit (population 6,000) was the only major community visited and the most northern ice-free town in winter. An "ice man" came aboard who was in touch with headquarters in Samia every day to determine ice conditions. Because of significant pack ice in Lancaster Sound, the vessel was diverted and they went further north along the Greenland coast.

In a short history of the west coast of Greenland, Mary noted that the earliest people arrived about 4,500 BP, there were two subsequent Dorset cultures, and the Thule culture arrived about 1200-1300 AD. All Greenland immigrants came from North America. In 1721, the Danish colonized Greenland and brought all communities together to Sisimuit. In 1801, there was a smallpox epidemic that wiped out most of the people on the west coast. Then at the end of the nineteenth century, the whaling industry collapsed. Fishing is now the main industry, concentrating on salmon, shrimp, cod and halibut. Greenlanders also hunt seals, walruses, musk ox, reindeer and Beluga Whales.

The fastest-moving glacier in the world is Jakobshaun Glacier. It spawns one iceberg every five minutes into a bergy-bit covered fjord. From here the icebergs move north and then south along the east Baffin Island coast. This is the source of most icebergs in the North Atlantic. The vessel proceeded to Ummanaq at the base of Red Greiss Mountains. This is a very steep rock island used as a navigational source. At the base of a cliff is the very pretty village. They continued north along the Greenland coast and then took two days to cross Baffin Bay, overnighing at Pond Inlet. One night succumbing to sleep, the Taskers missed some Inuits hunting a Narwhal a short distance from the ship. By the time they crossed Baffin Bay, the ocean had become completely clear of ice. Their route was then south to the north shore of Bylot Island, down Admiralty Inlet to Nanisivik and thence by air to Ottawa. Mary concluded that it was a marvellous trip; perfect weather, no wind or waves, and 24-hour daylight. In particular, the light on the ocean and sky was beautiful-pastel pinks and blues -- as was then demonstrated by Ron's photographs.

Ron commented on some of the wildlife, including about 40 species of birds. The Fulmar was perhaps the commonest bird and Sabine's Gulls were seen in many locations. In Baffin Bay, they observed thousands of Dovekies and many Thick-billed Murres. At one location near Greenland, he observed about a dozen Ross' Gulls, probably just dispersed from their nest colony. He noted a few Ivory Gulls, often beside a Polar Bear or seal carcass. At one stop, he was fortunate to observe a pair of Ringed Plovers. To his disappointment, he observed no butterflies during the trip! As consolation, Ron counted about 46 Polar Bears, many of them females with two cubs. Bears were "everywhere" in Baffin Bay, usually only one or two are seen per trip. They observed caribou in

Greenland and musk ox grazing on the shores. On occasion, musk ox formed defensive circles when they saw the ship approaching. Musk ox can be dangerous. At one village in Greenland, an ambulance was transporting a tourist who had got too close. They observed a walrus and number of whales: Humpback, Pilot and Fin Whales, all on the Greenland coast. Although only the heads were visible, a pair of walrus swimming in Baffin Bay was an interesting sighting. Ron used Porsild's "Flora of the Canadian Arctic" for plant identifications. He showed pictures of Fireweed, Arctic Harebell and Purple Saxifrage taken on previous trips. On this trip, he noted Alpine Bistort and a Chickweed.

Ron concluded by saying the spectacular scenery was perhaps the most memorable part of the whole trip. The play of light on the shifting ice, the unusual low-lying clouds and the close approach to calving glaciers were all special experiences.

Ann Falls, in thanking the speakers, praised the vivid pictures and wonderful descriptions.

Observations

Fred Bodsworth was very pleased to have been accompanied by Bruce and Ann Falls to view the Smith's Longspur near Hagersville. For Fred, it was the first life bird he had seen in the past five years.

Sandra Eadie was fortunate to observe three River Otters feeding and frolicking on a river north of Col borne.

A few weeks' ago, the Taskers had an American Robin which chose to sing for over an hour in their backyard-almost a month ahead of schedule.

The Speakman's Beaverton backyard has been most productive. They discovered a Flicker during the Christmas bird count. The woodpecker comes regularly to feed at the seed tray and suet. Then two weeks ago, a Carolina Wren turned up, very unusual at this northern latitude.

Signs of spring observed by George Bryant included: February 4-Icicles forming on broken Sugar Maple branches, Feb. 10--Ring-billed Gull in breeding plumage with crimson gape, Feb.11-Mourning Doves paired and cooing.

Bill Carrick reviewed Kenn Kaufman's recent "Birds of North America." Bill felt that the digitally enhanced pictures were far superior to the illustrations in many field guides.

The Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 19 in Rm. 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories. Dr. Rudy Boonstra of UoT's Scarborough Campus will speak on: "What causes the snowshoe hare cycle in Canada's boreal forest?" He was one of a group of scientists who studied the question over a 10-year period, and recently published a book on the subject.

Ann Fowle

Claire Muller proposed Dr. Ann Fowle for membership in the Brodie Club, and Ann and Bruce Falls enthusiastically seconded this proposal. Ann has attended the requisite three meetings and has written the following biographical information.

I have heard about the Brodie Club for many years and already know quite a few of the members. And so it gives me great pleasure to apply for membership in this unique club.

I am asked to introduce myself to you. Well, I grew up in Nanaimo, B.C. at the Pacific Biological Station. My father, a fisheries biologist, was director from 1924-40. His main research was on salmon and I remember the many evenings he spent reading salmon scales in our living room. My mother was also a biologist with an interest in invertebrates, mayflies in particular. At a young age I was introduced to plant collecting. Because I was taught the correct method of mounting and labelling specimens, my collection of species from many parts of B.C. was given to the Museum in Victoria when I left home for U.B.C. By this time I had developed an interest in things cellular and medical and so graduated from U.B.C. in Bacteriology and Preventive Medicine. Continuing this interest led me to Toronto and the School of Hygiene. There I learned the technique of tissue culture from Dr. Raymond Parker. This was an exciting time because while I was in his laboratory he perfected the formulation of a synthetic medium (#199), which would support the long-term growth of cells in vitro.

Next I decided to pursue graduate studies, This I did in the Dept. of Zoology under the direction of Prof. K.C. Fisher. I learned a great deal about cellular physiology and how to conduct research.

After graduation I was able to use my tissue culture experience by setting up an eye virology laboratory for an ophthalmologist at the Banting Institute. (There I met a young ophthalmologist, John Speakman!) We grew cornea in tissue culture and succeeded in isolating a virus that caused a bothersome eye disease. Unfortunately Dr. Ormsby decided to practice full time and dropped the research.

Next I learned a great deal about Human Genetics by working with Dr. Norma Ford Walker at the Hospital for Sick Children. My studies on autism in children suggested a biological basis for this disorder. Consequently this conclusion led to a clash of minds with the psychiatrists at the Hospital, whose theory was that autism was caused by "refrigerator mothers".

Perhaps fortunately for me, we moved to the York University campus, at Oufferin, and I dropped out of the research project. After 5 years there, I became involved in teaching biology and was noted for taking students on field trips. Because I now had summers off and the children were older, I was able to participate in the Univ. of California Research Expeditions Programs. I went to many interesting places and developed a particular liking for rain forests (Costa Rica and Ecuador). My reading about the rain forest ecosystem led to a curiosity about the coral reef ecosystem. So when I noticed that the Univ. of Toronto was giving a coral reef ecology course on the island of Bonaire, I decided that was for me. At the age of 50 I learned to scuba dive and off I went. For the next while I

dove with an organization out of New York called CEDAM (Conservation, Education, Diving, Archeology, Museums). Their projects took me to such places as the Galapagos Islands where we did a fish census because the islands had just been declared a Marine Reserve. On the Great Barrier Reef our project was to learn more about the predation of stalked starfish. Interestingly enough, my last dive (age 70) was off Bonaire doing another fish census.

Now that I'm retired and staying closer to home, I spend my summer gardening and looking after a local park in Thornhill which a friend and I "adopted". A branch of the east Don River flows through the park. We have called ourselves the Pomona Mills Park Conservationists and we are now planning, with the TRCA and Markham Parks and Recreation Dept., our third annual planting. There is far too much mowed grass, so we have many years work ahead of us restoring and rehabilitating the habitat.

This look back over my life has been a very interesting exercise for me. I had never fully realized what a hodge-podge of activities I have engaged in over the years. The one thread that seems to run through it all is a wide interest in biology in all its many and varied aspects.

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