

ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS NEWSLETTER

TO KNOW, ENJOY AND PRESERVE NATURE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - AUTUMN 2016

LYNNE BROOKES



My "report" this time is more of an announcement that we are all members of a wonderful naturalist club that continues to be healthy, active and growing. We are one of 53 naturalist clubs in our province—testimony that we are not alone in our love for, enjoyment of, and desire to protect all things nature—including ourselves.

Protect? If anyone is unsure of why nature needs protecting look around at the "cropped" hillsides that no longer bear "forests"; look at the abundance of human-introduced invasive species in our estuaries, wetlands "natural" parks and around homes; note the dwindling number of salmon, and the slaughter of ancient bruins for their clawed ashtray-sized paws, for their teeth and a photo op; and take note of the lack of proper management of our degraded watersheds which detrimentally impacts wildlife and leads to summer water restrictions.

So, what are we doing about this? While there are some very special individuals who have dedicated their careers, lives and/or retirement years to deal with a variety of these issues, many of us work best as part of a group of like-minded individuals working together to accomplish good things. As a club we carry out citizen science providing local data annually on Brant numbers and through the Christmas Bird Count. We also provide environmental stewardship by clearing out invasive plants in the Englishman River Estuary. As individuals and as a club we join with other like-minded organizations to protect streams, Hamilton Marsh, clean up beaches, monitor and report seabird mortality, support wildlife rehabilitation, participate in local government forums for the benefit of our region, write letters, work towards saving special areas, and offer a great deal of public education.

Public education? All of our meetings and field trips are open to the public. We provide displays at: Farmers' Markets; our Brant in the Bay event; the Hamilton Marsh tour along with leading the public tour; Qualicum Beach Day; and Parksville's KidFest. Our club is affiliated with the local BC Nature Kids group—led by two of our members; we

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Editor ~ Kat Derksen

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sponsored native plant signage at the RDN Errington Elementary School trail; we started and host the "Mushroom Show" portion of the annual Mushroom Festival; we participate in Earth Day and Rivers Day. Members write newsletters & BC Nature magazine articles; members provide programs & teach classes thru VIU Elder College, NIWRA and at clubs and schools. All of this increases public awareness of the wonder of nature and the great need to better care for it.

ALL of the above endeavours are carried out by our amazing club member volunteers! We can be proud to encourage others to join this proactive life-charged group.

Within this newsletter, you will find a list of those people currently filling elected and appointed positions. With a current membership of 106 naturalists it is appropriate to ask that those members who are able to either "test the water" by volunteering for a position on the board as one of the directors, or by jumping in to another of our club's important executive or appointed positions. Each of these positions are quite "doable" by newcomers who bring fresh perspectives and vitality to our club as well as by continuing members who have much to offer and have been "thinking about it". As part of the Arrowsmith Naturalists' Executive, you will be working as part of a welcoming, well-functioning, thoughtful and creative group—crucial to our club's success. Our (non-threatening) elections and appointments will occur at the AGM in November. Don't be shy! Contact Dave Hutchings, me or any others on the current executive (listed in the newsletter) with questions and/or an expression of interest!

We need you!

Lynne Brookes, President



Photo Credit: Dave Erickson



Photo Credit: Rosemary Taylor

Left: Arrowsmith Naturalists President Lynne Brookes with an Amanita muscaria

Right: Lynne Brookes (ANats), Robin Campbell (NIWRA), and in the basket is "Pip" – a duck that was saved by and has imprinted on Robin. Robin heard a faint sound coming from inside a duck egg that was to be thrown out. He carefully picked away the shell and out came Pip who is now a faithful companion.

"Clothes I wear for mushroom hunting are rarely sent to the cleaner. They constitute a collection of odors I produce and gather while rambling in the woods. I notice not only dogs (cats, too) are delighted (they love to smell me)."

– **John Cage, M: Writings '67-'72**

ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS CLUB/MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

General Information: Club membership information is available at both Parksville and Qualicum Beach public libraries; on the web site <http://www.arrowsmithnats.org>, or by writing 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 and October.

New memberships are always welcomed. **Membership Fees:** Family \$35.00, Single \$25.00. Annual membership dues are collected at the October & November club meeting.

MEETING TIME/LOCATION:

Where: Knox United Church, 345 Pym St, Parksville, BC **When:** 4th Monday of January to June & September to November. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Meeting begins at 7:30.

RESPECT FOR CLEAN AIR - NO SMOKING & SCENT FREE - Smoking is not permitted in, on or around Knox United Church property. As well, please refrain from wearing perfume or scented products.

ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS OFFICERS AND CONTACTS

President: Lynne Brookes - Executive Business

Vice President: Elaine Lefebvre - General Meeting & Club Activities

Past President: Dave Hutchings

Executive Secretary: Kat Derksen

General Meeting Secretary: Sue Wilson

Treasurer: Derrick Grimmer

Membership: Toni Wyckoff

Directors:

Dave Erickson, Terry Taylor, Rosemary Taylor

BC Nature Rep: Sandra Gray

E-mail Correspondence: Bill Campbell

Conservation Environment: Gary & Ronda Murdock

Field Trips: Tom Constable

Newsletter Editor: Kat Derksen

Promotion: Sallie Dabb

Refreshments: Ron Wyckoff and Dave Erickson

Speaker Program: Ronda Murdoch

Stewardship: Dave Hutchings

Broom Bashing: Dave Hutchings

***When:** 9:30am - 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month:

Where: Bottom of Shelley Road, Parksville. Weather permitting, they will do a tour of the estuary and see what areas need attention.

Oceanside Nature Kids BC: Alison Bakker

Archivist: Margaret Hill

Web Site: David Helem

ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS SPEAKERS PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 2016 - JANUARY 2017

November 28, 2016 - Malcolm McAdie. Malcolm is a Wildlife Veterinarian with the Vancouver Island Marmot Recovery Foundation and will give an update on the status and recovery of the Vancouver Island Marmots.

January 23, 2017 – Member’s Night. Members are encouraged to share their nature photos with the group at this meeting. Up to 12 photos may be submitted. Please bring them on a USB stick to the meeting and be prepared to give a brief explanation of each photo!

ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS EVENTS

November 28, 2016 – Arrowsmith Naturalists Annual General Meeting (AGM)

December 18, 2016 – Parksville Qualicum Beach Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

This will be the 26th year for our BCPQ, also the 117th CBC. Volunteers are needed to join a team in the field. Teams are usually 3-7 birders possessing a mix of skill levels. As well, volunteers for “at home” feeder counts are needed. For more info contact: Sandra Gray

December 18, 2016 ~ 5:00pm – ANats Annual Pot-Luck Dinner at St. Anne’s/St. Edmund’s Anglican Church Hall ~ 407 Wembley Rd, Parksville

ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS OUTINGS

November 2016 – April 2017

Meeting Locations Key: C&J = Corner of Craig and Jensen streets, Parksville ~ QBT = Qualicum Beach Visitor Information Centre, 2711 Island Hwy W, Qualicum Beach ~ N&P = Northfield and Parkway rest stop parking, Hwy 19, Nanaimo ~ SB= Hwy 19A North and Sunnybeach Rd ~

✓ Indicates easy walking

✓ November 2nd (Wednesday) - Cumberland Museum, Ponds and Trails:

Cumberland offers an easy walk along the old Japanese Townsite Trail past a marsh and beaver pond. There is a low spot so wear appropriate footwear. We will also visit the museum. Lunch in town. Meet at 9:30 at QBT or SB 10:00. Leaders: Pam & David Helem

November 12th (Saturday) - Little Q Hatchery: Experience some late fall birding. There should be lots of fish as well as birds & also some interesting fungi. Meet at 9:30 at QBT Bring Lunch. Leader: Dave Erickson

November 26th (Wednesday) - Yellow Point Cranberry Farm: An opportunity to experience a working cranberry farm during the harvest season. The farm owners are practicing sustainable farming, while preserving the natural values of the land. There will be a nominal charge for the tour. Bring your own lunch or splurge on a lunch at the Crow and Gate Pub. Meet at C&J at 9:30 or N&P at 10:00. Leaders: Chris & Dave Hutchings

December 3rd (Saturday) - Westwood Lake: One smallish hill and a 6 km walk round this attractive lake created around 1906. Lunch at the Blackbear Pub Meet C&J 9:30 or 10:00 N&P. Leaders: Lou & Helen Poncelet

December 18th (Sunday) - Christmas Bird Count (CBC): Be part of the 117th CBC, the longest running citizen science survey in the world. Join a team in the field or count birds from home for the Feeder Count. Pot Luck Dinner at St. Anne's/St. Edmund's Church Hall to follow at 5:00pm

✓ January 18th (Wednesday) - Nanaimo River Estuary: Birding in a prime area at a great time of year. The possibility of seeing Short Eared Owls along with many other species. Rubber boots are advisable. Restaurant: TBA Meet at C&J 9:30 or N&P 10:00. Leader: TBA

✓ January 28th (Saturday) - Somenos Marsh and Duncan Sewage Lagoon: Easy walking on a newly constructed boardwalk and expectations of seeing some unusual birds. Meet at C&J 9:30 or N&P 10:00. Restaurant: TBA. Leader: TBA

February 8th (Wednesday) - Notch Hill: Beautiful views of Mt. Arrowsmith, Nanoose Harbour and South to Nanaimo. Meet at C&J 9:30 Leader: Tom Constable. Restaurant: Rocking Horse pub

February 18th (Saturday) - Little Qualicum Falls: A beautiful location where the lighting can be spectacular. Good walking shoes are advisable. Meet at QBT 9:30. Restaurant: Goats on the Roof. Leaders: Toni & Ron Wyckoff

March 1st (Wednesday) - Christie Falls at Ladysmith: Moderate hike with some uphill from trailhead to the falls. Good walking shoes are advisable. Meet at C&J 9:30 or N&P 10:00. Bring lunch. Leader: Pam & David Helem

March 11th (Saturday) - Hemer Park: A favourite destination for bird watchers and ornithologists. A viewing platform over the marsh, approximately 1 km from the parking lot, provides the opportunity to observe various types of ducks, Trumpeter swans, Bald eagles and turkey vultures, as well as beavers. Meet at C&J 9:30 or N&P 10:00. Restaurant: TBA. Leader: Chris & Dave Hutchings.

March, 22nd (Wednesday) - Enos Lake & Beaver Ponds: Home to the endangered Enos Lake Stickleback. Nearby ponds & wetlands support a wide diversity of birds & aquatic life and the rocky uplands feature Arbutus. Bring lunch. Meet at C&J 9:30. Leader: TBA

✓ April 1st (Saturday) - Moorecroft. Regional Park offers peace, tranquility and some of Vancouver Island's loveliest vistas. Bring lunch. Meet at C&J 9:30

THE PARKSVILLE ARBORETUM

By: *Terry Taylor*

One of Parksville's best kept secrets is its arboretum. I found it by accident while walking through the Community Park. It surrounds the tennis courts, and most of the trees are on the ocean facing side of the courts. Beside the path is a little kiosk with a green roof. This shows a map of the arboretum, identifying the trees it contains and where they come from.

The plantings are well maintained, and anyone with an interest in trees can easily spend several hours looking at them. There about 90 specimens and I went back and forth from the kiosk locating and studying those that attracted my interest. There are both species and cultivated varieties from the northern hemisphere, with one outlier from Chile. Both conifers and broadleaf trees are represented. Many are familiar species such as Douglas firs and tulip trees, but others are ones you are not likely to see anywhere else in the local area.

Of the 90 specimens these are some that I noted for various reasons:

Winged elm (*Ulmus alata*): On the west side of the tennis courts. These are from eastern North America, and have distinctive corky wings along the branches. There are two of them, and their trunks especially attracted my attention. They are covered by a beautiful coating of the rusty red alga *Trentepohlia*.

Dove tree (*Davidia involucrata*): Has two large white petal-like bracts around each flower cluster. Native to a small area of central China.

Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*): The fan shaped leaves are very distinctive. Distantly related to conifers, ginkgos were dominant trees 100 million years ago, but this is the only species of the whole group that still survives. It is no longer found in the wild, but a few remaining trees were planted around ancient monasteries in China. Otherwise, it would now be extinct. The Ginkgo Petrified Forest in central Washington is so named, because fossils of ginkgo leaves have been found there.

Dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*): This relative of the redwood is another living fossil. It was known as a fossil before it was discovered as a living tree. It now occurs in the wild only in a small area of China, but 40 million years ago dawn redwoods were common trees in prehistoric British Columbia. The needles are deciduous like the bald cypress.

Southern beech (*Nothofagus antarctica*): This is the tree from Chile. These trees are related to beech trees. The genus grows in southern South America and New Zealand, and originated on the ancient continent of Gondwana before it broke apart.

Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*): There are two of these commonly planted trees, but what attracted my attention, in this case, was not the trees, but the showy orange *Xanthoria parietina* lichens on their trunks.

These are some of the trees that I liked, but visit the arboretum yourself and see which ones you like.

Photo Credits: Terry Taylor ~ Top to Bottom: Dawn Redwood, Dove Tree (Please refer to the May/June 2016 ANats Newsletter for additional photos)

Editor's Note: Having strolled through the Parksville Arboretum many times I highly recommend a visit to this jewel. It is a wonderful way to spend some time in nature and learn about some rather interesting trees. Each season offers its own interest so pick a time and just go – anytime. You might consider combining your visit there with a walk on the Parksville boardwalk along the oceanfront just a few steps away. ~ KD



THE BEES, THE BIRDS, AND THE ENGLISHMAN RIVER ESTUARY

By: *Rosemary Taylor*

A stroll through the Englishman River Estuary in summer is an exercise in relaxation. Nothing much is going on, right? Well, not exactly. Most of the regular birds in the area seem to have gone AWOL. All is quiet, the sun beats down, and one is left with one's thoughts while watching the 'bow wave' of migratory grasshoppers jumping in all directions as they feel footsteps coming towards them. Until unexpectedly there's a loud buzzing sound at ground level coming from one of those little sandy paths that crisscross the meadow area, which at that time is a sea of gumweed and wild carrot flowers. Looking down, you can't help but notice there is literally a hive of activity.

I watched in astonishment as little bees (or were they wasps?) flew in, landed on the sandy soil in front of me, and started burrowing furiously on touch-down. Even more astonishing were the large eye-catching bright yellow pollen baskets many of them carried on their legs, looking every bit like water wings on either side of their tiny bodies. How did they manage to fly so well with a load like that? Pollen must be extremely light! Other actors in this scene were thinner, more grey than brown, with white horizontal stripes across them. What exactly were these fascinating creatures? What was going on here?



Camera in hand, as usual, I took some photos. Not an easy task when your subjects keep taking off and landing just as the shutter button is being pressed but, nevertheless, some useful pictures resulted that I could use for ID purposes. But who to ask about all this? A quick search of the internet, and I found Rob Cannings, Emeritus Curator of Entomology at the Royal B.C. Museum, to be the answer. I contacted him, sent photos, and almost immediately got an answer that, having consulted with Lincoln Best, a bee expert in Calgary, Rob told me I'd been watching long-horned bees, with some cleptoparasite bees in the mix! (See above photo: female long-horned bee with the pollen baskets, the male long-horned bee to the right, and a dead cleptoparasite just by the female). Isn't that a great word - cleptoparasite! Rob wrote that they "lay eggs in other bees' nests and the larvae of these parasites feed on the pollen stores of the pollen-gathering bees. Obviously, these parasitic bees don't collect their own pollen". In other words, they're the cowbirds of the bee world.



My husband, Terry Taylor, had not seen all this as I was by myself. So, the next day we both returned to the meadow to take another look. (Photo at left shows sandy trails through the gumweed meadow). It was later in the day, and like most workers going home at five o'clock, the daily chores had been done and the pollen baskets were no longer full and bright yellow, but could still be seen although much duller and smaller than the day before.

The next surprise was yet to come. As we continued on our way towards the Mill Street entrance, past a dugout pond, backed by trees and houses, the sky was filled with scimitar-winged birds flying in all directions at high speed. Looking up in the sky, instead of down on the trail, we enjoyed a spectacle of a huge flock of nighthawks on the hunt for insects - of which there were many flying even around us, as is common on a sultry summer's late afternoon. This was a particular thrill, since nighthawks had long since disappeared from the skies over Vancouver, where we had lived until fairly recently. It was almost a relief to know that nighthawks were still around, and were still filling the skies in great numbers. What a pleasure to see their familiar forms, with the distinctive white patches on each wing, and know that at least here on the Island all is well with the world.

Photo Credits: *Rosemary Taylor*

PACIFIC SLOPE FLYCATCHER

By: *Stuart Spracklin*



As you probably know, the Pacific Slope Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*) is a species of concern. This summer we were surprised and excited to have a nest built under our eaves. (Editors Note: Pacific Slope Flycatchers are known to build elegant moss nests on banks, rock bluffs or large stumps.) I was able to take pictures, at arms-length and only when mum was away

from the nest, every second day from when the eggs were laid. This photo of a female was taken in June of this year (2016) in our birch tree. ~ SS

THE COWBIRD KID

By: *Kat Derksen*

This photo was taken in our front yard last spring. Yes, that is a kid yelling at its mother (typical)! As you likely know, the Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) is a brood parasitic New World bird - unrelated to the Old World Cuckoo (the most famous brood parasitic bird). In this instance, a female Cowbird



laid at least one egg in the nest of a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*). We watched the pair for days as Mom tried desperately to keep up with the feeding demands of this member of her brood. She had three other hungry mouths to feed but the Cowbird was by far the most vocal, most persistent & most demanding. ~ KD

Did You Know?

Did you know? - Small songbirds cannot learn to ignore their own reflection in a mirror or mirror-like surface. Monkeys, cats and dogs, while not necessarily able to recognize themselves in a mirror, are not baffled by their reflection – at least not for long. Small songbirds, on the other hand, never get over themselves! Tits & bluebirds will respond to a side-view mirror on a car as though it is an intruder in their territory. They will stop their hostilities only when the car drives off.



Did you know? - The Shaggy Mane (*Coprinus comatus*) mushroom is an excellent locally found edible mushroom provided it is eaten as soon after harvest as possible. The Shaggy Mane rapidly and completely auto-digests its gills and cap (this process can be slowed if they are kept in icy water). They are a fleshy and deceptively tough fungi. In reality, Shaggy Manes are powerful enough to grow through asphalt! **(Photo Credit: Wikipedia)**

Did you know? - There are no fewer than six rivers in BC with name “Salmon River”. The Salmon River of Vancouver Island is north of Campbell River and its headwaters lie in Strathcona Provincial Park. This particular Salmon River is a salmon river indeed! It has spawning runs of all five Pacific salmon species including annual runs of up to 200,000 Pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*). Pinks are the smallest and most abundant of Pacific salmon.

Did you know? - There are approximately 7000 different species that inhabit the coastal waters of Vancouver Island. This includes more than 200 species of migratory birds and 33 species of land mammals. An amphibian listed as of “Special Concern” on Vancouver Island, and in BC in general, is the Red-legged Frog. Their numbers are in decline due to habitat degradation & loss from agriculture, urban development and forestry.

WHAT IS IT?



Do you know what this is? Do you know what kind of environment it is found in? Do you know what season it is found in? More specifically – Where in the Oceanside area were these pictures taken? The next newsletter will contain the answers!



Arrowsmith Naturalists members hosting tables/displays at the recent 2nd Annual Mid-Island Mushroom Festival held October 16, 2016 at North Island Wildlife Recovery centre in Errington, BC : L – Terry Taylor (blue jacket), C – Sue Wilson (red jacket) & Pam Helem (blue jacket), R – Toni Wyckoff (green shirt) **Photo Credit: Ed Wilson**



Photo Credit: Ed Wilson

This is just a small sampling of the many mushrooms/fungi that were on display at the Mid-Island Mushroom Festival on October 16, 2016 in Errington, BC. Can you identify any? How about the Matsutake (more commonly referred to as Pine Mushroom)? Or how about the "mushroom" that really isn't a mushroom at all but rather is a parasitic ascomycete fungus. It is a *Hypomyces lactifluorum* (more commonly referred to as a Lobster Mushroom) that has likely parasitized a *Russula* mushroom.

Christie Falls

A happy group enjoying one of Arrowsmith Naturalists many outings/nature walks! This is just one example of the many fine natural environments available to our members as part of our group activities.



Arrowsmith Naturalists at Christie Falls (Ladysmith) October 2106: L-R: Frank Vanmanen, Brenda Vanmanen, Toni Wyckoff, Tom Constable, Jeannie Schippers, Rob Schippers and Ron Wyckoff in front. **Photo Credit: Bob Harvey**

CAN/BOTTLE RETURNS

Can/Bottle Return Accounts have been set up at both the Parksville and Qualicum Beach recycling centres. When returning your cans/bottles please indicate that you wish to donate the proceeds off your returns to the **ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS** account.

** Please remember to make the request to credit ANats **BEFORE** your cans/bottles are counted by a staff member at the centre. **

*** Please mention this to friends & family ***

Parksville Bottling & Recycling Centre: 611 Alberni Hwy, Parksville

Qualicum Bottling & Recycling Centre: 141 4 Ave E, Qualicum Beach



Be someone else's
sunshine.
Be the reason
someone smiles
today.

SUNSHINE ~ If you know of an Arrowsmith Naturalist who is ill, in hospital or recently bereaved, please contact: Pam Helem: arrowsmithnats@gmail.com

"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." –Desmond Tutu

The Arrowsmith Naturalist Newsletter 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 **January 31, 2017 for the February 2017 edition.**

Hand-written or typed articles and photos are accepted. Some editing may be required for length or held off for another edition as per available space. Please e-mail articles to: henandkat.derksen@gmail.com Alternatively, send by mail to: Kat Derksen, Arrowsmith Naturalists Newsletter Editor, Box 1542, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4.

A reference copy of the current ANats newsletter is available at each of the Parksville & Qualicum Beach libraries. Meetings and Outings sheets are available at Mulberry Bush Books in Parksville and in Qualicum Beach.