

THE
BRODIE
CLUB



ROYAL ONTARIO
MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

The 982nd MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

The 982nd meeting of The Brodie Club was held on Feb. 17, 2004 in the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories of the University of Toronto.

Chairman: Ed Addison
Secretary: Oliver Bertin

There were 12 members and four guests
Sharon Hick, guest of Jock McAndrews
Emily and Rosemary Addison, daughter and wife of Ed Addison
Rosalind Bradford, guest of Helen and Arne Juhola

NEW BUSINESS:

Ron Pittaway was proposed as a member. His biography was attached to the December minutes.

McAndrews suggested that the May meeting be moved ahead one week to the second week in May to accommodate birders who plan to travel down to Pt. Pelee for the annual bird migration. The suggestion was tabled to the next meeting after some discussion.

Claire Muller wrote a long and detailed letter, relating the activities of the local bird association on Wolfe Island, across the river from Kingston. She observed 75 avian species in 2003. She invited members to visit their home on Main St., just east of the ferry docks.

Ken Abraham requested changes in the January minutes that referred to the proposed de Beers diamond mine near the Attawapiskat River on Hudson's Bay. The changes were made in an e-mail to members and in the written minutes.

Ann Fowle

It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of member Ann Fowle on February 28, 2004. Born on May 22, 1922, Ann Fowle expressed a daring and adventurous spirit all her life, receiving a PhD in biology in 1952, pursuing a scientific research and teaching career, active environmental and civic advocacy, pioneering world travels, and many other interests including gardening, scuba diving, medical research and the arts. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Vancouver Aquarium (founded by her father W.A. Clemens), World Wildlife Fund or an environmental organization of your choice.

from The Globe & Mail, March 1, 2004

SPEAKER:

The speaker was introduced by McAndrews. Mima Kapches is senior curator of New World Archaeology at the Royal Ontario Museum, where she studies Iroquoian archaeology. She took her PhD at the University of Toronto. She has been a director of the Toronto Historical Board and the Canadian Archaeological Association.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF TORONTO

When Kapches arrived at UofT in 1968, there was nobody seriously studying the archaeology of the City of Toronto. There had been serious collectors in the past, who built an important archaeological history of the city in the days before it was settled. One of the early collectors was David Boyle, a Scottish blacksmith who trained as a teacher, opened a bookshop in Toronto and developed an interest in natural history. He built an extensive collection of Indian artifacts, which was donated to the Ontario Provincial Museum in 1896.

Various other people have collected archaeological artifacts in the Toronto area. Some of the collections ended up in the ROM, the Ontario Provincial Museum or the York Pioneer Association, a body that still exists. But considerable material has been returned to the landowners, to developers or placed in long-term storage because there is neither the time nor the resources to catalogue the material.

There have been many studies of the local archaeology, in varying detail. Bodies like the Metro Toronto Conservation Authority have prepared master plans and overviews. But many of the digs have been completed in a rush so a developer can complete a church or a subdivision..

The archaeology of Toronto goes back to about 12,000 BP when the glaciers were receding, leaving Lake Iroquois behind. The lake shoreline followed the hillside that stretches along Danforth Ave. and St. Clair Avenue from the Beaches to the Humber River. Originally the waters of Lake Iroquois flowed out through the French River, but the geology shifted around 4,000 BP, leading to flooding of many archaeological sites and the breaking open of the St. Lawrence River. The waters have since receded leaving an entirely new waterfront.

The archaeological record goes back to the days of Lake Iroquois. There are very few finds from the palaeo-period, which lasted from the end of the glaciation to about 10,000 BP. By the archaic period, from 2,500 to 800 BC, there were trails along the Humber River, Black Creek and Garrison Creek. During the late Iroquoian period, to about 1550 AD, the native people were living in longhouses in large, sophisticated villages, burying their dead in ossuaries and farming corn and squash. There was a relatively high native population in Toronto. Kapches put the number at between 25,000 and 30,000 Huron and Petun (Tobacco) people when the Iroquois left the area between 1450 AD and 1550 and moved to the Penetang region.

Nobody knows why the Iroquois left. They may have exhausted the land or left as a result of the founding of the Iroquoian League in about 1450.

There are a few remains from the distant past. A mammoth tusk was found in 1927 on the Moatfield Farm, near the current Leslie St. and Hwy. 401. A musk-ox skull dating back to 5,000 BP was found near Blantyre Ave. and Gerrard St. in the upper

Beaches. A caribou antler was picked up along Black Creek and an elk antler near the Coatsworth Cut, near Ashbridges Bay in eastern Toronto. This evidence shows that native peoples co-existed with mammoths and musk-oxen in the post-glacial period.

The historical record in Toronto dates back to the late 18th century. A painting of Toronto harbour in 1793 showed a lovely tree-lined bay with steep banks on the north side. The Iroquois apparently camped, fished and lived along the lake shoreline and river valleys, leaving many artifacts behind. Unfortunately, many of the early river valleys and marshes were filled in following the outbreak of disease in the 1880s. But traces of the native settlers do remain, particularly along the river valleys and at such meeting places as Lawrence Ave. and Avenue Rd., the Tam O'Shanter Golf Course and Moss Park near Jarvis and Queen Sts. in downtown Toronto.

There are many references to the early wildlife in the historical record, in old newspapers and in diaries. A bobcat was found in Scarborough in 1891 and a lynx was shot raiding a henhouse near Bathurst and St. Clair. Passenger pigeons were common in Toronto at one time and fishery records show that many species were already declining in the 19th century. Unfortunately these references all too often omit enticing details.

The Humber River valley is a prime collecting spot because it was a well-travelled route for both native people and caribou, and wild rice was collected there as late as the 1880s. There are 36 archaeological sites along the river, known from the archaeological record as well as from newspaper articles, scrapbooks and the like.

There was a French fort at the bottom of South Kingsway on the site of the present-day Petro-Canada station. In 1670, the early French trappers documented a Seneca village of about 50 longhouses near the mouth of the Humber River on the east side. A variety of trade goods have been found there, including copper pots, arrowheads and musket balls. Native people apparently occupied the first point of land north of the river's mouth. The occupation went back to 2000 BC, as indicated by arrowheads and smoking pipes.

There were three Iroquoian villages along Black Creek, from about 1400 to about 1550, as indicated by an ossuary that was found off Weston Road in the early 1900s during construction of a church. In 1928, an Iroquoian ossuary was found on Silverthorn Road in West Toronto and reburied in an unknown location. An ossuary is usually a clear sign that a village was nearby, and this one dated from about 900 AD to about 1650. Ossuaries are characteristic of Iroquoian villages of this period. The Iroquois reburied their dead after a year or two, in communal pits near the village.

A great many artifacts have been found near Grenadier Pond and in nearby High Park. There was a late archaic village dating to about 1800 BC at the top end of the pond – near Harcourt Rd. and Olympus Ave. A copper artifact, an amulet and traces of red ochre have been found there.

The French Fort Rouille was located on the Canadian National Exhibition grounds at the north end of the pedestrian bridge to Ontario Place. An Iroquoian arrowhead was found there, dating to 500 BC.

There were many Indian trails in the area, including Lakeshore Avenue, Garrison Creek, Indian Road, Indian Grove, Davenport Ave. and Poplar Plains Cres. Garrison Creek was densely occupied, as indicated by remains that include a slate amulet and a spear thrower. A beautiful bird stone from 1000 BC was found at Dufferin and St. Clair Ave. and stone knives have been found near the mouth of the creek, near Fort York.

There was also a Russell Creek that reached Lake Ontario near the bottom of Bathurst St. A hand-held engraving tool was found in a backyard in the late 1980s, dated to about 11,000 BP.

Toronto Island was a good place to catch fish – as indicated by the finding of a fish-skinning knife -- but the shifting sands prevented any long-term habitation.

Rosedale Creek went north of Eglinton Ave., as far as Allenby public school on Avenue Rd. There was an Iroquoian village there about 1450 AD as indicated by a potsherd. There were two ossuaries near this village. One ossuary was found in 1910 near the corner of Lonsdale Ave. and Oriole Parkway. Another was found in the late 1920s. There were other sites in North Toronto. A native copper axe dating from 1500 BC was found near Bedford Park Ave., just north of Lawrence Ave. on Avenue Rd.

The Iroquois also lived in East Toronto. A recent excavation on the grounds of the Ashbridge House at Queen St. and Connaught has turned up Iroquoian rim sherds, smoking implements and arrowheads. Other artifacts have been found in the Upper Beaches at Brookhaven and Gerrard St., on the grounds of the Toronto Hunt Club at the Scarborough Bluffs and at the Brimley Road cut, where artifacts from 2000 BC have been found. But perhaps one of the most exciting finds came from Highland Creek where a little girl found a palaeo-Indian artifact from 10,000 BP.

QUESTIONS:

- archaeologists have done an assessment on a village in the Rouge Valley. There is no digging at present.
- Remote sensing apparatus can be used to detect earth disturbances under ground. It can also be used when studying modern cemeteries to locate metal belt buckles and the like.
- Addison asked about brass decorative devices that were attached to leather fringes to tinkle as the person danced.
- There were lots of interactions between native peoples across the continent, as shown by the movement of trade goods. Conch shells from the Gulf of Mexico have been found in burial mounds near Rice Lake, northeast of Toronto, along with potsherds with a symbol of the sun, a key to the Mississippian peoples. Silver from Cobalt, Ont., was smelted locally and traded as far away as the Mississippi River.
- A member said explorer Samuel de Champlain may have seen a Carolina Parakeet when he got lost on Prince Edward County. The species was more typical of the Ohio Valley and south, but Glenn Coady said remains have been found in Indian middens in Ontario. The species went extinct in the 1920s.
- Native people have an oral tradition that tells of the founding of the Iroquoian League in about 1450. Some of the material was recorded on wax cylinders at the turn of the century, but much of the material is too recent to be of much value.
- The Iroquois grew corn and squash, along with other vegetables.

- Most of the Native artifacts end up in cupboards and basements and garages because there is nobody to catalogue them and nowhere to store them. Moreover, many of the artifacts belong to the land developer or landowner who found them. Sometimes they donate the artifact to a local museum, but often they do not.

The speaker was thanked by Ed Addison.

NOTES & OBSERVATIONS:

- McAndrews saw two Wild Turkeys feeding on sumach berries. He wondered how useful these plants are as a winter resource for birds. Coady said bluebirds, crows, grouse and robins feed on the berries through the winter.
- Ron Tasker pondered the range of the Wild Turkey, saying they are now seen into Muskoka. Coady said the range has been extended through introductions.
- Sandra Eadie saw a Common Goldeneye in mid-January in Stoney Creek.
- Eadie noted that a flock of a dozen Snow Geese landed in Bermuda in late January.
- Coady spied a Great Horned Owl nesting in Scarborough's Morningside Park. This is not abnormal for the species.
- Ron Scovell has already heard raccoons mating in the middle of the night near his house in the Humber Valley. About 40 species of bird use his bird bath, including a Cooper's Hawk, which feeds on the Mourning Doves.
- Addison saw an emaciated and very dead Wild Turkey while skiing in Beaver Valley. It appeared to be a winter kill.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on March 16 in room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories of the University of Toronto. The speaker will be Ronald Brooks, Professor of Zoology at the University of Guelph and a member of the COSEWIC committee that designates species at risk. He will talk on "Conservation of Reptiles in Canada: Life Histories and Distribution."

-30-



Carolina Parakeet