

THE BRODIE CLUB



Established 1921

Website: <http://thebrodieclub.eeb.utoronto.ca/>

THE 1,077th MEETING OF THE BRODIE CLUB

The 1,077th meeting of the Brodie Club was held on Tuesday, 21 October, 2014 in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Laboratories of the University of Toronto.

Chair: Ricky Dunn

Secretary: George Bryant

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm and was attended by 23; 19 members and 4 guests.

Roll Call:

Present: Bertin, Bryant, Coady, Currie, Daniels, Dunn, Eadie, A. Falls, B. Falls, D. Hussell, J. Hussell, A. Juhola, H. Juhola, Machin, Martyn, Muller, J. Rising, T. Rising, Speakman.

Guests: Cameron Hogarth (guest of Martyn), Kathryn Falls (A. and B. Falls), Terry Marescaux (Bertin), and Alan Somerset (guest of speaker)

Regrets: Abraham, E. Addison, R. Addison, J. Bendell, Y. Bendell, Carley, Crins, Curry, Dunham, Iron, Larsen, McAndrews, Obbard, Pittaway, Seymour, Slessor, Sutherland, Zoladeski

Minutes: Archived minutes of the September meeting corrected an error in the distributed document: The name for "Friends of the Spit" should not include the words "Nature Reserve" at the end. The minutes were accepted as amended.

Committee Reports:

B. Falls announced upcoming programs:

Nov 18	Chris Guglielmo, UWO	The Physiological Ecology of Migration in Birds and Bats
Dec 16	Brent Patterson, MNR	Towards science-based management of wolves and coyotes in Ontario

Dunn reported for Website Committee that people are still having trouble with password-protected pages, and this month will poll members as to views on which, if any pages, should remain protected. Meanwhile, you should ignore any security warnings you get.

Annual General Meeting:

Treasurer: Arne Juhola

Secretaries: Editing: Dunn; Corresponding: R. Addison; Recording: Abraham, E. Addison, R. Addison, Bryant, Eadie, T. Rising, Seymour

Membership: A. Falls, Crins, T. Rising

Field Trip: Bryant, Curry, Currie

Program: B. Falls, E. Addison, Bryant, Currie, Sutherland, Johnson

FON: Curry, Slessor

Archives: Dunn, Eadie, Seymour

Refreshments: Bertin, A. Falls, T. Rising

WebSite: Dunn, J. Hussell, Bertin

Moved by H. Juhola, seconded by B. Falls, the 2014-2015 committees were approved by members.

Communications and announcements:

The oldest and long-time Brodie member, Bev Scott, passed away recently at the age of 97. Bruce Falls reminisced about his association with Bev. They were both protégés of J.R. Dymond in their undergraduate years. Bev was curator of ichthyology at the Royal Ontario Museum from 1950 to about 1974, and was very active in the Brodie Club in those years, but less so after moving out of Toronto. Bruce had fond memories of seining minnows in Duffins Creek with his class and having Bev identify the tiny specimens. As co-author of the compendious Freshwater Fishes of Canada, Dr. Scott was very influential in the fisheries of Canada.

SPEAKER:

Claire Muller introduced the speaker, Felicity Somerset. Claire first met the speaker at Tiskita Lodge, Costa Rica and was overwhelmed by the quality of her photographs. Ms. Somerset is the author of six books and has had numerous exhibitions.

The subject was Birds, Beasts, Bugs and other Delights

Ms. Somerset began by claiming she had no formal training in photography but had been fascinated by the art since a child. Her photographic subjects are drawn from landscape and nature in both Canadian and international locations. She focuses on close-ups or abstract views; her goal is to simplify an image in order to emphasize colour, line and texture.

Costa Rica is a mountainous country, 50% forested and 27% protected. On the Pacific coast, the mountains come right down to the ocean. The government is very stable; coffee, bananas and oil palms were once the main industries but tourism is now the biggest source of revenue. The country supports 850 bird species, 1000 orchids and a huge number of plant species.

Tiskita Lodge, right on the Panama border is absolutely beautiful and her favourite destination—many of her pictures were taken on the grounds or trails of the lodge.

The presentation was broken into categories.

Birds

Birds are frustrating to photograph because branches are forever getting in your way. Nevertheless we viewed an array of Neotropic birds including a silhouetted chachalaca, in mid-step on a branch, a soft-focus White-collared Manakin (one of her favourite pictures) and an impressionistic male trogon in which the blues and greens of the plumage blended with the background. Jacanas have beautiful yellow huge feet—the chicks are hilarious as they try to figure out how to cross lily pads. At one time Costa Rica populations of Scarlet Macaw were perilously low. Because of many restoration projects, the species is now doing well. One macaw was too habituated to people—it sneaked into their cabin and they had to shoo it out. The country has a wonderful selection of hummingbirds—there were many photos of hummers from sea level to 7000'. As especially wonder bird is the Resplendent Quetzal, the reason why many people go to Costa Rica. Fiery-billed Aracaris are one of Somerset's favourite birds, her photos justified this. Because the rainforest is very dark, bird photography is difficult; antbirds, woodcreepers, ovenbirds are a real challenge to photograph. The Riverside and Black-bellied Wren have lovely songs but



were impossible to photograph. Rather than take a standard picture of a bird in side view, showing plumage features, Felicity prefers to take an action shot such as a bird in the act of eating or preening.



From <http://felicitysomersephotography.com/>
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Other Delights

Our speaker loves to spend time at the beach, not for the ultraviolet rays but for photo opportunities, particularly at low tide. Patterns in the mud look like trees while other features create wonderful abstract compositions. The presentation included a superb selection of iguanas including a basilisk lizard in mid-step over the water. Bugs and butterflies are everywhere and are wonderful photo subjects. Locusts can be noisy and are pests at the night lights but up close, they are beautiful. Malachite and morpho butterflies are eye-catching at any time but Felicity caught them to perfection.

Beasts

Coatimundis are a bit of a nuisance. They are actually thoroughly unpleasant, constantly fighting with each other around feeding trays. Felicity was trained as a sociologist and perhaps this is why she really enjoyed watching family groups of squirrel monkey. The adults take notice of you but do not respond—to their credit they do not beg for food. She showed delightful pictures of two adult squirrel monkeys taking care of one young.

In Costa Rica, especially in the south, there is very little ambient light so night skies are outstanding. They exemplify *pura vida*, a characteristic Costa Rican phrase which literally means *pure life*, although the real meaning is closer to "plenty of life".

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS:

Q. Bertin queried what equipment Somerset used, and what techniques.

A. She used a high end Canon with a 100-400 mm lens plus a 300 mm with extender and a full-frame sensor. She does not use a tripod or 500 mm lens. She prefers an open setting such as 2.8 to soften the background. Morning and afternoon are the best time for nature photography. Sometimes she employed vignetting in Photo-Shop.

Q. Daniels queried her admitted distaste for snakes.

A. As evidenced by her many frog pictures, she quite likes frogs but had a scary experience once with a fer-de-lance. She has been to Costa Rica many times but has only rarely encountered snakes.

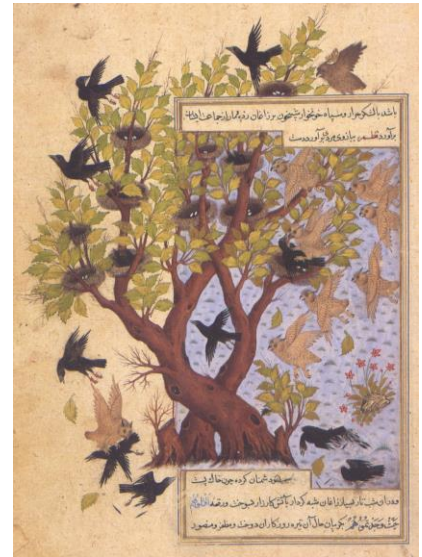
Q. Bryant commented on a particularly sharp picture of a Red-legged Honeycreeper, but one she stated she did not like. Why not? From an aesthetic point of view what does she look for in a bird picture?

A. Sharpness of focus is not critical in a bird picture if the atmosphere shows well. Often a soft-focus picture with a harmonious background will be more appealing. Any photo showing a man-made object like a feeding table or hummingbird feeder is unnatural and so less appealing. The presenter was thanked by Bruce Falls. We often hear scientific talks about natural history. But we are also naturalists. It is important for us to pause and appreciate the beauty of nature as so brilliantly provided to us by the speaker.

OBSERVATIONS

Bryant noted a delightful Tribute to Richard M. Saunders, who was active in the Toronto birding community for decades, in the current Canadian Field Naturalist. (Copy distributed with email minutes.)

Bertin enjoys turning up biological references in ancient manuscripts and art, and was very impressed with the art in the brand new Aga Khan Museum up in Don Mills. There are many charming drawings of plants and animals, especially poppies, lions, elephants and deer. There was a fascinating 16th century painting of a “battle” between owls and a crow that goes back to an Indian fable of the third century BC. There is a drawing of a wild turkey, which he had thought was limited to the new World. And there was a lovely little drawing of several monkeys sitting in a tree taunting a lion. It is clear that the ancients appreciated birds, mammals and plants just like we do. [Editor’s note: for an interesting article on the history of turkey distribution, see dialnet.unirioja.es/download/articulo/278695.pdf]



Jeremy Hussell—On October 09 he observed a very high count of 400 Pied-billed Grebes in Long Point Inner Bay, most migrants but some still feeding young. On checking eBird, Hussell was intrigued to note 425 were noted from the same location last year at almost the identical date October 11, 2013. [Editor’s note: Bryant had aware of a count of 430 on 13 October, 2002 at Rondeau Bay. Flocks of >500 both in spring and fall are reported in *The Birds of North America*.]

Currie—Four Pacific Loons had been reported from Kempenfelt Bay, Lake Simcoe. He saw one, and also 1700 Common Loons, many Bonaparte’s Gulls and 6 Little Gulls – very different than the birds he saw there as he was growing up in Barrie.

B. Falls and Currie spent an enjoyable day at Cranberry Marsh Hawk Watch, seeing 2 Golden Eagles, a Northern Goshawk and hundreds of Turkey Vultures.

Claire Muller reported observing a Bald Eagle bring down a Ring-billed Gull near Wolfe Island following a valiant struggle by the doomed gull.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, November 18 at 7:30 pm in Room 432 of the Ramsay Wright Zoological Laboratories. Chris Guglielmo will discuss the Physiological Ecology of Bird and Bat Migration.

