

THE BRODIE CLUB



Established 1921

THE 1,066th MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

The 1,066th meeting of the Brodie Club was held on Tuesday, 7 May, 2013 in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Laboratories of the University of Toronto.

Chair: Peter Kotanen
Secretary: George Bryant

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm and was attended by 27; 24 members and 3 guests.

Roll Call:

Present: E. Addison, R. Addison, Aird, Beadle, Boswell, Bryant, Currie, Daniels, Dunham, Dunn, A. Falls, B. Falls, D. Hussell, J. Hussell, A. Juhola, H. Juhola, Kotanen, Larsen, Machin, McAndrews, Rapley, J. Rising, T. Rising, Zoladeski.

Regrets: Abraham, J. Bendell, Y. Bendell, Bertin, Carley, Crins, Curry, Eadie, Martyn, Obbard, Seymour, Slessor, Sutherland.

Guests: Sharon Hick (guest of McAndrews); Anne Bell and Jerry De Marco (J. and T. Rising).

Minutes: Sutherland sent a list of corrections, mainly of plant names, which should appear as follows: Kentucky Coffee-tree (*Gymnocladus dioicus*), Eastern Foxsnake, Trumpet-creeper (*Campsis radicans*), Sea-rocket (*Cakile eduntula*), Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*), Climbing Prairie Rose (*Rosa setigera*), Chinquapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*), Purple Milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens* – as opposed to “Purple hawkweed”), Common Hop-tree, Prickly-ash, and May-apple. “Carolinian” was also misspelled. Minutes implied that the Trumpet-creeper has been assessed by COSEWIC or COSSARO, but it has not been reviewed by either.

Reports of Committees

Field Trip: McAndrews noted there are now three leaders for the Crawford Lake outing. Details will be appended to the minutes. Those interested in car-pooling should advise raddison@gmail.com. Jock also raised the merits of an autumn outing, in particular to the TFN Jim Baillie Reserve north of Uxbridge. Trudy Rising suggested the preparation entailed in Brodie field trips merits a committee. Perhaps one could be established at the October annual meeting.

Program: B. Falls was delighted to report that the programs for next year are almost filled. Members desiring to make a presentation for the September members’ night should contact B. Falls. E. Addison noted that the Program Committee encourages new members to consider participating as speakers at the September meeting.

Announcements

Rapley announced the Toronto Zoo is holding their annual migratory bird day May 11.

R. Addison, reporting for Glenda Slessor, noted the Ontario Nature AGM of June 8 held at the Cawthra-Mulock Reserve in Newmarket. Details at

http://www.ontarionature.org/discover/annual_general_meeting.php

T. Rising reminded members of the Carden Challenge May 24-25. Dr. Anne Bell will be the celebrity birder. Larson pointed out that the Carden Nature Festival will be the following week with lots of alvar-related activities.

SPEAKER:

Bruce Falls introduced the speaker, James Paterson of Ontario Nature. The topic was **The Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas**. James obtained a BSc at University of Guelph and a MSc at Laurentian focusing on Blanding's Turtle. He is currently employed by Ontario Nature as the new Atlas coordinator.



The Ontario Atlas of Reptiles and Amphibians

James introduced the subject with an overview of reptiles and amphibians. They are termed “cold-blooded,” but this term can have negative connotations. Moreover, it is not scientifically accurate, as their blood can get hot. “Ectotherm” is a better term, indicating that the internal temperature matches that of the external environment.



All reptiles are completely covered in scales. Snakes are characterized by a forked tongue and poor vision. They have three methods of immobilizing prey: venom, constriction or grab and swallow. Ontario has one venomous snake, the Massasauga. We have no true constrictor; the Eastern Foxsnake is a “semi-constrictor.” True constrictors do not kill by suffocating a victim, but rather by stopping its heart. “Grab and swallow” is the most

common method of seizing prey. June is the time when we most often encounter reptiles, at the time when most are laying their eggs in the ground.

Lizards have legs—except for those which don't! (E.g., glass lizards, or slow-worms). They have the ability to “autotomize” limbs—to drop and regenerate limbs and portions of the spine.

Amphibians have porous skin which is sensitive and can absorb pollution.

At this time of year many frogs and toads are calling. Often they have more than one call. For example, as well as peeping, Spring Peeper males have a trill which tells other amplexed males to get off (release call).



In New York State, the Red-backed Salamander can form the largest vertebrate biomass in forest systems. Up to 2500 salamanders may occur in 100 square meters, all underground, and some as deep as a metre.

Ontario has about 55 species of reptiles and amphibians, many listed under the Endangered Species Act as a species at risk (SAR). Most of our amphibians are okay but world-wide almost half of the species are at risk, mainly from a widespread fungus (*Chytridiomycosis*). As well, there is a fatal frog virus (*Ranavirus*) which is spreading in the U.S.

Generally the greatest threat is habitat loss and fragmentation. In south-western Ontario, humans and roads have the greatest impact on herptiles. There is no point which is more than 1½ km from a road anywhere in southern Ontario. [Editor's note: Excepting at least 20 km of Long Point.] In



one year 215 reptiles were road-killed in Rondeau Park; including three percent that were intentionally targeted by motorists. On Long Point Causeway, 864 dead-on-road reptiles were tallied over four years. In Ontario it is still legal, with a fishing license, to harvest Snapping Turtle for one's own use. Poaching is the greatest threat to Spotted and Wood Turtles, which are taken for the pet trade.

The Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas (ORAA), established in 2009, maps records by 10 X 10 km squares. The format is similar to that of the Breeding Bird Atlas (OBBA). Before 2009 there were 169,000 reptile and amphibian observations. So far, ORAA has 176,000 new records, from 1500 contributors. (In comparison, the second OBBA had 1.2 million observations.) Several people contribute 1000 observations a year. Atlas partners include Ontario Nature, other NGOs, researchers and citizen scientists. The database is established at the Natural History Information Centre in Peterborough. The atlas has very few data on salamanders—only two percent of all records—clearly, more help is needed for this group.



Populations of many reptile and amphibian species are monitored for three year stretches, because that is the length of time taken by most graduate students to complete a thesis. Nonetheless, there are good data showing that frogs and toads start to call seven days earlier in recent years, because of climate warming. Six species of reptiles have declined drastically and are now found in less than 50 percent of their historic range in Ontario. Turtle populations are way down with little prospect of any reversals.

ORAA is accessible at www.ontarionature.org/atlas. All range maps are current—the old Atlas is now quite out of date. There is a new phone app available so that you can report for free, for any time, species, date and location. Reports can also be submitted on-line and by e-mail: atlas@ontarionature.org. For information on reporting by phone or mail, call 416-444-8419 ext. 243.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Kotanen: What is the status of the introduced Red-backed Slider?

A. This is tracked by ORAA. It may reproduce here, but “sucks” at being an invasive species because it matures very slowly.

Q. B. Falls: I want to find Yellow-spotted Salamander at my cottage but am reluctant to destroy their ground cover. What is the protocol?

A. As a general rule, if you can cleanly lift a cover object, it is okay. If you have to break the log, don't do it.

Q. D. Hussell: When do you plan to wind-up the Atlas?

A. We don't have an end date. The salamander data have been really slow to come, and there are no set plans to publish. Unlike the bird Atlas, people are not signing up to do squares. With OBBA, squares were allocated to individuals—not with ORAA. But we do have more than 200 very dedicated observers.

Q. Bryant: Can we see Atlas maps on line for all species.

A. Yes, except for Wood and Spotted Turtles because of poaching risk.

Q. E. Addison: How big does a Jefferson Salamander get?

A. Jefferson/Blue-spotted Salamanders are a complex polyploidy taxon. If a specimen is really big (on the order of 15 cm), it will be a hybrid and will almost always female. Only two percent are males and they are almost always sterile. ORAA maintains one map for the group.

Q. Rapley: Can you comment on the turtle drift nets and culverts along Long Point causeway.

A. Long Point is the second or third worst road in N. America for turtle mortality. The fences do encourage reptiles to use the culverts and reduce collisions.

Q. Kotanen: I have seen the black plastic fencing along the Algonquin Parkway. Where did turtles nest before people created roads?

A. I installed a lot of these fences myself. Problem with plastic is that it does degrade in sun. Nowadays, virtually all turtle nest sites in that area are created by people.

Q. R. Addison: How are you promoting ORAA to naturalists?

A. ORAA provides a variety of resources for participants including brochures and a help line. James makes many presentations to nature and hiking clubs and other interested groups. As well Ontario Nature has a particular program to engage young people in nature.

Sid Daniels thanked the speaker, both for the talk itself and for its audibility. The presentation resonated with Sid, as in his youth he had a large wall map of Ontario on which he inserted pins for reptile and amphibian records. An understanding of the distribution of Ontario reptiles and amphibians has certainly come a long way since the days of Shelley Logier's old records.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEWS

E. Addison monitors about 20 bird boxes in a section of Aurora. Ed reported first egg (Tree Swallow) in a box today (May 7).

D. Hussell has been monitoring over 200 Tree Swallow nests at Long Point since 1977. The first egg was found this year on May 1—the earliest ever recorded, despite the late spring.

B. Falls noted that member Glen Coady had discovered a Neotropical Cormorant off Thickson's Woods, one of the few records for Ontario. Bruce made the trek but failed to observe the rarity.

Rapley joined a tour of Pelican Island NWR near Vero Beach, Fla. Established in 1904 as one of the earliest refuges, it afforded wonderful close-up views of a heronry. Also during perfect calm weather, he boated from his Hope Bay cottage 10 kms out to Barrier Island off Cape Croker. There were lots of cormorant nests along with Great Blue Herons and four pairs of Common Egrets that have nested there for the past ten years.

Bryant observed White Suckers schooling in shallow water near his Gravenhurst cottage. Avid fishermen had netted almost sixty that day and were looking forward to cooking and canning the fish. They pointed out a lookalike sibling species, Long-nosed Sucker, equally widespread throughout Ontario but less abundant than White Sucker. While watching the suckers they were fortunate to observe a Stinkpot moving slowly against the current.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m. and refreshments were enjoyed by all.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, 17 September at 7:30 pm in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories. This is **Members' Night**, and anyone wishing to give a short (ca 10 min) presentation should contact B. Falls.

FIELD TRIP AND PICNIC

One page flyer overleaf (page 6).



The BRODIE Club 2013 Annual Field Trip and Picnic

Sunday June 2, 2013 9:30 am --3:30 pm

Crawford Lake Conservation Area, 312 Conservation Road.

Jock McAndrews, Bob Curry and Glenda Slessor

9:30 am: Meet in parking lot just inside gate. Admission \$7.50 adult/ \$6.50 senior

Morning: Natural history walk: Escarpment Trail (2.4 km)- winds through rocky woodlands and along brow of the Niagara Escarpment with lookout, interpretive cairns and resting benches. Co-Leaders Bob Currie & Glenda Slessor

Lunch: Bring your own picnic☺; we'll eat at picnic tables outside visitor centre. Washrooms are on the bottom level of visitor centre. Coffee, tea, cold drinks and ice-cream available for purchase on upper level.

Afternoon: Archeology: Crawford Lake Trail (1.4 km)–elevated boardwalk around Crawford Lake (meromictic) and tour of Iroquoian Village. Leader Jock McAndrews

Some points of interest about Crawford Lake Conservation Area....

- 232 hectare park established in 1969 on the Niagara Escarpment in Milton
- Regionally Environmentally Sensitive Area
- Provincial Area of Natural and Scientific Interest
- World Biosphere Reserve as part of Niagara Escarpment
- Rare meromictic lake with surrounding boardwalk
- One of the most accurately dated pre-contact archeological sites in Canada
- 15th century reconstructed Iroquoian Village and heritage site
- Nassagaweya Canyon Interpretive Lookout
- 19 km of hiking trails with connections to Bruce Trail
- Elevated boardwalk with interpretation stations surrounding Crawford Lake
- Education programs and exhibits
- Visitors Centre & Gathering Place with Gift Shop, theatres, lunchrooms, exhibits, displays & outdoor picnic area

Driving Directions: (43.47 -79.951) Travel west on 401 from Toronto. Take **Exit 312** for Regional Road 1S/Guelph Line towards Campbellville. Travel S on Guelph Line about 4 km. Turn left onto Conservation Rd. into Crawford Lake Conservation Area

Google maps approximates 1 hour driving time from downtown Toronto.

Crawford Lake Conservation Area opens at 8:30 am and closes at 7:30 pm for those wishing to visit other areas of the park.

Links to downloadable and printable lists:

[**Herp Checklist**](#)

[**Damselfly and Dragonfly Checklist**](#)

[**Butterfly Checklist**](#)

[**SPRING Birdwatching Checklist**](#)

[**SUMMER Birdwatching Checklist**](#)

Map of conservation area including parking, visitor centre and trails:

<http://www.conservationhalton.on.ca/uploads/Maps/Crawford%20Trail%20map.pdf>

