

Arrowsmith Naturalists Newsletter
October 2025
Volume 30, Number 3



Photo courtesy of Bonnie Mullin

We respectfully acknowledge that we live within the unceded traditional territories of the Snaw-naw-as People and the Qualicum First Nation, the traditional keepers of these lands.

We intend to nurture better understanding and pursue opportunities for collaboration with our First Nations neighbours.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Hello fellow Anats! I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and happy as nature once again begins to slide gently into the fall season. The chickadees and nuthatches are back at our feeder, making a mess and swiping the corn and peanut bits to hide in the trees for winter. What? Do they think we'll stop feeding them?

Last year they didn't return until November, so it seems a bit early this year, once again I find myself wondering why nature does what she does. Good seed crop last year? Poor one this year?

One good thing I noticed this morning was fishermen in the Englishman River – a sure sign that the salmon are running, which means there's enough water in the river for them to get up.

Salmon are such amazing creatures. On a recent trip to Kitimat, I walked along the riverbank there below the fish hatchery. There is a 24-inch water intake culvert there and salmon were crowding around, waiting their turn to go in – returning to the *exact* spot they were hatched. I wonder if the creators of fish hatcheries foresaw that!

Loving and enjoying nature is part of who we all are. Protecting it is also part of that love. As I look around at all the changes happening in our world right now, I think of the economic crises that we all have lived through. The main thing I remember about them is that they were temporary. The climate crisis, however, is permanent. The only question is how bad things will get. So, I think we need to get even more active than we already are.

The current economic crisis is a nasty one and it will take some time to work our way through it. And right on cue, our governments swiftly dumped as many environmental protections as they could in the name of saving the economy. But let me just say that there is nothing like 100 foot high flames, or 10 feet of water roaring down Main Street to put a crimp in the economy. Even our environmentally active prime minister who has written books on the subject seems to have forgotten this.

Some people attend protests, some people send money, some people work even harder at what they already do; and some people write letters. I urge you to choose one and follow through. Below are some key addresses if you choose to write a letter.

mark.carney@parl.gc.ca, gord.johns@parl.gc.ca; david.eby.MLA@leg.bc.ca;

Stephanie.Higginson.MLA@leg.bc.ca

Happy activism!

OFFICERS AND CONTACTS

President: Elizabeth Thorne
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Vice President: Sally Soanes
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Executive Secretary: Randy Richardson
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Membership: Bonnie Mullin
Special Projects: Lynne Brookes

Stewardship: Dave Hutchings
BC Nature Contact: Liz Bredberg
Website: Kerry Baker
Newsletter: Liz Bredberg
Facebook: Tom Constable
Outreach Contact: Sue Wilson
Email & Zoom: Liz Bredberg

Club/Membership Information: Check our [website](#) or [Facebook](#) page or write to: Arrowsmith Naturalists, Box 1542, Parksville, BC, V9P 2H

If you know of someone who needs a few words of comfort or encouragement please contact our Outreach Person, Sue Wilson 250-248-7280, [http://susiebird@gmail.com](mailto:susiebird@gmail.com)

Attention

It's Membership Time!!

Remember last year we began to change
when memberships for everyone is due.
So here we are!! Success!!

All memberships are now due by **December 1st!!!**

What do I need?

1. Membership Form and Waiver - filled in and signed!
2. Payment:
Single: \$25 Family \$35
Plus \$5 if you wish to receive the BC Nature magazine
as a hard copy. E-version is free.

How to get the forms:

1. I will have paper forms with me when I am at meetings, etc.
2. Forms available for print on the website:
www.arrowsmithnats.org

How to get them to me:

Deliver them to me at an event or October or November
meetings or mail them to the address on the Membership form.

Another option is to email them to me.

Payment can be cash, cheque or e-transfer directly to
Arrowsmith Naturalists at anatsmembers@gmail.com

People who joined or renewed since June do NOT need to
pay this year. You are OK till December 1, 2026.

Any questions? Contact Bonnie at live2hike@shaw.ca

CONTENTS

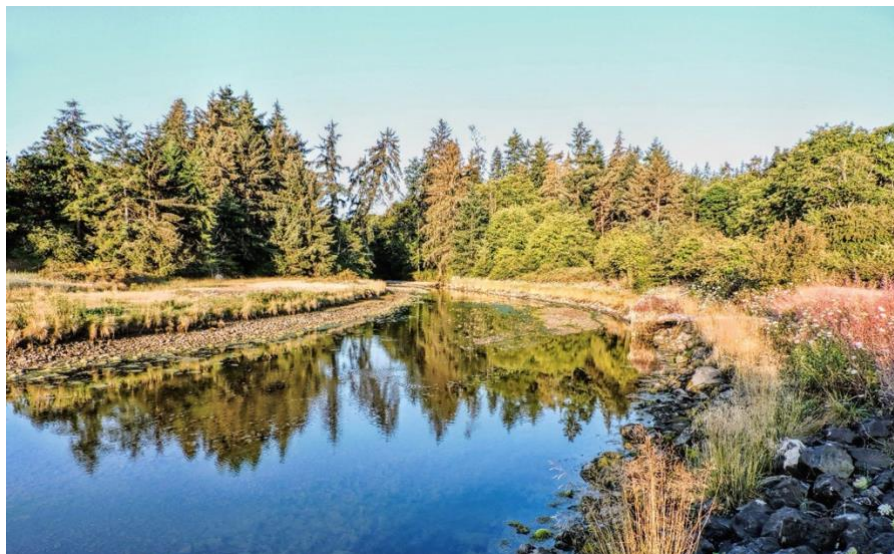
President's Corner	p.1
Officers and Contacts	p.2
Club Activities	p.4
Outings	p.4
Picnic	p.9
Stewardship	p.10
Advocacy	p.13
Nature Notes	p.17
Coming Events	p.21

CLUB ACTIVITIES

Outings

Arrowsmith Naturalists (henceforth in this newsletter ANats) have enjoyed a range of outings this past summer.

On August 6th, Terry Taylor led a walk that he described as “not a hike-- an in-depth exploration at a slow pace,” in the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve.



On August 13th Tom Whitfield, President of the Brown Property Preservation Society, led ANats on an in-depth tour of this local gem, a carefully preserved old-growth forest in the middle of Qualicum Beach. Tom shared the history of the site and its renowned former owners and provided a naturalist's perspective on the trees and understory plants found there.



A first for ANats—outings have long been daylight events, but on August 22nd, Terry Taylor and Dave Erickson led a group observing the night sky.

A visit to the Wildwood Ecoforest on September 11th, gave ANats the opportunity to see a forest that has been sustainably managed for about 80 years.



Led by Dianne Anderson, on September 17th ANats visited Helliwell Provincial Park on Hornby Island.



ANats visit Alert Bay

On August 20th and 21st, three members of Arrowsmith Naturalists (Lynne Brookes, Sally Soanes, and Liz Bredberg) paid a two-day visit to Alert Bay at the north end of Vancouver Island. We visited the Alert Bay Ecological Forest, where there are very old cedars, some of which have been culturally modified. It appeared that the bark that had been harvested may be used in the U'mista Cultural Centre, where there are weaving projects underway.



The Cultural Centre houses a remarkable collection of masks and regalia returned to the Kwakwaka'wakw nations after the laws against potlatch had been lifted. In addition, there are photos and accounts of the Peoples' histories, a fine bookstore, and a gift shop.



We also attended a beautiful and very moving performance by the T'sasala Cultural Group in the 'Namgis Big House.



The group, which includes very young participants, is committed to preservation of traditional dance and song.



(We found it remarkable that little Cecilia could hang on to eagle feathers without chewing them...doesn't Grandma look proud?)

Arrowsmith Naturalists Picnic (as described and photographed by Bonnie Mullin)

On July 24, we attended our annual picnic at Rathtrevor Beach. Always such fun, lots of visiting, the donation table we put our tickets in the cups of what we want. And of course, Liz's yummy carrot cake and Sally's quiz of impossible questions!! Haha!!





...so many wondrous items to be had at the draw!!

Stewardship

ANats have long taken part in a variety of stewardship activities. The past summer has been no exception.

Englishman River Estuary

Dave Hutchings updated his accounts of stewardship in the Englishman River Estuary:

October, 2025

September marked the return from our stewardship “summer holidays”. With such a hot, dry July and August, it was advisable that we curtail our work at the Englishman River Estuary until cooler weather returned - and we needed a break. We had dealt with the main surge of spotted knapweed blossoms and David Helem and I took turns to monitor and cut off the blossoms throughout the rest of the summer. Liz Bredberg also volunteered to keep an eye out for blossoms during her frequent visits to the Estuary. Happily, we have noticed no real spread of knapweed, so our control seems to be working.

Our first workday in September marked a significant change for our stewardship efforts. After years spent hunting for broom, daphne and, most recently, English holly, the Nature Trust folks offered us a change of focus: the newly-acquired Mariner Way property, the former site of the Englishman River Art Gallery. With the buildings and associated infrastructure cleared from the property, the task is now to bring this land

back to a much more natural state. Last Fall, a planting medium was brought in and used to create several large areas to receive hundreds of native trees and shrubs, with the plan to continue this planting again this Fall.

Beware of unintended consequences! Over the summer, the planting medium proved to harbour a host of invasive thistles, invasive grasses and other unwanted plant life. So the immediate task is to first dig and pull out the invasives before the new stock of plants arrive for planting this Fall. Happily, most of the hundreds of trees and shrubs planted last Fall have survived.

An exciting outcome of our new assignment is the decision of Yana Maltais, Liz Thorne and Marion Jamieson to organize the collection of appropriate native plant seeds and store and/or stratify the seeds over the winter. Some seeds will be used for direct seeding, while others will be used for propagation to provide a stock of plants for the Mariner Way site. All of this was sparked by a comment by The Nature Trust staff that native plant seeds might be a long-term and cost-effective source of providing and sustaining a supply of native plant species appropriate for the site. Further details are provided on the ANats Facebook page.

So much our work for the foreseeable future will be focused on weeding out the invasive plants which populate much of the property and to introduce the plant life which Nature intended. There may also be the opportunity for the birders among us to use a purpose-built viewing area to regularly monitor and record the ebb and flow of birdlife in and around the Englishman River Estuary.

All of this does not mean that our work on the Parksville side of the Estuary is being ignored. We intend to monitor the growth of invasive plant species in the area and direct our efforts there when the need arises, such as during the spring and early summer flowering of Scotch broom. The control of English holly is also an ongoing concern.

This is an exciting time for our Arrowsmith Naturalists' stewardship. There is lots to do but also much to learn from our new assignment. The Mariner Way provides a welcome change from the bushwhacking, cutting and digging which occupied much of our efforts on the south side of the Estuary. But this new assignment means that we all have a variety of ways to contribute to our ongoing support of Nature on the Englishman River Estuary. If you wish to be part of our work, call me at 250-927-4462 or email at dhutchings40@shaw.ca, or just come out to one of our morning work sessions to "kick the tires" and see what we're about. We'll be at Mariner Way at 9:30 a.m. on the first and third Thursday of most months.



ANats and Nature Trust team members

French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve (FCENP)

ANats have been engaged in two stewardship projects in the FCENP.

The area that was cleared of invasives and planted with native shrubs and trees in November 2023 continues to need weekly watering. This was the second summer that a small team, usually about five people, have taken on a routine. One of us fills watering cans from a hose attached to the water tank that ANats purchased last summer. Two of us shift the cans to the watering experts in the restored site, who then carefully water the shrubs and trees. With practice, the process takes just over an hour. It is an effective way to nurture vulnerable growth in a season of drought. At present, the survival rate of the planted area is a respectable 92%.



In addition to the team that has tended the recent plantings, a second group has worked at clearing invasive ivy, holly, and Himalayan blackberry vines from the Preserve.



Continuing surveys of reptile and amphibian populations are also underway in the FCENP, with weekly reptile counts, regular surveys of water levels in wetlands and strategic placement of amphibian “motels” which will be monitored in future months.

ANats also participated in a survey of beach debris and assisted with planting and invasive clearance in Shelly Creek park.

Nature Kids

Nurturing children’s interest in nature may be less physically taxing than most of our stewardship efforts (*or perhaps not—certainly can depend on the kids—ed.*), but it is an important long-term way to support nature.

A project that combined pollinators and pottery yielded a collection of little bee-watering basins:

NatureKids partnered with BC Ocean Mist Pottery to host a special hands-on workshop. As the children and families shaped ceramic flower-inspired 'bee watering stations', they also learned about the vital role water plays in the lives of pollinators. Bees and other pollinators depend on shallow, accessible sources of clean water - not only to drink, but also to cool their hives through a process called evaporative cooling. Worker bees collect water and spread tiny droplets over the honeycomb and brood, then fan their wings to evaporate the water, which absorbs heat and keeps the hive at the ideal temperature. Water is also essential for diluting honey and feeding the colony.

By combining creative expression with environmental education, the workshop gave participants a deeper understanding of how small actions can make a meaningful difference. The ceramic watering stations the children created will provide safe places for pollinators to hydrate, helping to strengthen the resilience of local ecosystems.



Every Drop Counts!

ADVOCACY

Arrowsmith Naturalists continue to be strong advocates for the protection and preservation of nature.

Union Bay.

Sheri Plummer contributes this observation of the environmentally destructive shipbreaking work that has gone on for the past five years.

For the last five years a [foreign owned and operated shipbreaking facility](#) handling highly hazardous materials [has been found to be polluting](#) in [Baynes Sound](#). You can find a summary of the background information as to how the Fisheries act applies to this situation [here](#).

The province finally closed down the DWR shipbreaking. And one complainant received \$165000 by the court for misbehaviour by DWR manager. NOW we need clean-up of the polluted areas and shipbreaking regulations in Canada.

We need 500 signatures (more would be nice :)) on [this e-petition](#) to qualify for presentation in parliament by our MP Gord Johns, so far there are just over 250 signatures. This petition simply asks the Federal government to take enforcement actions to stop the pollution and develop comprehensive regulations to oversee ship recycling in Canada.

Please sign the petition [here](#). It is a government website which will ask for your name and email address, your province and postal code and affirm you are a Canadian citizen or resident of Canada. Don't forget to complete the email verification process.

Thanks in advance for your support,
Sheri Plummer

Shorebird decline and off-leash dogs

Marion Lea Jamieson contributes a follow-up to the resolution that Arrowsmith Naturalists submitted to BC Nature at the May Annual General Meeting.

Many naturalists have expressed concern about the steep decline in shorebirds, not only Canada-wide, but in the Parksville/Qualicum Beach (PQB) area. *The State of Canada's Birds*, by Birds Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada, showed a decline in Shorebirds Canada-wide, of 42%. One of the main recommended conservation actions for shorebirds in *The State of Canada's Birds* is to leash dogs on beaches to give shorebirds space to feed, rest, and nest.

PQB beaches are within the provincially designated Parksville-Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area that was put in place to protect shorebirds.

The Wildlife Management Area Use and Access Regulation, a provincial regulation under the *Wildlife Act*, states that dogs must be on-leash, year round, with the exception of March 1 to April 30, when NO dogs are allowed on beaches (leashed or otherwise) within the PQBWMA.

As there appear to be only 3 Conservation Officers serving all of Central Vancouver Island, and only one or two Bylaw Compliance Officers in TQB and Parksville, it is unlikely that there would be timely responses to calls made. However, there will be records available of the number of violations reported that can be used to assess the effectiveness of the PQBWMA in protecting marine, estuarine and river habitat critical to fish and wildlife populations, especially shorebirds.

Hamilton Wetlands and Forest

Ceri Peacey sends us this update on the Hamilton Marsh purchase:

Hamilton Wetlands and Forest Preservation Society:

- TOURS: Take part in the Thanksgiving Hamilton Marsh tours on Sunday October 12th, between the hours 12pm and 3pm. Tickets \$10 for individuals, \$15 for Families, Please pre-register online: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/hamilton-marsh-thanksgiving-tours> walk-ins and by donation are welcome. The Arrowsmith Naturalists, MABR, NALT, and Ducks Unlimited Oceanside, will all be on hand. RAIN OR SHINE!

- DONATIONS: HWFPS has partnered with the Nanaimo Area Land Trust to collect donations for land acquisition for this once in a lifetime opportunity to purchase the entire 360 hectares! Donate here: <https://nalt.bc.ca/hamilton-marsh/> PLEDGES: Watch for information on pledge forms at the MABR office.
- ASSISTANCE NEEDED: We are on an exceptionally short timeline to raise awareness and funds for Hamilton Marsh. If you have expertise and follow through with media, graphics, etc. send an email to info@hamiltonwetlands.com
- VIDEO: We have a secret project coming on – a new video spearheaded by Taryn Pickard. We'll be looking at places to show the video – line us up for your organization! We will let you know the release date.
- Ducks Banquet November 8th – We will be giving a presentation at the Gala. Ducks Unlimited support wetlands and we support Ducks! Get tickets here! https://ducks.donordrive.com/OceansideBanquet2025?fbclid=IwY2xjawNKPmhleHRuA2FlbQlXMQBicmlkETF0amg0dlB0NEI5NHRKWXB3AR4Wj68DsiZ6J9FkMm4vEuIr2RO5KE6thiK0c9a4iSOLre92mKppoCChbG0XNQ_aem_UpkwznZmeJoiOEdpq4pPTg#cb=
- Hamilton Marsh Acquisition – for the first time includes the whole 360 hectares! But there's so little time to get ahead of things. Got questions? Here's an excellent link from the RDN page. <https://www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/hamilton-marsh-conditional-purchase?tool=ganda>

...and a couple of fine photos from the Marsh:



Red-legged frog, courtesy of Helen Davidson



Night sky, courtesy of Roberto LaChance

French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve

Submitted by Denise Foster

French Creek Estuary Great Blue Heron Colony

Wonderful news to share!

Against all odds, the Great Blue herons have returned to their home at the French Creek Estuary colony. The colony came under siege in December 2024 when the land was partially logged and cleared by the property owner, Don May Construction. Many people were worried that the herons wouldn't return, but they did! This emphasizes the importance of the French Creek breeding site with its plentiful food supply at the estuary, beaches, two creeks and pond for this blue-listed, *Coastal fannini* subspecies of Great Blue herons.

There are seven mated pairs of herons in the colony sitting on nests, five pairs on nests which were active and fledged chicks in 2024, and two pairs on new nests built in 2025. The sounds of chicks "chittering," sometimes referred to as a "tik tik tik" call, is beginning to be heard as chicks hatch. Great Blue heron chicks can vocalize within minutes of hatching and as they mature, their calls grow louder and more insistent with their increased need for food.

As one of only two active Great Blue heron colonies identified from Nanoose to Deep Bay, the French Creek colony is vital to the breeding success of this Species at Risk.

Help the Herons Stay in Their Home!

The Save Estuary Land Society and partners are kicking off a fundraising campaign to raise funds toward acquisition of the one hectare of land to protect the French Creek heron colony.

To make a tax deductible donation by cash, cheque or e-transfer:

Contact Denise Foster at the Save Estuary Land Society: Email: saveestuaryland@gmail.com

Registered Charity No: 786588079 RR 0001

NATURE NOTES

Birds on the Beach, and What Knot

One of the most relaxing things to do after a hectic summer's day is to take a lawn chair to a favourite beach for an hour or more in the early evening. In mid-summer it's the province of paddle boarders, kayakers, canoeists, and the brave, who enjoy a quick dip or a longer swim.

As the days cool and shorten, the evening's entertainment is taken over by migrating birds. Depending on where your favourite beach is, and the state of the tide, we've found the incoming tide that will be full in a couple of hours, or vice-versa is full and heading back out is, for us, the most interesting time.

So far over the past few weeks we've seen Greater and Lesser yellowlegs at the tide edge, waiting for supper to arrive, followed by large numbers of Black Turnstones, Black Bellied Plovers, Bonaparte's and other gulls, Killdeer galore, Western and Least Sandpipers, and most surprisingly for three consecutive days, a non-breeding Red Knot (verified by those on the beach who know a whole lot more about birds than I do). Unfortunately, after its short stay, the Knot is not there anymore! Now we're also seeing Sanderlings, in their smart black and white winter plumage, that have recently joined the foray, and not to forget the many Mallards that fly in each evening to their regular spot on the water. One evening they really upped the entertainment. The tide was fully in, and the ducks were enjoying whatever they could find in the piles of seaweed on the beach, not far from the water's edge. Every one of them picked up a beak full of food, did an about turn and waddled the five or so steps to the tideline. There they dipped just the tips of their beaks in the water, as if they needed to wash their seaweed down with some liquid, then went back to the seaweed, and repeat. That was a practice I'd never had the opportunity to see before, but it went on for as long as the ducks were feeding, and it was quite amusing watching the performance. It almost seemed choreographed! One warm evening when the termites and other insects were flying high, flocks of Bonaparte's gulls flew low over our heads on a feeding frenzy, like something out of Hitchcock's *The Birds* – but this was fascinating, not frightening. The gulls flew so fast and so low they almost needed help from NavCan! There's nothing quite like an hour or two on the beach to put the world right after a busy day, and if a couple of friends can join you, it's even better.

Yellowlegs—I think Greater, but perhaps a Newsletter reader can correct me.



Red Knot (juvenile or non-breeding adult) sharing a moment of contemplation
with a Least Sandpiper



Black Turnstone



Black Bellied Plover. The two flying Killdeer photobombed my shot and improved it no end!



Bonaparte's gull



Bonaparte's gulls feeding on seaweed



-Rosemary Taylor

The Vancouver Island Aspen

Trembling aspen trees are very common throughout the interior of the province, all the way from the southern interior to the boreal forest. However, here on Vancouver Island we also have trembling aspen. It looks essentially the same as the interior ones, with only slight differences. There is an interesting history behind these differences as well as how and when it reached the island.

Aspens (*Populus tremuloides*) are a species of poplar, but differ from other poplars in a number of respects. Both the common and scientific names refer to the way the leaves flutter in the breeze. This is mainly due to the very flat leaf stem. Unlike most trees, most aspens do not grow from seeds, they grow from suckers. Aspens occur in groves. The founding tree in the grove started as a seed, but the other, smaller trees around it did not. Aspens have shallow, spreading roots that produce upright shoots which grow into new aspen trees. Individual trees are short lived, but the stand that develops from these shoots can, potentially, live for thousands of years. An aspen grove is genetically one organism. There is a claim that a large grove in Colorado is the biggest organism in the world, but there is another claim that a honey mushroom colony in Oregon is actually the largest organism. In larger groves the founding tree has died long ago, leaving only its clonal progeny.

In southern British Columbia, except for Vancouver Island and a few trees in the lower Fraser Valley, aspens are not coastal trees. How did they get here? The ice age ended about 11,000 years ago, and plants from the south then occupied the newly available land. Between 10,000 and 6,000 years ago, there was a warm period, called the Hypsithermal Interval. Warmer, drier interior conditions extended all the way down the Fraser Valley to the coast. A few interior species were able to migrate down the valley, and some as far as the island. The

aspen is believed to be one of those species. But only a few individuals made it that far, and they have been isolated from other aspens for possibly 10,000 years. Hence the differences.

Those differences between our aspens and the interior ones are rather subtle. According to Christopher Brayshaw, in his book Catkin Bearing Plants of British Columbia there are three slightly different varieties in B. C. Ours is var. *vancouveriana*. The variety *tremuloides* is the common one to the east of the Coast Mountains, and the interior also has an uncommon form whose leaves turn orange in the autumn, variety *aurea*. Our variety has larger leaf teeth, and the young leaves are slightly more hairy. Although the differences are not great, our aspens are special.



-Terry Taylor

COMING EVENTS

9 October Outing to Saisutshen Island

12 October Hamilton Wetlands and Forest Thanksgiving Walks 12-3 pm

15 October Outing to Roberts Memorial Park

18 October Bottle Drive for the Viking Drive 1 hectare acquisition, drop-off 1601 Marine Circle 9am-4pm

23 October ANATS general meeting, 2 pm, St Edmund's Church Hall

25 October Open House: Findings from MABR Climate Change Realities Project ,10-12 pm, ts'xwelikwshenawtxw (MABR Education Centre) 124 w2nd Ave, Qualicum Beach

25, 26 October 10th Annual Mushroom and Nature Festival, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre.

25 October 2-4 pm Anat members receiving mushrooms for identification

26 October 11 am-4 pm Public event

27-28 October Wetland Monitoring – MABR details pending

1 November Science in the Park, Stellar Salmon at the Big Qualicum River

8 November Ducks Unlimited Oceanside Banquet, 7 pm, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre

