



*To Know, Enjoy and  
Preserve Nature*

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## President's Report

2012 was a good year for the Arrowsmith Naturalists. Our membership increased and, together with the Nanoose Naturalists, we put on a very successful Fall General Meeting for BC Nature. As a result, we enter 2013 with a stable membership and in a stronger position financially with our share of the FGM proceeds safely tucked away in the bank. A year-end financial statement appears on page 10 of the Newsletter for your perusal.

The financial windfall is very welcome. Your Executive has begun to brainstorm areas where the extra funds might be put to good use but we are very mindful that, without prudent planning, the "windfall" can quickly disappear. To date, improvements to interpretive signage at the Qualicum Beach wildlife viewing platform, a campaign to encourage area residents to control their cats and a reprinting of our club brochure have been suggested as possible projects for 2013 and beyond. If you have any ideas for other worthwhile projects that the Club might consider, we welcome your thoughts.

And the past year has been a success not just for the FGM, a strong membership and improved finances, but for the Club's involvement in more than a few ongoing activities. We have advised on the development plans for Moorecroft Regional Park; continued the noxious plant eradication at the Englishman estuary; contributed to the repeated success of the Christmas Bird Count organized by Sandy Gray; produced an updated Parksville-

Qualicum Beach bird list, under the guidance of Pat Bourgeois; participated in Kidfest with an improved, more ecologically-friendly exhibit co-ordinated by Pam Helem, Lynne Brookes and Alison Bakker; promoted the Club at the Errington Farmers' Market and at Earth Day and provided the "Brant on the Bay" event at the Brant Festival. As recognition for our ongoing work in the community, Maggie Little accepted the Nature Trust Conservation Champions Award presented by Tim Clermont at the FGM.

We must thank those stalwarts who came forward again at our November AGM to serve on the Executive. A special "thank you" goes also to Sandy Gray, not only for her work on the CBC, as the Club Liason and "Club Chat" contributor with BC Nature, and for representing us on the Brant Festival planning committee. Chris Hutchings has taken over from Alison Bakker as "Refreshment Coordinator", while Alison has taken on the position of "Speakers Coorinator". After years of fine service, Maggie Little and Penny Marshall have bowed out of their roles as "Outings Coordinators". In their place, Dave Erickson, one of our newer members, has entered the position with vigor and enthusiasm. Thanks, Dave.

When the next issue of the Club Newsletter appears, a new BC government will be in place. This means that the next few months are critical for all of us in coming to grips with the issues so that we can become informed voters. For naturalists – particularly on Vancouver Island – there are so many issues to consider: the pressure on water sources, ....con't p. 2

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*PRESIDENT'S REPORT...cont'd*

the responsible management of land and sea resources, the impacts of industrial and residential development, the importance of environmental regulations - to name but a few. All have profound impacts on Nature's vital ecosystems and our ability to sustain crucial biodiversity. Our votes will be our way of speaking up for Nature.

*Dave Hutchings, President*

*The oystercatcher can prize open bivalves that other waders cannot exploit, thanks to its strong, flattened bill.*



**Black Oystercatcher photographed on Pacific Rim National Park, Vancouver Island**

Photo from Wikimedia Commons; October 17, 2011

**Seasons with Birds** *Review by Dave Hutchings*

*Bruce Whittington - with illustrations by Loucas Raptis 2004. ISBN 1-894898-21-4 Touch Wood Editions Ltd. Victoria, BC*

This soft-cover is a book to delight any naturalist – bird lover or not. Bruce Whittington – who spoke to our club several years ago – takes us through a year with the birds of the Georgia Basin. For over 10 years, Bruce wrote the *Island Birds* column in the *Victoria Times Colonist* and this book is a kind of distillation of much of that writing.

For each month, as well as recounting his birding experiences, the author highlights several birds and his description for each, ranges from the mythology of a species, to the migration routes, the changes in plumage, the mechanics of their flight and much more. As an example, in one “Spring” entry, Whittington describes the nesting of a pair of Black Oyster-catchers, the birth of the chicks, and the critical stages of their young lives. Further on, he treats us to a short biography of John Kirk Townsend – a rival of Audubon – for whom a solitaire and a warbler are named. Elsewhere, we enjoy an account of bird banding at the Rocky Point Bird Observatory.

*Seasons with Birds* is, for me, best enjoyed as a delectable, fascinating confection. Each short chapter allows the reader a delicious bite, just enough to savour with a cup of coffee or tea at any time of the day.

One note of caution: I'm not sure that *Seasons with Birds* is still in print, as I purchased my copy as a sale item from Munro's Books in Victoria. Last year, however, I noticed that the shop still had copies on the “sale” table and you might try Amazon.

## THE ARROWSMITH NATURALIST ...

is published three times a year in February, June and October. Articles on birding, travel, botany and environmental matters are welcomed by the end of the month prior to publication. The next deadline is May 2013 for the June 2013 edition.

Hand-written or typed articles and photos are accepted. Some editing may be required for length or held off for another edition according to available space. Please e-mail articles to

[m.e.6@me.com](mailto:m.e.6@me.com) or

phone (250) 752.2728

or send by mail to:

Margaret Hill, **Editor**

194 Valdez Ave, Qualicum Beach,  
B.C. V9K 1R8.

**General Information:** Club membership information is available at both of the public libraries, on the web site <http://www.arrowsmithnats.org>, or write to Arrowsmith Naturalists, Box 1542 Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4

Membership includes monthly meetings (talks and/or slide shows), regular outings (bird watching, botanical), BC Nature newsletter four times a year and the club newsletter in February, June, October.

New memberships are always welcomed...Family \$35.00, Single \$25.00

## Arrowsmith Naturalists Officers and Contacts:

**President:** Dave Hutchings  
(250) 752.1613

**Past President:** Roger Simms

**Vice President:** Bill Campbell

**Secretary:** Pam Helem

**Treasurer:** Carol Anne Phillion

**Membership:** Gail Armstrong

### Directors:

Lynne Brooks

Cindie Cosentino

Dave Erickson

Ed Wilson

**Programs:** Alison Bakker

**Field Trips:** Dave Erickson

**Promotion:** Sallie Dabb

**Refreshments:** Chris Hutchings

**Young Naturalists:** Alison  
Bakker

**Conservation/Environment:**  
Gary & Ronda Murdock

**Web Site:** David Helem

**BC Nature:** Sandra Gray

## SUNSHINE

If you know of an Arrowsmith Naturalist, who is ill, in hospital or recently bereaved, please contact: Pam Helem, at (250) 468-7475 or at [arrowsmithnats@gmail.com](mailto:arrowsmithnats@gmail.com)

## CLUB PUBLICATIONS

A reference copy of the current newsletter is available at each of the libraries in Parksville and Qualicum Beach.

Meetings and Outings information sheets are available at Mulberry Bush Book Stores in Qualicum Beach and Parksville.

## RESPECT FOR CLEAN AIR

### NO SMOKING

Smoking is not allowed anywhere in, on or around Knox Church property.

## SCENTS OR PERFUMES

Avoid the use of any fragrances when participating in meetings or activities at Knox Church. This request is in respect for others for whom such scents are a health hazard.

## NEW MEMBER WELCOME

The Arrowsmith Naturalist Club is pleased to welcome the following new members.  
Ingrid Busch; Maya Carson; Vi Chungranes; Reinette Summers; Dave Erickson

## NESTING

Author, Maya Carson

A beautiful Easter morning...still early

I'm deciding to bake some Easter bread.

The dough is rising lovely, I even remember braiding. Varnished with yolk, it goes in the oven, while I have my first cup of tea. Out of the shower. Instead of the mouthwatering scent of fresh-bread-baking, I am meeting a stench as if I was cooking a rat. ??? the heck? The bread looks fine, the oven clean, yet...the smell isn't getting less! Maybe a spill below the burner?

Suprise, surprise! About a 100 kiddy kibbles are baking above the oven, yuck! Kiddy kibbles? Lots! I certainly did not put them there and neither did my cat.

*Mouse!*

Mouse in the house, live mouse! Set the trap! Get the vacuum!...which needs a fresh bag from the hall closet. I am reaching on tiptoes to the shelf above my head: kibbles, kibbles, kibbles raining down on me...kibbles inside the rolled up hammock, kibbles inside my beach bag...between the towel, the sarong, my bathing suit. The bag is hanging from a hook underneath that shelf.

This mouse must have climbed along the broom stick into the bag, up the shoulder strap onto the shelf, working itself to the centre of the hammock, out again, down the strap, down the broom, back to kibble dish in the kitchen, up again, down again: about 500 kibbles worth of traveling. The tassels on my sarong are missing? Little bits of hammock chewed off, too...

Well, well, on the hip-high cardboard tube, which holds rolls of paintings, is a nest. There are my tassels and the other bits of cloth...

A gift! An Easter nest from Mouse and as it turns out a pregnant deer mouse, alive, with potential that is...a gift

from my cat, well meant, but...my Easter bread will have to feed wi

The Lives of a Mouse....



*The lives of a mouse:*

They are pregnant for 21 days, weaned in 20 days, mature 10 days later. Not adverse to incest, the female can get pregnant 24 hours after giving birth to 6 - 8 babies, each time.

I let you do the math. You might also like to figure out how many miles this pregnant mother worked off, one kibble at a time: 6 feet from bowl to stove and back; 35 feet from bowl to shelf, one way; 6 feet up to the shelf; add one foot for the bag and strap and 4 feet up the tube with tassels from up above, and down again!

The third Easter is coming up since...

We're no longer living in the woods, my cat and I; however, we learned to communicate about those *gifts*: I explained that she has enough to eat, does not need them, that I do not like to play with a live mouse or any gift of birds. It is enough since, to say calmly: "No *birdies*, no *mouse!*" Clearly, she understands...The gift I treasure most...

## MOORECROFT REGIONAL PARK – Activities Update

The Nature Trust partnership with the "Moorecrofters" formally ended October 2012 and the RDN has assumed management of Moorecroft as a Regional Park. The Moorecrofters are partnering with NALT to work together on improvements at Moorecroft under the supervision of the RDN. Three collaborative initiatives have been identified and will be undertaken this year: the renovation of Kennedy Lodge; removal of invasive plants within the park; and Park Host and Interpretive Tour programmes. In order to carry out these initiatives various volunteer and fundraising activities will be taking place throughout the year. The Northwest Bay Ranch owners have again generously offered their lovely property to host another great Fun-Raiser event on September 7th.

### BIRD NESTING BOX ASSEMBLERS NEEDED

Spring is coming and volunteers have a chance to help out our feathered friends **and** raise funds for **Moorecroft Regional Park**. Here's the plan:

Northwest appropriate bird nesting boxes engraved with the lovely Moorecroft Park logo will be assembled on **Sunday March 17th** from **1 to approximately 3:30 pm** at Lynne and Derrick's place in Errington. The nesting boxes will be sold at various venues to raise funds for repairs to Kennedy Lodge at the Park. Volunteers will have a good time assembling the pre-cut pieces and afterwards have an opportunity to learn about cavity nesting birds in our area. Lynne will take interested box builders for a walk around the 10 acres of mixed forest, wetland and small meadow to see and learn about bird friendly features including the mounted nest boxes along the easy trail. Orientation, predator guards, and nest box monitoring will be discussed. Come to help assemble nest boxes at 1pm and enjoy the tour at 3:45!

Want to come and help?

1. Please let Lynne know of your interest. (see below)
2. Minimal to moderate+ carpentry skills needed: Assembly: pre-drilling of holes, assembly of the box pieces, screwing pieces together, placing a nail to secure door opening. IF you want to help but have minimal skills with drills and bits-- general assembly helpers are welcome. Maybe someone could also help by starting the coffee and setting out the snacks that will be provided?.
3. TOOLS NEEDED: While we'll have some, we'll need more drills and bits to help out.

Please send your interest in participating and your comments on Numbers 1, 2 and 3 above to Lynne as soon as you can at:

(e-mail) [rppsolar@yahoo.com](mailto:rppsolar@yahoo.com) or by phone @ [250-586-4595](tel:250-586-4595).



**DINNER ON A MUDFLAT - by Chris Pielou,**

*Reprinted, with permission, from the Comox Valley Naturalists Society, Newsletter, Nov. 2012*

Coastal mudflats are not most people's favourite places, but they do attract birders, and naturalists in general, when the shore birds are in migration, northwards in spring, and back southwards in late summer. When the birds are hungry, huge flocks of them settle on mudflats at low tide, and pig out on innumerable tiny invertebrates living in the mud. The invertebrates of choice were said to be amphipods, that is, tiny shrimps also called "scuds", and miscellaneous worms such as roundworms. That's all the peeps (the smallest sandpipers) were presumed to be eating while they keep on pecking the mud like sewing machines.

Or so it was thought, until recently. Now research has shown that Western sandpipers, the commonest of the peeps, have vegetarian tastes. About fifty percent of their diet consists of *diatoms*, single-celled bacteria, incapable of moving on their own, but able to feed themselves by photosynthesis. They are among the principal ingredients of *biofilm*, itself a recent discovery.

Biofilm is a new microhabitat and, at the same time, a new ecological community. Wikipedia defines it as "an aggregate of microorganisms in which cell adhere to each other on a surface". The diatom biofilm on a mudflat is a layer of seawater containing a variety of tiny organisms, most of them diatoms, all held together by the mucus on *their* surfaces; usually some organic detritus and inorganic mud gets stuck to the layer too.

Western sandpipers and probably other small peeps, have been found to rely on biofilm for their food. They eat it by slurping it up with slightly open bills. You can watch them doing it (for 9 seconds!) on a Nature Canada video, by asking Google for "biofilm sandpipers".

The discovery has caused a change of opinion on the energy cycle of sandpipers. It had been thought that they were two steps (maybe more) up their food chain, because their food consisted exclusively of animals. But diatoms are autotrophic, that is, they photosynthesize their own food, which means they capture the sun's energy at first hand. They are therefore at the bottom of the food chain. Sandpipers are now only *one* step up, at least during their migration: or perhaps 1.5 steps up because they don't confine themselves to diatoms. The whole food/energy cycle of a mudflat, during the peeps' migration season, is not what was previously thought.

The discovery also emphasizes how important mudflats are in seashore ecology.

**Note:**

Some ecologists say "diatoms and bacteria", others "bacteria including diatoms". It all depends on whether "greenness" which gives the ability to photosynthesize, or "single-celledness" as in bacteria, is regarded as the salient character of diatoms. (Anyway they are microscopic, individually.) My vote is for greenness. Their actual colour tends more to golden, but the chlorophyll is there.

The Least Sandpiper is the world's smallest sandpiper (14 cm). It along with the Western Sandpiper are often referred to collectively as "peeps". They migrate down our coasts in August and September. Some Least Sandpipers winter on the west coast, but most winter in northern south-America.

*See page 7 for photos from Wikipedia*

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**WESTERN SANDPIPER**

-black legs, pale rufous patches on scapulars and head, long slightly drooping bill



**LEAST SANDPIPER**

-greenish-yellow legs, fine-tipped bill, slightly drooping, with a somewhat crouching posture



*Editor's Note:*

Little Mountain has been profiled in the local newspapers lately with respect to the mountain of garbage that persons have deposited around it thus creating an unsightly blight on this unique, naturally beautiful terrain. Little Mountain has been of interest to hikers and naturalists for years. The Arrowsmith Natural History Society, forefathers of the Arrowsmith Naturalists provided an article, noting the geological creation of Little Mountain, in their newsletter dated, *Issue No.2. May 1976*, by the then, Club President, A. Geo. Tranfield, Snr. The article is as follows:

**OUR LITTLE MOUNTAIN.....by Club Pres. A.Geo.Tranfield.Snr.(1976)**

Our Little Mountain has many interesting features for a naturalist to study. It was originally raised up out of a tropical sea to become an island. Then came the ice age and it was beneath the glacier until the ice melted and it became an island again. Another earthquake raised it again, the sea receded and it became a mountain, much the same as it is today (1976), with its cones and crown worn away by the glacier.

It has had other changes too, forest fires caused by man and falling meteors, shearing and fusing the rocks with their intense heat. In days gone by the Indians hunted on the mountain and their middens can still be found there. The West side has many caves, formed by the action of the sea from when it was submerged.

The surface of Little Mountain has been changed with the addition of a Lookout Tower and a Radar Station; but the view is still magnificent. on the East side is the sea, on the West side are the mountains and a broad view of the Englishman River valley and surrounding farmland.

**ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS MEETINGS AND OUTINGS***FEBRUARY 26 - July 22, 2013*

CARPPOOL IF POSSIBLE. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: DAVE ERIKSON: (250) 947-9698 OR DAVE HUTCHINGS: (250) 752-1613

Please note – Guests are very welcome. A Guest Waiver and Day Membership forms are available at the time of an outing or on the website: [www.arrowsmithnats.org/membership](http://www.arrowsmithnats.org/membership) These forms must be read carefully, completed and signed with an accompanying \$1.00 fee before participating in an outing.

**Meeting Locations Key:**

**C&J = Craig and Jensen; QBT = Qualicum Beach Tourist (centre on 19A); N&P = Northfield and Parkway rest stop parking lot; Arlington = Arlington Pub & Hwy 19 south; Sunnybeach = Hwy 19A north & Sunnybeach Rd**

**Wednesday March 20 - Courtenay Airpark and Goose Spit (Kye Bay time permitting).** An easy paved walk round the airpark then on to Goose Spit and Kye Bay. We have a choice, bag lunch or pub. Meet QBT for 9:30 start; Sunnybeach 9:45 Leader: Roger Simms

**Saturday March 23 - Brant in the Bay:** Parksville Community Park. View Brant geese and other birds through spotting scopes set up by the Arrowsmith Naturalists. 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. FREE

**Monday March 25 - GENERAL MEETING - at Knox United Church, 345 Pym, PV @ 7:30 p.m.**

Topic: Horne Lake Caves and Caves on Vancouver Island Speaker: Richard Varela

**Saturday April 6 - Moss Walk.** A special walk with invited guest/leader Kent Anders. Learn all about mosses - it will be fascinating. Bring lunch. Meet QTB for 9:30 start.

**Saturday April 13 - Mt Tzouhalem and St Peters churchyard.** An historic 19th century church with pastoral meadow/woodland grounds with an array of wildflowers followed by a modest walk to a Gary Oak meadow ecological reserve. Bring lunch. Meet C&J for a 9:30 start; N&P 10:00 Leader: Sue Wilson and Ed

**Saturday April 20 - Earth Day** Watch for further information by e-mail.

**Sunday April 21 - Hamilton Marsh** Bring your friends and family to explore this amazing marsh in Qualicum Beach and learn about the interesting plants and wildlife with [Friends of French Creek](#). By donation

**Monday April 22 - GENERAL MEETING - at Knox United Church, 345 Pym, PV @ 7:30 p.m.**

Topic: Bear Smart Program Speaker: Richard Varela

**Wednesday April 24 - Reifel Bird Sanctuary.** We have planned a very special trip to the Reifel Sanctuary in Delta and may include a stop at Boundary Bay first, depending on the tides. It promises to be a great day and the hope is to have a good turnout to maximize carpooling. Meet C&J for a 6:30 a.m. start; N&P asap. Leaving Duke Point on the 7:45 a.m. ferry. Leader: Dave Hutchings

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**ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS MEETINGS AND OUTINGS***FEBRUARY 26, - July 22, 2013*

**Saturday May 4 - Yellow Point Park.** This mature growth park should display many and varied spring flowers but can be boggy and wet. Wear your boots. An intermediate walk, we could finish with lunch at the Crow and Gate. Meet C&J 9:30 or N&P 10:00                      Leader: Dave and Pam Helem

**Wednesday May 15 - Denman and Hornby Islands.** The easy but spectacular walk along the Helliwell Park Bluffs is not to be missed. Flowers, oak trees, ocean views. Lunch on the grass. Meet QBT 8:30 a.m.; Sunnybeach 8:45 a.m. for 10:00 a.m. ferry. Leader: Maggie Little

**Saturday May 25 - Harewood Plains.** A second growth forest with interesting rock formations and an almost unsurpassed collection of rare and endangered plants. This is an important and beautiful area that needs to be protected. Meet C&J for a 9:30 a.m.; Parkway 10:00                      Leaders: Dave and Pam Helem

**Monday May 27 - GENERAL MEETING - at Knox United Church, 345 Pym, PV @ 7:30 p.m.**

Topic:TBA    Speaker: TBA

**Wednesday June 5 - Pipers Lagoon and Neck Point.** Popular and beautiful with ocean vistas, interesting botany and the tidal lagoon. Lunch on the rocks. Meet C&J for a 9:30 start; N&P 10:00                      Leaders: Gilles and Barb Gratton

**Saturday June 15 - Springwood Park and Legacy Marsh.** Good birding areas; centrally situated. Lunch at the marsh or the Lantzville pub. Meet: C&J for a 9:30 start. Leader: We are pleased to announce that Christopher Stevens has agreed to lead us and share his wide knowledge with us.

**Monday June 24 - GENERAL MEETING - at Knox United Church, 345 Pym, PV @ 7:30 p.m.**

Topic:TBA    Speaker: Andy McKinnon

**Saturday July 20 - Enos Lake - Terry Thormin, an authority on dragonflies, will lead a 1 km walk to view swamp critters, plant life, beaver ponds and Garry oak meadows. The trail features modest up/downhill sections with some tricky footing. (Look for further details in June's newsletter.)                      Leaders: TBA**

**July 22 - Club Picnic.** Look for further details in June's newsletter.

**24th ANNUAL, QUALICUM BEACH/PARKSVILLE,  
BRANT FESTIVAL 2013**

**Sunday, March 10th, - Thursday, April 18th**

For Brant Festival information and events go to

[brantfestival.bc.ca/events/](http://brantfestival.bc.ca/events/)

Photo: Brant Goose in a defensive posture

