

Arrowsmith Naturalists

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JUNE 2009

President's Message

To all members, greetings, including a hearty welcome to those who have joined our club over the last year. For the balance of this year, we have a full Executive, being joined by Bill Campbell - welcome, Bill.

By the time this goes to press Duncan and Lois will have returned to Ottawa. They have both joined in on our various activities including Earth Day Celebrations. Many thanks to Duncan for helping out with the Broom Bashing. It is interesting to note that Broom Bashing has really taken off in Oceanside this year.

Repeating words I have used in many president reports over the last six years...we are continually in need of volunteers for our Invasive Species Removal Programme and club management volunteers.

Pat Bourgeois and I after completing our six-year terms this November will be required to step down. I realize we are still five months away from Elections; however, we all need time to consider where our club priorities lie. We must have a President, Treasurer and Secretary otherwise the Club cannot continue. Please give this your full consideration and plan to put your name forward for a position on the Executive.

The club looks forward to your support of our various programmes this year. Do plan to be with us at the Annual Picnic, July 27th...see the Outings p. 7 for details.

Have a great summer.

Roger Simms, President

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Request for Volunteers

NEEDED – VOLUNTEER ECOLOGICAL WARDENS

2 Eco Wardens are required to help out at the Bowser Ecological Reserve

Duties include:

- Visits 4 times per year of approx 3 hours per visit
 - Check on the easily accessible areas to monitor for garbage dumping, illegal logging, poaching, and introduction of invasives
 - Report back to Parks staff who deal with any infractions
 - Photograph unusual findings
 - Terrain not physically challenging
- If interested contact Maggie at 757-2328

The Arrowsmith Naturalist is published three times a year --- in February, June and October. Articles on birding, travel, botany and environmental matters are welcome by the end of the month prior to publication. The next deadline is August 7, 2009, for the September /09 edition.

Hand-written or typed articles are accepted, editing may be required for length or held off for another edition according to available space. E-mail articles to mmhillm@shaw.ca or send by snail mail to 194 Valdez Ave, Qualicum Beach B.C. V9K 1R8

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General Information:

An information pamphlet on Club membership is available at both of the public libraries, or write to Arrowsmith Naturalists, Box 1542, Parksville, B.C., V9P 2H4. Annual membership is \$35.00 per family, \$22.00 single or \$12.00 junior (up to 18 years). Membership includes monthly meetings (talks and/or slide shows), regular hikes (bird watching, botanical focus), BC Nature newsletter four times a year and the Club newsletter in February, June and October.

“Meetings and Outings” sheets are available at Mulberry Bush Book Store in Qualicum Beach and Parksville.

Website: <http://arrowsmithnats.org>

EDITOR'S NOTE

The layout of this Arrowsmith Naturalist Newsletter is presented in a different format from what we have been used to seeing.

These changes have been made:

- to trim publication and circulation costs
- to develop a format that can be posted to our website;
- to create a format for e-mailing that club members can easily open;
- to assist the club to avoid raising membership fees.

Although the newsletter's format may be changing, every effort to maintain the interest, integrity and informative nature of our monthly publication remains a priority. To this end, each member is encouraged to send travel notes, articles pertaining to our natural world, current updates regarding threatened lands and species, write-ups about our outings and photographs. Until the newsletter is ready for e-mailing (which may be in October 2009), photos will be reproduced in black and white. Members without e-mail access will continue to receive the newsletter at meetings and by post where necessary.

BULLETIN BOARD

Parking

If you find you have to park in the over-flow lot down the street from the school, be aware that the gates are locked at 9:30 p.m. One of our members found herself locked in and had to phone for a ride home.

No Smoking

Smoking is not allowed anywhere on school property

Sunshine

If you know of an Arrowsmith Naturalist, who is ill, in hospital or recently bereaved, please call Maggie Little at 250- 757-2387

Club Stewardship

Stewardship of the Englishman River Estuary is an on-going club project which seeks to monitor and eradicate invasive species from the Estuary.

Members meet on the last Friday of each month (weather permitting) for a couple of hours to carry out project work. Come on out to share in an important cause, as well as enjoying some lively social time. **Contact: Maggie at 250 757-2328 for more information.**

Over the Equator and Across the Dateline

BY: ROGER SIMMS

We have always wanted to visit New Zealand and decided to leave on March 8th for a five week trip. The eventual decision was to stop off in the Cook Islands which we did by spending three nights in Aitutaki a small island in a large lagoon, and four nights on the capital island of Rarotonga, both of which were very enjoyable and highly recommended. The people are really friendly and the food, beach and amenities just great. From a birding stand point the islands do not have a lot of birds. The ones they do have are quite different and colourful. I recorded sixteen species which included four species seen either in Hawai'i or Canada. The birds which stand out are Blue Lorikeet, Grey Duck, Lesser Frigatebird, Rarotonga Starling and the endangered Rarotongan Flycatcher.

The lagoon in Aitutaki is very large so we took a day trip on a catamaran, with a BBQ on board, around the lagoon. We visited an island where I saw a pair of Lesser Frigatebirds as well as a Common Fairy Tern on its bare branch nest. After a swim in chest high water in the lagoon by several of the nine passengers we had a BBQ. Then a stop to visit One Foot Island where there is a small Post Office that is allowed to stamp passports with the official Island Entry stamp. Maggie and I both walked around the island heading back to the boat through a heavy rain shower to the port.

On Rarotonga I had the opportunity to visit the Takitumu Conservation Park where my guide Allison spotted for me five new species including Rarotongan Starling and the endangered Rarotongan Flycatcher (Kakatori),

Of course all good things must come to an end and we left the Cook Islands for New Zealand...the other paradise. What a country! Very good road system even if they drive on the "wrong side" of the road. Very friendly people and most proud of the country they live in. We rented a car in Auckland and toured the North Island for almost four weeks at our own pace. Again the birding was great with so many new and interesting birds. Like Canada, New Zealand has many introduced birds mainly but not entirely from the U.K. such as House Sparrow and Blackbird for example. As this was a celebratory trip not all the time was spent birding. Anybody who knows Maggie knows of her interest in all aspects of wool, so we shared time at wool shops, fairs, clothing stores selling woolen goods etc. as well as looking at and for birds at the various places we stopped at.

New Zealand is making a great effort at protecting its native wildlife to the extent that at places like Mount Bruce and the Karori Wildlife Centre (to be re-named Zealandia) they have installed several kilometres of anti-predator fencing. Once the fencing is installed they remove permanently all non-native animals such as woolly possum, cats, rats, mice, weasels, rabbits and farm livestock. The result is that many endangered bird species are making a slow but steady come-back. At Mount Bruce their two main successes are the Kaka and the Kokako of the wattlebird family, the former come to feeding stations at around 3.00pm every day. They seem to appear out of nowhere in spite of their size. The latter are more often heard rather than seen. An

interesting point about the Karori Centre is that there are feeding stations set up for the Kaka the native parrot. While the Kaka is free to roam where ever it wishes, they still come to the feeding stations set up on tall metal poles. When the Kaka arrive at dusk it feeds on some food that has fallen to the ground, It is then that the Brown Teal comes out from the undergrowth to eat the fallen food completely ignoring the people like ourselves on the dusk to dark guided tour.

Of the sixty-seven species I saw, at least twenty-two are introduced including our own California Quail so numerous here in B.C. The notable species seen or heard include Little Spotted Kiwi, Australasian Gannet, four species of Shag(similar to cormorant), Morpork (native owl), Whitehead and Grey Warbler just to name a few. New Zealand has two native bat species and one prehistoric Lizard/Iguana called the Tuatara

that is rarely seen. We did see one female which was heard in the fallen leaves, etc. and located by the flashlights with which we had been provided.

One final venture before our departure was to take the train from Wellington to Auckland a journey of twelve and a half hours to complete the distance of 685 kilometres. This journey included going along the west coast past Kapiti Island now a bird sanctuary where permission is required to visit. Then traveling inland past the three volcanoes in the centre of the North Island and stopping at Okahune, at the National Park the highest point on the line and through farm land and on to Auckland.

All in all a most memorable visit and one highly recommended. Now we have to save to visit the South Island!

Annual General Meeting and Conference in Duncan

BY: PAT BOURGEOIS

The Annual General Meeting and Conference in Duncan was organized by the Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Society. It began with an evening slide show on Thursday, April 30 and ended with the final field trips on Sunday morning. As usual Friday and Saturday began with the early morning bird-watching walks. Friday morning we met at 5:30 a.m. at the Quw'utsun' Conference & Cultural Center to carpool to the east side of Somenos Marsh and on Saturday we had a 'late' 6:00 a.m. meet to tour the Cowichan estuary. Both were well worth the early start.

The Friday workshops, beginning at 9:00 a.m., offered four choices for two time slots. After much deliberation, I chose Derrick Marven's 'Butterflies of Vancouver Island'

for the first workshop. Derrick has studied butterflies for many years and told us that the best way to identify them is by the under-wing. There are 60 species on Vancouver Island and 90% of them can be found in the Cowichan Valley.

The second morning workshop was 'Birds on the Move' with Bruce Whittington. Just one amazing tidbit of information that he passed along: the Bar-tailed Godwit makes the longest **non-stop** migration - 10,000 km in just 7 - 10 days! There were many afternoon field trip choices. I opted for Eves Park - a tiny, little-known provincial park just outside of Duncan with a lot of history, some lovely viewpoints and a wealth of spring flowers. The evening's speaker was Dave Polster. His topic 'Natural Processes and Ecological

'Restoration' addressed how to restore ecologically damaged and sensitive areas with natural solutions.

Saturday morning I attended the BC Nature Board of Director's meeting and we covered many topics: BC Nature finances and the executive board, BC Naturalists' Foundation and the Federation's 40th anniversary. A large part of the morning was devoted to discussing two issues: the preparation of a BC Nature five year strategic plan and the choice each club must make regarding risk management and insurance. I've brought the issues to our club's executive board meetings and they will also be discussed at future general meetings for our club members. The afternoon AGM began with an address by Ralph Archibald, Assistant Deputy Minister, Environmental Stewardship Division. He spoke at length and provided a website address for public information: www.env.gov.bc.ca/conservationframework.

Of the many AGM items discussed, here are some of the highlights: seven BC Nature resolutions were discussed (six passed and one was tabled); the Rene Savenye Scholarship was awarded to Christina Milavic; and of the BC Important Bird Areas (IBA's), 90% have caretakers. More information is available in the 2008 Annual Report which can be borrowed from the club.

Some important dates to remember:
June 12-14 - Manning Park Bird Blitz
September 10-13 - Fall General Meeting & Conference hosted by the Pender Harbour and District Wildlife Society on the Sunshine Coast
September 13-17 - Lillooet Field Camp
April 2010 - Saltspring Island Field Camp
May 2010 - AGM & Conference, Kamloops
May 2010 - Williams Lake Field Camp

September or October 2010 - FGM & Conference, Langley

It was a very busy, informative and enjoyable weekend. Start making your own plans to attend one of the upcoming events whether a field camp or FGM - you'll be glad you did!

The Varied Thrush

BY: RONDA MURDOCK

We recently had a wonderful experience with a pair of Varied Thrushes in Cathedral Grove. The male Thrush had moss in his beak and was likely on his way to the nest. The Varied Thrush is a strikingly handsome forest bird and known to be extremely shy, so we and our guests were delighted to good views while we listened to its most fascinating melancholic, eerie song.

Cathedral Grove Forest is an important breeding habitat for the Varied Thrush because this thrush nests in dense coniferous forest. Two to five eggs are laid in a tree nest. The diet of the Varied Thrush changes from season to season. When breeding, it mainly searches the forest floor for arthropods and other invertebrates, which it often locates by using its bill to flip leaf litter into the air. They will also take a variety of prey, including worms, caterpillars and insects. In winter, its diet becomes especially dependant upon fruits and berries, but also upon seeds.

Varied Thrush are smaller than an American Robin and there is a black breast band and facemask, orange underparts with, dark gray upperparts, orange wing bars and an orange stripe extends rearward from the eye. Female and juvenile birds are browner above and the orange is more subdued. The breast band and facemask are a blotchy brown.

Oceanside Young Naturalist Club

BY ALISON BAKKER

We have had some interesting activities over the last few months. The Nanaimo Recycling Exchange had a selection of activities to choose from. The Young Naturalists learned about the connection between the habitat and ecology of the area around Springwood Park. Unfortunately, there was not a good turnout...our membership needs to increase. Weekends are busy times for families with the sports programs and other activities. Last month Val and I had a YNC table at the "River Never Sleeps" Festival which proved very popular and we had many inquiries about YNC. On the Monday after, the Home Schoolers were invited to take part in a stream keepers course about the aquatic insects in Nile Creek by the Nile Creek Fish Hatchery. It was great fun identifying the numerous insects, it was concluded Nile Creek is very healthy, which was great news for the salmon released from the hatchery.

Our last event took place at the Englishman River Park with Jim Russell and his working partner Eric. They took us to areas where the beavers have been very active and told us about how the beavers have adapted to their environment on Vancouver Island. They even have a pair of invisible lips inside the mouth to keep the water out while swimming with a log.



A TREE THE BEAVERS TRIED TO FELL.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: ALISON BAKKER

Jim and Eric relocate beaver out of one watershed into another more appropriate area. They showed us the live trap, which they designed and used a toy stuffed beaver to demonstrate how the beaver enters the trap. The final highlight was feeding the millions of Chinook fry by the hatchery.

I am in the process of starting our next program of events. We hope to go fossil hunting at Nanoose in July. Other outings being considered are from a long list of interests the children have suggested.

If you have grandchildren, grandnieces/nephews or grand-young friends visiting, you are most welcome to join the Young Naturalists on an outing. For information contact: Alison Bakker at 250 757-8551.

ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS - MEETINGS AND OUTINGS - 2009

Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Carpool if possible. Contact the leader(s) for further info.

Sun. June 28th - Paradise Meadows & Battleship Lake, Mt Washington

This is A lovely walk through mountain meadows to see the flowers (hopefully!) and then lunch at an alpine lake. Bring lunch, wear sturdy footwear and dress with layers - just in case. Meet at the Qualicum Beach Tourist Centre at 8:30 a.m. or at the Horne Lake Hwy 19 intersection at 8:50 a.m.

Leaders: Chris and Dave: 250 752-1613

Mon. July 27th - Arrowsmith Naturalists' Picnic at Little Qualicum Hatchery

Leaving Qualicum and traveling up the old Island Hwy., turn left onto Laburnum Rd. and travel up the hill to Claymore Rd. Turn right and travel on to the Hatchery. Drive past the Hatchery gates for 1.9 kms., turn right (at the power lines) and down the hill through the back gate of the Hatchery. Bring lawn chairs and a potluck dish, your own beverage, plates, cutlery, and item(s) for the raffle. Be aware that there is no drinkable water on site. The fun starts at 4 pm. until ?? For info contact Dave & Chris :752-1613

Sun. Aug. 16th - Kidfest: in Parksville Community Park from 10:00 am. - 4:00 pm.

If you would like to help out, call Betty: 752-4744.

Sun. Sept. 13th - Dudley Marsh

A local marsh and woods walk. The marsh is not as large as Hamilton Marsh and not as often visited. There are opportunities for birding, as well as the chance to see a wetland at the close of what may be a very dry summer. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m.

Leader: Allen Gillespie: 752-9518.

Sun. Sept. 20th - Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up with the Oceanside Young Naturalists

This annual event is a great way to remind ourselves of all the waste which washes up on our shores, as well as a chance to support the Young Naturalists in our area and demonstrate our stewardship of nature. Meet at Sunny Beach Rd. in Qualicum Bay at 1 p.m. Sturdy gloves would be a good idea.

Leader: Val Tinney: 468-7556.

Thurs. Sept 24th - Tour of the Sturgeon Rearing and Research Ponds: Vancouver Island University

A rare chance to see this exciting project which involves the rearing and conservation of this endangered, prehistoric fish species. Wear comfy shoes as there are multi stairways to "overcome". Let Maggie @ 250 757- 2328 know if you are attending so she can let the staff at VIU know a few days ahead. Also, maximum car pooling is required; parking at VIU is scarce. The tour is about 90 minutes. A pub lunch to follow or bring your own lunch - whichever you desire. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:00 a.m. or Arlington at 9:15 for a 10 a.m. start at VIU.

Mon. Sept 28th - General Meeting at Springwood Middle School - 7:30 pm

Speaker: TBA

Sun. Oct. 4th - The Holland Creek Trail and Falls, Ladysmith. A lovely, and at times taxing walk in a new area...for us. This good trail, which affords good views of the creek, involves a steady climb through a mixed forest. The reward is the waterfall at the end of the trail. Bring lunch and afterwards enjoy a stroll through one of the Island's historic old towns. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m. or Arlington at 9:45.

Leader: Pat Bourgeois: 250 586 - 4846.

Sun. Oct. 18th- Nanaimo River Estuary

In one of our prime birding areas, this easy although, sometimes uneven walk through a tidal marsh area, is an important stopover for migrating species and year-round raptors. On a previous outing to the Estuary we were "fogged out", so this is a repeat with better conditions. Bring binoculars, your lunch and wear good footwear for the muddy patches. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 am or Arlington at 9:45.

Leader: Roger Simms: 250 752-0445

Sun. Oct. 25th - Mushroom Walk at the Big Qualicum River

This is one of our most popular outings. Bring lunch and delight in a mature forest as we forage for fall mushrooms. This is an easy walk, with some stairs and hills. Meet at the Qualicum Beach Tourist Office at 9:30 am.

Leaders: the club's expert 'shroom hunters. For more info, phone Chris and Dave: 250 752-1613.

Mon. Oct. 26th - General Meeting at Springwood Middle School - 7:30 pm

Speaker: Michele Deakin, a local biologist, who will present an update on the Eelgrass Beds - Integrated Mapping Project

Wed. Nov. 3rd - Little Mountain

A short walk along the loop trail to the impressive cliffs of, Little Mountain with a spectacular view inland. If we are lucky, we may see numbers of varied thrushes feeding on arbutus berries. Enjoy a hot coffee afterwards in Parksville. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m. Leaders: Chris and Dave: 250 752-1613.

VARIED THRUSH AT CATHEDRAL GROVE
PICTURE BY: RONDA MURDOCK

