

BRODIE CLUB MEETING

The 911th meeting of the Brodie Club was held in the Howard Savage Faunal Archeo-Osteology Laboratory of the University of Toronto, Tuesday March 19, 1996.

Chairman: Norman Martin

Secretary: Paul Aird

Attendance

There were 15 members present and 5 guests. Guests: Linda Pim, guest of Paul Aird; Wayne Bezner-Kerr and Chunmei Huang, guests of Bill Carrick; Ron Scovell, guest of Bruce Falls; Trudy Rising, guest of Jim Rising.

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Announcements

Currie discussed the history of the Christmas bird counts, noting that the records for 1954-56 are missing. It was suggested that the Brodie Club minutes might contain the missing information.

Aird circulated a recent publication of his titled "Forest Legislation: A Digest of the Statutes of Ontario".

The Speaker

McAndrews introduced the speaker Robert (Bob) Murphy, who spoke on "Biodiversity in Vietnam".

Vietnam has a 400-year history of war. Some of its native species are retained only in areas sealed off and protected for use by the army.

Biodiversity is a measure of the earth's health. The Royal Ontario Museum's (ROM's) Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology is concerned with the depletion of biodiversity throughout the world. The loss of biodiversity in Vietnam has reached crisis proportions. In fact, a major mass extinction process is in progress there now.

Vietnam was 80% covered with tropical moist forests, which are now denuded. It needs help. The people lack the basic resources and expertise to help themselves. The nation is in political crisis, and its people are impoverished. It is the 12th most populous country in the world, with an annual income per person of 200 US\$. The annual inflation rate is 50-700%.

ROM and its collaborators have initiated several biodiversity projects on tropical forest amphibians and reptiles; mammals; insects; plants; and on coral reef fishes.

Eighty-two species of amphibians were known in 1942. Many new species have been found since. 1-2 billion frog legs are sold per year. Seventy-five species of carab beetles were found in one year. The diversity of insects is still an unknown. Only about 50 tigers remain.

Why is sustaining Vietnam's biological diversity so critical? At the current rate of destruction, it is estimated

that only about 10% of the native species will remain until the year 2020.

How to help? International efforts need to be increased and coordinated to conduct more basic field studies, to advise and train Vietnamese colleagues, to build and maintain reference collections, and to help develop a national policy to sustain the nation's natural resources.

Questions and Answers

Is any agricultural land returning to wilderness? No, it is being reforested to non-native eucalyptus species.

If left alone, what would an abandoned farm return to naturally? Anything that grows back gets cut or burned. There is a huge population problem.

National parks? Creating a national park is a major problem, because of the population density. There are 10 national parks, but there is much poaching.

Is ROM's effort focused on protected areas and parks? Yes, and this can give added value to the benefits of parks by knowing what is there. There are three species of frogs with sexual dimorphism expressed -- the male is much smaller than the female, which is most unusual. And Vietnam has incredibly beautiful snakes.

The speaker was thanked by Bruce Falls for a presentation that went to the heart of the problem, and that made us proud that ROM is involved in worldwide conservation efforts. Hearty applause followed.

Notes and Observations

Tasker spoke of a visit to the Philippines, which has none of the redeeming features of Vietnam. Its forest is reduced to 0.1%; it also has a serious population problem and lacks leadership.

Aird referred to a literature reference about acidic deposition in Europe leading to a reduction in snail populations, resulting in a calcium deficiency in passerines and the production of abnormally thin egg shells.

Jim Rising commented on the great gray owl invasion, that robins and crows had reached Go Home Bay, and that this has been a poor year for chickadees and nuthatches.

Falls spoke of a visit to Amherst Island near Kingston. In a "scruffy bit of woods" he saw 5 great grays, 5 boreals, 2 saw-whets, a barred owl, and a snowy not far away. There has been a population explosion of mice on the island.

Currie reported seeing trumpeter swans 304 and 306. He commented on the great gray invasion -- estimated at 800 in southern Ontario -- Doug Saddler counted 181 in the Peterborough area. Toronto's first Ross' goose was seen in Humber Bay east.

Carrick reported on swans dying from lead poisoning -- half of them from lead shotgun shot and half from fishline sinkers.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 10:15 PM