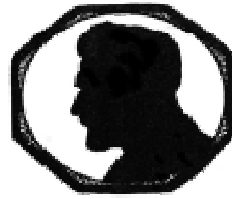


THE
BRODIE
CLUB



ROYAL ONTARIO
MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

THE 995TH MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

The 995th meeting of The Brodie Club was held on Sept. 20, 2005 in Rm. 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories at the University of Toronto.

Chairman: Ann Falls

Secretary: Oliver Bertin

There were 22 members and five guests.

Rosemary Addison, guest of Ed Addison

Julie Berger and John Tyacke, guests of Jean Iron

Dorothy Andrews, guest of Fred Bodsworth.

Una Chung, guest of Ellen Larsen

The minutes of the 994th meeting were approved without change.

NEW BUSINESS:

Ron Pittaway has joined the long list of Brodie Club members who have received awards for their work in natural history. Pittaway was recently given the Distinguished Ornithologist Award by the Ontario Field Ornithologists, joining previous winners Bruce Falls and Jim Rising. Pittaway is a founding life member of the OFO and co-editor of Ontario Birds. He has published more than 130 notes and articles, including the *Birding Guide to Carden Alvar*. He spent 10 summers as a park naturalist in Algonquin Park and 23 years teaching conservation and resource management in Dorset before retiring from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in 2003.

Sandra Eadie reported on the committee organizing the Brodie Club 1000th meeting. The committee gathered just before the Brodie Club meeting. Jennifer Young, Bruce Falls, Ann Falls, Kevin Seymour and Sandra were in attendance. The Faculty Club will be where we will celebrate our 1000th on Feb. 21, 2006. The cost will be about \$50 or so. There will be an eminent speaker. If you are interested in helping out in some way or have suggestions please let one of us know. Guests will be welcome of course.

The annual club elections will be held at the October meeting. George Bryant would like to resign as FON co-ordinator. Bertin invited members to tender for the rewarding and challenging position of secretary.

Treasurer Aarne Juhola is eager to meet members, new and old, especially if they come with annual membership fees in hand. The price is still \$10 for members and \$15 for families. Former members will receive minutes for a payment of \$10 a year to defray reproduction, postage and distribution costs. It's the best deal in town. Cookies and coffee are extra.

Juhola said the Brodie Club has assets of \$861, a figure that includes a \$500 donation from Ken Reading to cover the cost of mailing the minutes.

Bertin visited corresponding member Rufus Churcher in his lovely home on Gabriola Island, B.C., with Vancouver, the coastal range and Howe Inlet in the distance. He was directed to Churcher's house by the island librarian who remembered attending "a wonderful talk on ancient camels by a retired professor." Now, who else could that be?

Bertin plans to send out a revised membership list with the minutes of the October meeting. Please forward all changes in address, telephone number or email co-ordinates to him at 416-588-8520. Thanks.

The next meeting will be held at 7:30 pm on Oct. 18 in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories at the University of Toronto. Member Kevin Seymour will speak on cats and their ancestry. *Can the missing Lynx be identified? Morphological variation, phylogeny and possible ancestry of the South American small cats.*

MEMBERS' NIGHT:

Jean Iron joined Ken Abraham's recent expedition to the James Bay coast for a study of climactic change. She was headquartered in Moosonee from Aug. 1 to Aug. 9 and flew north every morning to study sites on the mud flats and inter-tidal zones where she observed changes in vegetation and fauna.

The purpose of the study was to compare the local ecotypes in August, 2005 with the results of a similar study at the same location in the 1970s. The earlier five-year study was initiated by plans to build a hydroelectric dam across James Bay in Quebec. Those results of that study proved very useful when studying climactic change 30 years later.

Abraham was helped in his study by one of the biologists in the original study who was able to recognize the original features, match the photographs and locate the original transects.

There have been many changes in the intervening years. Water levels have risen due to the melting of glaciers and they have fallen because of the steady uplift of the shoreline. The vegetal zones are similar to those in the previous study, but have moved about 300 metres inland. The vegetation has also been profoundly affected by the nesting of 100,000 geese in the area every year.

There were many new plant species and many more migrating shorebirds, which were attracted by the abundant food on the extensive mud flats of the area.

Iron noted many bird species in both the juvenile and adult plumage, but not always at the same time, some moulting and some not. These included the Semipalmated Plover and Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs and Hudsonian Godwit.

The birds also included the Pectoral Sandpiper and an isolated population of about 1,000 Marbled Godwits that breed locally. She observed Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, a brightly coloured version of the prairie sub-species. She saw a local and brighter-coloured subspecies of the American Toad. And she heard lots of Yellow Rails, but didn't see any.

Abraham reminded members that the Hudson Bay Lowlands is a bird-breeding area of world importance. He was assisted in his study by a number of students who worked all summer on the local bird-breeding atlas, the impact of goose nesting, goose banding and a shorebird survey.

He showed photographs of 33 White Pelicans flying north to their breeding grounds on isolated islands halfway up James Bay. This species is usually not found in sea water, but it does tolerate the brackish water that is typical of James Bay.

A pair of Trumpeter Swans turned up on the coastline, but Tundra Swans did not. They are seen in tundra lakes, from 10 kilometers inland to the Manitoba border.

Abraham studied four Snow Goose colonies on the Hudson Bay-James Bay coast, including one colony of 170,000 breeding pairs on Cape Henrietta Maria.

He also found a pair of Common Eider and a polar-bear den in a scrubby tree in the side of a mound of peat.

In reply to questions, Abraham said the land is rising because the glaciers are leaving and the permafrost is melting. But there is little change to the shoreline because the rise in the sea level matches the hydrostatic rise in the land.

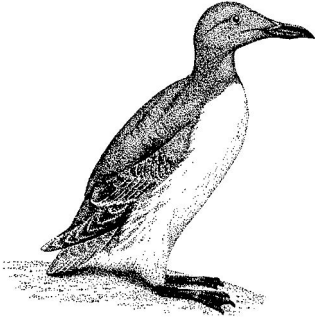
There has clearly been a significant and continuous rise in temperature since 1930, especially in summer. There is less precipitation in winter and an earlier spring. There are more southern plants and more grass species, and the ecozones have moved about 300 metres inland. "It is an exciting and dramatic change. You can see predictions of ecological change come true," Abraham said.

Iron also talked about her visit to the High Arctic from Aug. 13 to 23. She flew to southwest Greenland to pick up a Russian research icebreaker that was offering cruises of the area. There were 108 passengers in the group, many of them birdwatchers.

They sailed up the west coast of Greenland, across Baffin Bay and up the east coast of Baffin Island to Pond Inlet and Resolute, following the course of the ill-fated Franklin Expedition. They stopped every day for shore landings under the care of naturalist guides.

The scenery was beautiful. They saw huge glaciers and mountains in Greenland and beautiful icebergs. Fauna included an arctic fox feeding on a dead seal, muskox, lots of walrus and many polar bears, often close up. Ivory Gulls often come in to clean up the remaining walrus carcasses. As many as 150 were seen in one day. Northern Fulmars followed the ship. They have special nostrils that allow them to drink salt water.

Iron also saw Black-legged Kittiwakes, Iceland Gulls, Glaucous Gulls and 20 to 25 pairs of Thayer's Gulls on Devon Island. Iron visited the Prince Leopold Migratory Bird Sanctuary and saw thousands of Thick-billed Murres, Black-legged Kittiwakes and Black Guillemots. Polar bears eat birds that fall out of their nests on the steep cliffs. Vegetation of the area included dwarf fireweed, purple saxifrage and jewel lichen, which coloured cliffs orange. She also saw woolly bear caterpillars. They take 14 years to metamorphose in the Arctic climate and can freeze completely.



Beachy Island was a high point of the trip. There were three graves from the Franklin expedition of 1846. The expedition was caught in the ice and marooned through the winter of 1845-46. "This must be the bleakest place on earth," Iron said. "We could hardly stand up in the wind." Later investigations showed the sailors died of lead poisoning, probably from the lead solder in early tin cans. Many of the cans can still be found, scattered in the area. Lead poisoning typically causes disorientation, pneumonia and dementia and lowers immune reactions, typical symptoms of the Franklin crew.

NOTES & OBSERVATIONS:

- Hugh Currie saw 134 species of bird in Durham region the previous Sunday, including the Hudsonian Godwit. 34 species were seen in record high numbers.
- Jennifer Young saw nesting European Storks in her visit to Estonia this summer.
- Abraham visited the tip of Long Point by fishing boat and saw hundreds of monarch butterflies. They have apparently been migrating for the past seven days, from Port Dover to Long Point and across to Erie, Penna. People have been seeing 1,000 a day, with a peak of 6,500 on one day.
- Bodsworth noted that it is about 20 miles from Port Dover to the tip of Long Island and another 30 miles from there across the lake.
- Currie saw 16,000 monarchs off the Leslie Spit in Toronto.
- Coady has seen monarchs fly from Point Pelee to Pelee Island and straight across to Ohio.
- Kevin Seymour visited Yosemite and Sequoia Park in California. He saw six of the 100 condors that have been released in the area. They have not established themselves very well and need training to return to the wild. There has been a 90-per-cent success rate in breeding, usually with double clutches.
- Coady saw a small juvenile Saw-whet Owl near College and Bay St. He later saw an adult and two juveniles in a small patch of conifers near 40 Gerrard St.
- Coady visited Abraham's goose camp on James Bay. He saw a Ross Goose nest, a Pacific Loon and a Tundra Swan, a Whimbrel and lots of Snow Goose nests.
- Coady also visited the Rainy River area and found 40 to 50 Yellow Rails in some flooded hayfields.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Following the September meeting, Trudy Rising passed on the following memo from the Sierra Legal Defence Fund:

End of an era of secrecy:
Ontario's illegal water polluters revealed

TORONTO – After years of government secrecy and drawn out legal battles over information on polluters, Sierra Legal Defence Fund applauds Ontario's Ministry of Environment for unveiling its long awaited website on Sept. 20, 2005 providing the public with information concerning provincial water pollution laws.

For the first time in seven years, the Government of Ontario will be providing full, detailed information on violations of water pollution laws by Ontario's municipal and industrial facilities. The information provided through the website identifies polluting facilities and the quantity and type of violations that have occurred.

"This has been a long hard fought battle for Ontarians right to know who is illegally polluting in their community," said Dr. Elaine MacDonald, Staff Scientist at Sierra Legal. "This is a first step in what we hope will be an era of greater government transparency with respect to environmental issues."

Using freedom of information laws, Sierra Legal has fought each year since 1997 to make this type of information on pollution violations publicly available. Initially the government denied public access to the information and Sierra Legal was forced to appeal to Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Yet even after a string of precedent setting decisions from the Privacy Commissioner, each year Sierra Legal was still forced to wait for up to nine

months to get the information. In the absence of government reporting, Sierra Legal analyzed and provided this information to the public by publishing non-compliance reports each year.

Sierra Legal reports on pollution violations from 1996 to 2003 exposed shocking levels of non-compliance with Ontario's pollution laws with little or no enforcement by the MOE. Only after the Walkerton tragedy in the year 2000 -- a wake-up call to government -- did the situation start to improve. Wastewater pollution violations peaked around 3000 per year in 1998 and 1999 and dropped steadily to about 1000 violations in 2003.

Although improvements to Ontario's monitoring and enforcement of its water pollution laws are still needed, it is hoped that the recently proclaimed Bill 133, the "Spills Bill", will cause violations to decrease further.

"This information will make it easier to identify the laggards and prompt corrective action," said Sierra Legal lawyer Robert Wright. "This will level the playing field for those companies who have made efforts to implement strong environment management plans."

The MOE Environmental Compliance website can be accessed at: <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/compliance/compliance.htm>. For further information please contact: Dr. Elaine MacDonald, Staff Scientist (416) 368-7533 ext. 27.

Long Point

By Yorke Edwards

Our Western Correspondent

My first bird trips to Long Point were with John Crosby (the later famed bird artist) going by bus with food and bedding to see birds and have small fires, meals, and sleeps, all on the beach.

When older, we drove our family cars and slept beside them near the sand. It was our early days of birding, but this short story is not much about the birds. It is about saving the Point's miles of beach, the long southern part by the lake.

The northern part has grasses, bushes, and small forest next to the northern marshes. Facing that northern edge is a group of cottages owned by annual duck hunters.

A book about it says: "In the middle of the last century, the government sold most of the peninsula to the Long Point Company, an association of wealthy sportsmen that still maintains one of the most famous and exclusive shooting preserves in the

world. And with the formation of the Company there, through the forests of the Point and along the waterways of the big Marsh, a long war was between the employees of the Company and their enemies, the poachers."

This paragraph is from the book "*Lore of Legends of Long Point*" by H.B. Barrett, 1977. That book is mostly about people, not much about the Point itself.

In five years of the late 1960s and early 1970s, I went to the Canadian Wildlife Service in Ottawa to locate and start plans for buildings for nature interpretation. Near the end of those CWS days there was an interesting job given to me, to help "save" Long Point, probably because the township and other people had little appreciation of its natural values.

I was sent to one of the Point's good looking cottages, all of them facing the swamp. Scotch in hand, I went to meet a friendly man waiting for me.

We talked into the night, I slept a good sleep, had a fine breakfast, then together went on a small vehicle to the lighthouse.

I returned home late that day. A few days later I was driving west to live again in Victoria where I had the big B.C. museum waiting. (Yorke was appointed director of the Provincial Museum, later the Royal B.C. Museum.)

While settling in Victoria, I was asked by the CWS to write and illustrate a booklet that would help to save the Point as an ornithological park. With my artist, naturalist and friend Paul Geraghty, we worked upon a thin book with 24 large pages, 14 inches across, nine up.

On its front cover was the long and graceful shape of Long Point. Inside the book there were scattered squares of words, 37 line drawings, and seven photographs. (Paul is a wonderful artist. Finally he went to work in Saskatchewan's large museum, and perhaps now is staying home near the city and with lots of birds.)

It is good to see that part of the Point is now a federal National Wildlife Area and that there is a large Canadian establishment nearby (Bird Studies Canada including Long Point Bird Observatory) working across Canada to learn about our birds. Here, in B.C., we have a Long Beach by the sea, and with many birds.

I'll write about it sometime. Y

Bruce Falls filed the following addendum:

"Yorke asked me about the present status of Long Point and the members may be interested in what I found. Through most of the 20th century, the Long Point Co. owned nearly all the land beyond the

public area. A small area at the tip, where the famous lighthouse was located, was held by the federal government, and the lighthouse keeper lived there. When the lighthouse was automated the tip was transferred to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. There were and still are small private holdings on the north shore of Gravelly Bay and the nearby Bluffs.

In 1978, with the help of The Nature Conservancy (U.S.) and the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Long Point Co. transferred over half its land – mainly the wooded part beyond the big marsh – to the federal government. This became a National Wildlife Area administered by the Canadian Wildlife Service, which is also responsible for the Big Creek Dike that many of us visit near the base. The Long Point Co. still retains most of the large marsh and a strip across the point. While this may seem an anachronism, it is because of the company's long tenure that the point has been preserved as wilderness.

Long Point is a RAMSAR site and a Biosphere Reserve, both giving international recognition to its outstanding natural features.

There is no public access beyond the small Provincial Park that extends along the south beach beyond Old Cut Boulevard. The Long Point Bird Observatory maintains a base station at Old Cut, another on company land about halfway along the point (the Breakwater) and also uses the buildings at the tip."

Bertin heard from a local resident that Prince Philip has been known to visit Long Point for some secret duck-hunting. –30–

NEXT MEETING:

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