

Minutes of the 893rd Meeting of the
Brodie Club
Held in the Borden Building
March 15, 1994

Chairman: John Riley
Secretary: Ron Tasker

Minutes of the 892nd Meeting:

These had been precirculated. Don Young noted that he had seen only common not hoary red polls at his feeder.

Announcements:

Savage noted that in 44 B.C. this date, Julius Ceasar was murdered, his obituary appearing in the Globe and Mail. Falls stated that on the 26th of March the Annual General Meeting of the LPBO would be held in Port Rowan. Martin noted that the CSA Advisory Committee on Lead was inviting contributions. He noted the publication of another issue of Bird Trends by the CWS. He drew attention to the Tanager Project of Cornell University, Laboratory of Ornithology, to the AGM of the FON in Hamilton 27-29th of May, 1994. He encouraged people to participate in the LPBO Birdathon. He noted that the Nature Society of Vankleek Hill was holding a birdathon to raise money to buy additional property in the Alfred Bog. The AGM of the American Birding Association is to be held in North Dakota. Aird announced that a talk on the Ecology and Management of Grasslands, Owls in Argentina would be held March 18th, 1994 room 1B, Koffler Building, Faculty of Forestry 2-3 pm.

The Speaker of the Evening:

Bodsworth introduced the speaker of the evening, Christine Bishop. She had obtained her BSc at Guelph, her MSc at York and was currently working on her PhD. In 1983 she had worked at the Bermuda Biological Station carrying out a sea urchin census and assessing toxic substances in coral. In 1985 at the Canadian Centre for Inland Waters she had studied turtles, amphibians and small mammals in the Royal Botanical Gardens for content of contaminants in wetlands and she had conducted studies of chlorinated hydrocarbons in birds in orchards.

Her talk for tonight was on snapping turtles comparing data concerning their biology in Algonquin Park and Cootes Paradise.

Cootes Paradise contains snapping turtles, a few Blandings, a large population of painted and map turtles and some red eared sliders that have been introduced. The Eastern spiny softshell was last seen in 1984. It is uncertain whether the musk turtle is still present. The snapping turtles in Cootes nest mainly in West Pond in property owned by Ontario Hydro and rented out for market gardens. The Algonquin Park study was done at Lake Sasajewun. Snapping turtles have a large range and occurred in most squares in

the Ontario Herp survey. Their diet is high in fish. Therefore they are at risk to have high levels of PCB's. They can be sexed by measurement; nesting turtles age 20-75 years in Algonquin Park but only 10-35 in Southern Ontario sites. The youngest nester was age 7. In Algonquin Park they make long treks to nesting grounds but in Cootes Paradise they usually nest close to their home range. Home range in Cootes was 7.2 ha compared with 3.44 in Algonquin Park. Migration was 5.3 km in Algonquin Park, 1.1 in Cootes. Snapping turtles are heavily contaminated in Cootes Paradise contamination reaching the highest levels recorded in the Great Lakes as indicated by studies on eggs, the accumulations being similar to those in herring gulls. Egg contamination was not proportional to the turtles' size suggesting that if the site could be cleared of contamination, contamination of the turtles should subside.

Through artificial incubation of snapping turtle eggs deformities were measured. These are rare in Algonquin Park but common in Cootes Paradise:- bent or absent tails, non-resorption of yolk sack. It is planned to examine snapping turtles for evidence of feminizing effects of contamination with DDE observed in alligator turtles in Florida.

The talk was appropriately illustrated with slides.

Question:

Falls asked if temperature effects observed in the turtles reflected the temperature of the site.

Answer:

Yes, but has no effect on egg success.

Question:

Riley asked about the age distribution of turtles and whether the advanced age of Algonquin Park turtles indicated failed recruitment.

Answer:

Because of predators nesting success is approximately 1 per 10 years. In Cootes there is a large population of snapping turtles which are unhealthy (many dead ones are found), the reason is uncertain whereas Algonquin Park turtles are much older and start nesting at age 18.

Question:

Savage asked about age measurements.

Answer:

This is done by measuring rings under the microscope. In Cootes these turtles grow faster but the population is smaller than they are farther north.

Question:

Bertin asked about study of turtles with scuba diving.

Answer:

This is possible in Algonquin Park but not in the muddy waters of Cootes. Quantitative population data could not be obtained. The turtles tend to congregate.

Question:

Speakman asked about the effect of turtle population on duck populations.

Answer:

It is felt that the turtles eat few ducks.

Question:

Bertin asked if one-legged ducks resulted from turtle attacks.

Answer:

Apparently not, since attacked ducks seldom escape.

Question:

Speakman asked about commercial exploitation.

Answer:

This was formerly unlimited and extensive in the US particularly but also in Canada. The MNR now limits the catch of snapping turtles to 2 per day, total possession 5. Commercial trapping has been discouraged though the animal still appears on the markets.

Question:

Savage asked about unhatched eggs.

Answer:

Even when they were moved to a new site they never hatched.

After this lengthy question period indicating the level of interest Reading thanked the speaker and there was hearty applause.

Members Notes & Observations:

Savage referred to a letter from Reading from Yellowknife. Reading commented on his discovery of what Gollop feels is almost certainly an Eskimo curlew nest and spoke briefly about planned further investigation during the coming summer. His find was in a different habitat and geographical location to where most of the previous searches had been made. Carrick commented on the Whooping Crane Conservation Association's plans to attempt to imprint whooping cranes to migrate to a suitable West Canadian wintering site. Falls commented that there were thousands of white-winged scoters and greater scaups, goldeneyes, the occasional king eider at Burlington though the numbers were declining. There were 6 surf and 1-2 black scoters. Bodsworth had seen the same birds. Bertin commented on the note in the Globe & Mail of a published confession that the best-known supposed photograph of the Loch Ness monster was a deliberate fake. The meeting adjourned at 9:35.