



To know, enjoy and preserve  
Nature.

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Photo by: Micheline Messner  
January 2009



# ARROWSMITH NEWSLETTER

Volume 16 Issue 2 June 2010

## President's Message

It's that time of year again - summer. Or so the calendar tells us. As I write, I contemplate another "cloudy with showers" day and wonder if those heat-loving tomato plants will survive. But, despite the gloom, nature has sprung forth with an abundance of renewed life: the fresh growth and vibrant hues of our gardens, the delicate unfolding of new ferns, the fledging of young robins, and the tentative emergence of new fawns. All of this timed precisely to announce a fresh period of growth and renewal and to nourish the soul.

I hope you all will have the opportunity to experience nature's abundance in the coming months. Allen Gillespie - our outings coordinator is working hard to provide a variety of walking experiences from the alpine to the sea shore which all club members can enjoy, whatever their mobility.

Over the past few months, we have enjoyed the speakers' presentations arranged by Pam Helem. This is an important part of our mandate "to know nature" and to deepen our understanding, whether it is the evolution of bird species in the Tropics, the biology and habitat requirements of the Brant geese or the need to map and preserve the eel grass beds along our coast.

The fight against the Scotch broom and knapweed at the Englishman River Estuary continues with demonstrable success. Maggie Little and her dedicated group of naturalists have halted the spread of both these of noxious invaders from many areas of the Estuary, while beginning the restoration of habitat with the planting of dozens of Douglas firs.

With the timely support of our club, Alli Roberts has been able to once again hire two park interpreters for Rath Trevor Provincial Park. An oversight by government and our local MP almost cost Alli the loss of this valuable manpower for this summer.

Our club has given support to the campaign to halt the logging of DL33 in Nanoose. At this time, the start of work seems to have been delayed. The public outcry has pushed the government agencies involved to re-examine the decision to log this vital piece of Coastal Douglas Fir habitat.

It was my pleasure to represent the Arrowsmith Naturalists at the BC Nature Annual General Meeting in Kamloops in mid-May. Apart from the financial and administrative issues dealt with by the AGM, the gathering allows naturalists from across the province to share their challenges and successes in the effort "to keep nature worth knowing". I'll provide a more extensive report on the AGM elsewhere in this newsletter.

...cont'd on p. 2

**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 September 2010, for the October 2010 edition.

Hand-written or typed articles are accepted. Some 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 mail to: 194 Valdez Ave, Qualicum Beach B.C. V9K 1R8  
**Editor:** Margaret Hill (250) 752-2728

### Arrowsmith Naturalists Officers and Contacts:

**President:** Dave Hutchings (250) 752-1613  
**Past President:** Roger Simms  
**Vice President:** Bill Campbell  
**Secretary:**  
**Treasurer:** Carol Anne Phillion  
**Membership:** Gail Armstrong  
**Directors:** Lynn Bieber Weir; Tony Heal ; Pam Helem, Allison Roberts  
**Programs:** Pam Helem, Allison Roberts **Field Trips:** Allen Gillespie  
**Promotion:** Sallie Dabb  
**Refreshments:** Alison Bakker  
**Young Naturalists:** Alison Bakker  
**Conservation/Environment:** Gary & Ronda Murdock  
**Web Site:** David Helem  
**BC Nature:** Pat Bourgeois

### 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), BC Nature newsletter four times a year and the Club newsletter in February, June and October.

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

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

For Further Information: Please go to the

**Website:** <http://www.arrowsmithnats.org>

### President's Report cont'

(WiTS) program . On Vancouver Island, in particular, WiTS is facing a crisis not only of funding and co-ordination but also of morale.

Locally, Sandy Gray and her very dedicated volunteers have become so frustrated with the administration of the program that they cannot continue to support the program unless drastic changes are made. It would be unfortunate to see their hundreds of hours of dedicated effort go to waste because of organizational and financial neglect.

Don't forget our annual pot luck picnic on July 26<sup>th</sup> at the Little Qualicum Hatchery. Good food, good games (bocce again?) and another exciting raffle. Details are in the "Meetings and Outings" section of the newsletter.

I hope you all have a fine summer. Do take the time to get out for a walk on the beach or along your favourite stream, or to amble down a wooded path with family and friends - or on your own for a bit of quiet time with nature.

## 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 a 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 contact: Pam Helem, at (250) 468 - 7475 or at [arrowsmithnats@gmail.com](mailto:arrowsmithnats@gmail.com)

### July 26<sup>th</sup> - 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 potable water on site. The fun starts at 4 pm. until ??

**For info contact: Dave & Chris (250) 752-1613**

**Conference & FGM:** Sept 30 to Oct 3, 2010; hosted by Langley Field Naturalist Society  
<http://bcnature.ca/pages/conferences/conferences.html>

## **Annual General Meeting and Conference in Kamloops**

The **2010 BC Nature Annual General Meeting**, from May 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>, was hosted by the Kamloops Naturalist Club at Thompson Rivers University. These annual gatherings are important not just for the discussions which shape the policy and workings of BC Nature but, as importantly, for their educational and social components. Naturalists from many parts of BC come together to renew old friendships and to share their knowledge and the challenges to Nature presented in their own regions.

Each General Meeting – both the AGM and the Fall General Meeting – takes place around a theme. The Kamloops theme, “Grasslands: Past, Present and Future”, provided the focus for the educational component with a roster of speakers and a collection of relevant field trips. Predictably, the speakers dealt with the ecology of the grasslands: “The Special Nature of our Grasslands”; “Hot, Dry Forests – Future Grasslands?”; “One percent and shrinking: Grassland Conservation in BC”, and “Looking Ahead” – the future of BC’s grasslands. Development, over-grazing, invasive species, forest encroachment and climate change all imperil the survival of our present-day grasslands.

Field trips to areas such as the grasslands around the Highland Valley Copper Mine, the Kamloops Indian Reserve, the Lac du Bois Protected Area and the Knutsford Ranches provided valuable object lessons to accompany the speaker series. Chris and I elected to go out to the Indian Reserve and were fortunate to have several excellent sightings of California Big Horn sheep, as well as an interesting explanation of controlled burning to regenerate grasses in selected areas of Crown land. The process is a very exact science, where proper humidity, wind, temperatures

and topography need to come together for a successful burn.

Chris was able to take in a tour (while I was in meetings!) of private ranch land in the Knutsford area. As well as seeing burrowing owls and a beautiful Swainson’s hawk, the group learned how the evolution of the Knutsford grasslands has been shaped by human influences: heavy grazing and introduced vegetation, to name only two.

Both the Board of Directors and the AGM meetings examined many key issues. Among these were the approval of the Strategic Plan for 2010 – 2015 and the allocations of funds to aid in implementation. The Plan outlines some ambitious goals which are deemed vital for BC Nature to grow in effectiveness and in membership.

Conservation matters receiving attention were the renewed effort to push for the establishment of a South Okanagan Similkameen National Park (in the works for seven years), and the need to prioritize conservation issues but to include better regional representation on the committee.

The proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway oil pipe line to Kitimat will be the subject of government environmental hearings where BC Nature will be represented by Nature Canada which has intervener status.

BC Parks had offered to lay out \$40,000 to fund the Province’s park interpretation program for the next five years. BC Nature rejected the proposal as totally inadequate and urged government to more adequately fund park interpretation.

BC Nature has received a substantial bequest - \$146,961 – from the estate of Lilian Hayden for land acquisition...cont’d  
p.4

...cont'd from p. 3

on southern Vancouver Island. Through a partnership with The Land Conservancy, a portion of the bequest will be used to purchase land in the Sooke Hills Potholes area. The remaining portion may be used to acquire land for conservation on Salt Spring Island.

We were sad to hear that Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan died. In his honour, the outstanding naturalist award will be renamed the McTaggart-Cowan Outstanding Naturalist Award.

Both Anne Murray and Eva Durance are stepping down from their respective executive positions as chairs of the Conservation and Parks and Protected Areas committees. These women have been powerful driving forces in BC Nature for over ten years. In addition, Bev Ramey has completed her two terms as President – a job well done.

At present, the new executive will be as follows:

President – John Neville

Secretary – Nieke Visser

Parks and Protected Areas Chair – Don Guild

Conservation Co-Chair – Rosemary Fox

Past President – Bev Ramey

The positions of Vice-President, Treasurer and Conservation Co-Chair are vacant at this time. Let's hope for a few willing volunteers to step forth.

As I mentioned in my President's Report, the WiTS program has lost funding and is in a crisis situation. Hopefully, a way will be found to salvage a program which has involved countless hours of

volunteer effort, particularly here on the island.

Every AGM ends with a Saturday evening banquet and a keynote speaker. We were treated to a fascinating slide presentation depicting both the Thompson and Chilcotin grassland and an address by Dr. Lauchlan Fraser, Research Chair at TRU. His talk on "Grasslands in Our World" directed our attention both at the diverse nature of the global grasslands and at the challenging future of these ecosystems not only in North America but in Central Asia as well.

Kamloops did a masterful job of hosting the AGM and the related activities in a region whose ecology is not all that familiar to many of us. These meetings are all the more valuable in that, as they are held around the province, naturalists are introduced to landscapes and flora and fauna distinct from our own.

If you can, do take the time and effort to attend a BC Nature AGM or FGM. Chris and I often attend and come away exhilarated. Usually we take an extra few days to tour that region and adjacent regions – an excellent spring getaway.

The next Fall General Meeting on Sept.30 – Oct. 3 will be hosted by the Langley Field Naturalist Society, with the 2011 Annual General Meeting in Williams Lake. I hope we see you there.

Submitted by: David Hutchings

**A COLLECTION OF...???**

Submitted by: Robert and Penny Mercer

Hare's Language of Field Sports (1939) collected a specific group of names for more than one hundred British birds. Among these curiosities: a convocation of eagles; a pitying of turtledoves; a murder of crows; a charm of goldfinches; a rafter of turkeys; a watch of nightingales; a mustering of storks; a descent of woodpeckers; a decit of lapwings; a mutation of thrush; a puddling of mallards; a building of rooks; a muster or

an ostentation of peacocks; a tribe of sparrows; a covert of coots; a siege of bitterns; and a peep of chickens.

In 'Schott's Original Miscellany' there are variations and additions to these nouns of assemblage (2002). In this book lapwings are a 'desert of'...and rooks a 'parliament of'...and additional names include an exaltation of larks; a sege of herons; and a herd of curlews. And just for the fun of it, there is a noun of assemblage for a cete of badgers.

Over the last six months (Nov /09 – Apr /10) we have been lucky enough to catch a number of unusual yard birds on camera in our back yard. We think the Cooper's Hawk must have flown too close to the window as he/she stayed for about 15 minutes on the same branch by our feeders - only four feet from the window where we got the photo. The Turtle-Dove has been a constant visitor eating cracked corn on the ground below the feeder. The Towhee is just stating its opinion of the camera. The Blue Heron was, we feel, searching for a nesting spot both here and across the road.

We are located on the water side of 19a at Wright Road near the Oceanside Middle School.



## **Flower Hunters**

By Mary Gribbin & John Gribbin

Oxford University Press, 332 pages, \$21.95

Reviewed by: Pam Helem

"Although it is so seldom felt, and seldom fulfilled, it is nevertheless one of our foremost duties – to know Nature, to realize the value of Nature's great and wonderful Chain, – to regard its splendour devoutly and with admiration, – to use its products wisely and with consideration."

The heartfelt words of botanical explorer, Carl Peter Thunberg in 1807, at a ceremony honouring the centenary of the birth of Carl Linnaeus, are as relevant two hundred years ago as they are today, -- and our our BC Nature Federation reminds us: "To know nature and keep it worth knowing".

His story and those of eleven other adventurous flower hunters, are sure to be enjoyed by any natural history enthusiast, particularly for botany, in a book published in 2008 by the English authors, Mary Gribbin and John Gribbin. Their extensive research has brought alive the rugged journeys, eccentricities and single-minded obsessions of those early collectors for seeking and collecting plants, beginning with John Ray in the mid-17th century to Joseph Hooker, who died in 1911. Familiar names, such as Carl Linnaeus, Joseph Banks, and David Douglas are included. As well as is the story of an intrepid female artist, Marianne North, who set herself a life goal to paint as many of the flowering species she could find in the tropical regions. Having the advantages of wealth, she was able to travel during the mid-eighteen hundreds to every inhabited continent and many of the larger islands.

My puzzlement about the Latin name for the Douglas Fir being '*Pseudotsuga menziesii*', was answered in the remarkable chapter about the trials and tribulations of explorer, David Douglas. The tree had been sighted by botanist Archibald Menzies during his unfortunate assignment as naturalist aboard the "Discovery" under a tyrannical Captain George Vancouver during their explorations in the 1790's along the now Washington and British Columbian coasts. However, it was Douglas, who in 1836, during one of his collecting trips, was able to send back to the Horticultural Society in London the seeds of this fast growing coastal giant of the western North American coast. Because of his prodigious collecting skills on behalf of this Society, the

*Pinus radiata*, *P. ponderosa*, *P. lambetiana*, and *Abies grandis* were introduced. However, it is the lovely Flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), which we learn, generated sales to such an extent that it covered the costs of one of his expeditions. Another favourite native plant in our Douglas Fir forest is the aromatic ground cover, Yerba buena (*Satureja douglasii*).

Several of these intrepid plant hunters had trained as medical doctors, such as Thunberg, Menzies and Hooker and these medical skills often smoothed the way for them to follow their real passion for botany in many of the remote and unwelcoming locales.

During the extensive chapter on Joseph Banks, reference is made to a Scottish surgeon-naturalist, Robert Brown (1773-1858), who sailed with Matthew Flinders during his circumnavigating of the entire coast of Australia. After Flinders returned to Britain, Brown remained in Australia to complete botanical studies during the 1820s and later described a phenomenon called the 'Brownian motion' a term coined for "the curious jiggling dance of pollen grains and other tiny particles suspended in air". Eighty years later, Albert Einstein proved "this motion is caused by the battering the particles receive from the molecules the air is made of."

The extensive notes and detailed index make the "Flower Hunters", a useful reference book for anyone with a curiosity for the remarkable floral treasures in today's gardens or simply with just a love for wildflower viewing and exploring the nature trails in our forests, coastlines and deserts.



Photo by: Penny Marshall

**Club History Notes: from the June 1980, Arrowsmith Natural History Society Newsletter**  
**Article written by: A. George Tranfield**

Little Mountain lies south-west of Parksville and provides a wonderful viewpoint from the peak, overlooking Parksville, Errington, Nanoose and the Englishman River valley. It was thus an ideal place to locate a forest fire lookout tower.

The Forest Service built the tower in the hungry thirties. I was in charge of constructing the eighty foot steel tower and it was used for many years before being reduced in height to fifty feet. The tower was brought here from Courtenay and the construction crew stayed on Bellevue Road.

In those days only a trail wound it's way up to the top of the mountain. A slip was made from the forks of a maple tree, with a cross bar placed across the top of the slip. The steel for the tower was lashed onto this and a horse dragged it up the mountain.

At first there was no telephone in the tower. You had to run down to the foot of the mountain, to Pophams, to telephone. The tower was taken down a few years ago after it ceased to be used. As it was being vandalized and was a hazard to children.

The telephone relay installation for the West Coast now stands close to the old tower location and there is also an antenna for District 69 cable television. A blacktop road extends a good way up the mountain and many permanent homes have appeared on the subdivided land.

**Koksilah River Ancient Forest...reprint from the Valley Naturalist, Mar/Apr 2010**  
**Article written by: Warrick Whitehead**

*The Koksilah River Ancient forest and the Renfrew Road area, which is part of the CVRD's Vision 2008, is still not safe from logging or development. The last time I (Warrick Whitehead) went to visit the forest, in late January, there were fresh ribbons for logging in the area. Talking with the real state division of Timber West (Couverdon) about this planned logging, they have given their assurance they will hold off any logging until after March 10<sup>th</sup>, when I have delegation status at the CVRD Parks Committee meeting. I will be asking for the Koksilah River Forest, downstream area to the Koksilah River Provincial Park and Kinsol Trestle to be added to the Parks acquisition list so those monies can be used in acquiring this*

*area as a park for the Cowichan Valley. I will also be asking the CVRD Parks committee to endorse the process for acquisition and to immediately start the negotiations with Couverdon to make sure this opportunity does not disappear. We should have such a treasure added to our park system. Couverdon will not hold these areas forever.*

An outing to the Kinsol Trestle is scheduled for the Arrowsmith Naturalists September 15<sup>th</sup>. In light of this outing, you may want to go on-line and learn more about the logging threatening this area, the Koksilah River Ancient Forest.

Article edited by: Margaret Hill

**ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS MEETINGS AND OUTINGS****- JUNE 28<sup>TH</sup> to NOVEMBER 22<sup>ND</sup> 2010 -****Car-pooling is encouraged**

For further information, please contact: Dave Hutchings (250) 752-1613

**Please Note:** Guests are most welcome. The Guest Waiver and Day Membership forms are available at time of outing and on the website [www.arrowsmithsnats.org/membership](http://www.arrowsmithsnats.org/membership). These forms must be read carefully, completed and signed with an accompanying \$1.00 fee before participating in an outing. Both forms and fee are to be given to the outing leader.

**Sun. June 28<sup>th</sup> - Paradise Meadows & Battleship Lake, Mount Washington**

Enjoy a lovely walk through mountain meadows on a boardwalk to see the flowers (hopefully) and then a moderate climb to an alpine lake. Gray Jays tend to seek out visitors, hoping for a handout...feeding them is discouraged. Part of the Paradise Meadows boardwalk is wheel chair accessible. Meet at Qualicum Beach Tourist Office, at 9:30 a.m. Bring a lunch, sturdy footwear and dress in layers...be prepared for weather changes.

**Mon. June 28<sup>th</sup> - General Meeting Springwood Middle School, PV - 7:30 p.m.:**

HANS BOERGER...presents slides and live demonstrations to illustrate his talk "Blood, Phantoms and Ghosts: Close Encounters with Pond Critters", an ideal subject to put us in the mood for the coming summer.

**Mon. July 26<sup>th</sup> - Annual Club 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 on to the Hatchery; drive past the Hatchery gates for 1.9 km, 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 potable water on site. The fun starts at 4 pm. until ??

**Sun. Aug. 22nd - Kidfest**

In the Parksville Community Park from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
If you would like to help out, call Betty: (250) 752-4744

**Wed. Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> Kinsol Trestle near Shawnigan Lake**

This is one of the last very impressive wooden trestles, spanning a deep gorge over the Koksilah River. It is slated for refurbishing as part of the Trans Canada Trail. Moderate. Bring lunch. Meet at Craig & Jensen at 9:30, or Arlington at 9:45.

**Sun. Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> - 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. Sturdy gloves would be a good idea. Meet at Sunny Beach Rd. in Qualicum Bay at 1:30 p.m.

**Sun. Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> - Nile Creek**

Nice forest nature walk along a major creek located just north of Qualicum Bay. Bring a lunch. Meet at the Qualicum Beach Tourist Office at 9:30 a.m.

**Mon. Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> - General Meeting Springwood Middle School, PV - 7:30 p.m.:**

DR. JOHN GUNTON...local geological consultant, will start our Fall session with a "bang", when he presents "Geohazards of the Georgia Basin". It is a multi-faceted topic, which he will discuss with accompanying slides in 2 Parts. The second Part will follow at the November meeting.

**Wed. Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> - Westwood Lake**

This is a moderate 6 km walk around lake with a chance to see a few birds. Lunch at Jingle Pot Pub. Meet at Craig & Jensen at 9:30 a.m., or Arlington at 9:45 a.m.

**Sun. Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> - Stamp Falls & Robertson Creek Hatchery**

Going to the hatchery is a chance to see returning salmon and walk along the riverside trail. Bring lunch and sturdy footwear. Bring a lunch. Meet at Qualicum Tourist office at 9:30 a.m.

**Mon. Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> - General Meeting Springwood Middle School, PV - 7:30 p.m.:**

ELKE WIND...takes us into the world of amphibians on the move at the time of year when it rains with her topic: "Why did the Toad Cross the Road?"

**Wed. Oct. 27<sup>th</sup> - 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 search for fall mushrooms. This is a moderate walk, with some stairs and hills. Bring a lunch. Meet at the Qualicum Beach Tourist Office at 9:30 a.m.

**Mon. Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> - General Meeting Springwood Middle School, PV - 7:30 p.m.:**

DR. JOHN GUNTON...is returning to present Part 2 of his topic "Geohazards of the Georgia Basin"

**Sun. DEC. 19<sup>th</sup>** - No meeting; however, you won't want to miss that special year-end event -- **THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**, followed by the **Potluck Dinner**, which always promises good food and many tall tales from the participant birders.

**2011****Mon. Jan. 24<sup>th</sup> - General Meeting Springwood Middle School, PV - 7:30 p.m.:**

MEMBERS' NIGHT: This is a favourite event for members to share their photos.

**Mon. Feb. 28<sup>th</sup> - General Meeting Springwood Middle School, PV - 7:30 p.m.:**

\*\* : (Date to be confirmed by School Board). TBA.