

THE  
BRODIE  
CLUB



ROYAL ONTARIO  
MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

### Annual Field Day

The Brodie Club annual field day was held at Joker's Hill on June 17, 2001. Attendance included 29 members and guests including:

Bill Carrick's daughter and grandson;  
Bruce and Ann Falls' daughter and two grandchildren;  
Fred Bodsworth's daughter and son-in-law;  
Oliver Bertin's mother, the wife of late member Leonard Bertin.

The field day was led by Peter Kotanen, associate professor of Erindale College at Uoff, chairman of the Scientific Oversight Committee and a forest ecologist. He provided a 33-page list of plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and dragonflies that have been seen at the site. Much of the archival work was done by the Brodie Club's Marc Johnson.

Joker's Hill is at 16921 Dufferin St. on the Oak Ridges Moraine, just south of Holland Marsh and west of Newmarket. It is the former estate of Murray Koffler, the founder of Shoppers Drug Mart retail stores, who donated the estate to the University of Toronto in 1995 for use as a botany research and field station. Kotanen said the land was originally settled in the early 19th century, and was probably denuded by about 1895. The Kofflers bought the land in 1969. It has since evolved into a dense forest with many original trees, including white pine and a 45-metre white ash. The estate is about one square mile in area, about one-third devoted to a horse farm and house, one-third to fields and one-third to forest. It is probably the biggest contiguous forest in York Region.

The members had a picnic and then walked for about 2.5 hours on a horse trail through the property. The route was marked by a pine forest, an old-growth forest, long-abandoned farm houses and ponds full of newts and frogs. Falls found three new dragonflies for the site list. Carrick brought along a five-day old Sandhill Crane and a three-day-old Trumpeter Swan for people to see. Several members visited the home of Harry Lumsden after the field day and were treated to an extensive tour of his garden and the many exotic species from Asia and Siberia.

Bruce Falls wrote:

Professor Peter Kotanen of the Erindale Campus, University of Toronto met over 20 Brodie Club members and guests and told about the donation of the area to Uoff' by Murray Koffler and about the mainly botanical research being carried out there by staff and students of the university. On site, he described some of his own work on the fate of seeds in forest gaps, and students who

accompanied us demonstrated other projects. After lunch, the Brodie group walked about 2 km along trails through the forest and visited a semi-natural pond. There were few biting insects and the weather was fine, making for a very pleasant afternoon. Dr. Kotanen was thanked on behalf of the club by Jock McAndrews and presented with an autographed copy of Fred Bodsworth's book: *The Last of the Curlews*.

In the course of the walk I noted the following ferns:

Rattlesnake Fern	Intermediate Wood-fern
Interrupted Fern	Marginal Shield-fern
Bracken Fern	Oak Fern
New York Fern	Ostrich Fern
Lady Fern	Sensitive Fern
Bulblet Fern	Christmas Fern

I also noted the following damselflies and dragonflies:

Dragonflies:

	Common Whitetail
<u>Damselflies:</u>	Twelve-spotted Skimmer
Eastern Forktail	Prince Baskettail
Ebony Jewelwing	Common Baskettail
Eastern Red Damsel	Dot-tailed Whiteface
Variegated Damsel	Four-spotted Skimmer
Boreal Bluet	

Several of these are not on the preliminary list for the area.

At least the following birds were noted:

Great Blue Heron	Pine Warbler
Broad-winged Hawk	Ovenbird
Belted Kingfisher	Mourning Warbler
Blue Jay	Indigo Bunting
Red-eyed Vireo	
Black-throated Green Warbler	

Fred Bodsworth wrote:

For what it might be worth, here is a list of birds I heard on the Joker's Hill outing:

Broad-winged Hawk; Black-capped Chickadee; Red-eyed Vireo; Chestnut-sided Warbler; Black-throated Green Warbler; Pine Warbler; Ovenbird; Mourning Warbler; Indigo Bunting and Goldfinch.

Sandra Eadie suggested that members consult the Jokers' Hill website for more information. It contains an extensive list of species that have been found at the field station.

<http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/~w3pkota/jh.html>

Member Marc Johnson sent the following letter from Australia:

August 20, 2001

Dear Brodie Club Members:

I write you from a train passing through the semi-arid outback of Australia, still hundreds of kilometers west of the Great Dividing Range and Sydney. You may recall at our March meeting I bade you farewell and announced my regrets for all meetings until January 2002. I was leaving on an eight-month trip around the globe to see a little more of the world and study natural history. So that you may know, I am not traveling alone. Some of you may even know my companions, Carl Rothfels and Reagan Szabo, both fellow naturalists and birders.

At the halfway point of our journey, I am feeling great, not bored with traveling in the least and probably never will be. We started in England and have worked our way steadily south and east through France, Spain, Italy, Greece, United Arab Emirates, Oman, India, China (Hong Kong), Thailand and now Australia. A 'whirlwind tour' so to speak. Of particular interest to the club, our path has crossed with past Brodie Club members now living afar. We stayed with John Reynolds in Norwich, England for a few days in May, where he took us to every reserve between Minsmere and Tichwell. And in Delhi, India we stayed with James Carrick who made us feel like we were back at home.

We have worked hard to experience as much of the natural history and culture in each place we visit as possible. There is not the space here to even begin to list our experiences and highlights. Those of you who have been receiving my e-mails may be able to pass on stories if pressed, but I would be more than happy to share any stories when I return. I would however, like to submit an observation on courting behaviour of the Satin Bowerbird for the next meeting. It follows this letter.

The rest of our time in Australia (until late September) will be spent on the east coast from Cairns to Sydney. We are then off to New Zealand for a month, Easter Island, central Chile and then Chile's bit of Patagonia, where we hope to meet up with fellow Brodie member Bill Crins. We will return home in time for Christmas, so you can expect me at the January meeting.

I hope all are happy and healthy. I extend my deep thanks to many of our members for invaluable contacts and advice. It has and surely will continue to help me. If any of you have access to [e-mail.pleasedonothesitatetodropalineatjohnson@botany.utoronto.ca](mailto:pleasedonothesitatetodropalineatjohnson@botany.utoronto.ca). I check it frequently.

Until January, take care.

Sincerely,

Marc T. J. Johnson

Observation: Satin Bower Bird courting females  
Date: August 11, 2001  
Location: Cliff Road, Katoomba, Blue Mountains, Australia

I came across the Satin Bowerbird early in a hike on my first morning in the mountains. I was investigating a flock of birds when I was distracted by a harsh twittering coming from low shrubs ahead of me. Through the branches I could only make out a black object with blue being waved all around. When I got a better look I realized that it was a male Satin Bowerbird holding blue plastic in its beak as at least 2 females stood nearby watching. As the females perched, the male held its head low with a large piece of bright blue plastic held in its beak, its tail held high and its vent feathers puffed out. The male twittered away excitedly, occasionally giving an accelerated crescendo of twitters accompanied by a flick of the wings. When the male was not in this frenzied state it was casually walking around picking up different blue plastic pieces from the ground for short periods of time. Periodically a female would come down closer to the stage and investigate things. Most curiously there was aggression between females (female mate competition), something I think of being rather rare when it comes to mating.

When I refer to 'the stage', I mean the area the Bowerbird had created specially for this display. This stage was a circular area, 1.5m across, bedded with many grass stalks and fine twigs. Scattered on the surface were blue bits of plastic and feathers, as well as the occasional yellow flower from Wattle (*Acacia*). Most prominent among the blue plastic bits were drinking straws, probably over 100 of these in total. I would have loved to see this Bowerbird plundering a restaurant's supply of these left unguarded on a picnic table. In the middle of the stage was the bower: two curving pillars about 15cm high made out of numerous sticks and grass stems arranged vertically.

TV documentaries on this bird do not evoke the feelings of excitement and wonder when seen in the wild. Splendid!

#### The Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Sept. 18 at 8 pm in room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories of the University of Toronto. It will be a members' night. Members are invited to bring their observations from the summer field season. Falls will provide a slide projector. If you need other equipment, please telephone him at 416-444-4598.

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