



October 2022
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Arrowsmith Naturalists NEWS

President's Report

What a wonderful summer we've had. I'm so pleased that my last president's letter is such a positive one.

Getting our new park and eagle sanctuary at French Creek was the icing on the cake. A large donation from the Age of Union ([Age of Union](#)) put us over the top and it's all coming to fruition. Wonderfully, The Regional District of Nanaimo and the [BC Parks Foundation](#) have both created and filled a new position in each of their organizations focused on restoration and stewardship of this new park to return it to a more natural state. It's a pilot project that could have huge ramifications for BC parks and perhaps other parks within RDN.

It's expected that the baseline insect and aerial insectivore surveys planned for 2022 will make a fresh start next spring (weather permitting again). This year's funding will carry forward to 2023. The researchers are on board again and the survey volunteers are primed!

We have had two great meetings at Rathtrevor. We're lucky to have this beautiful place so close and to have so much room for our outdoor meetings. I did discover, during the quiz, that some of you need a bit more trivia at your fingertips. Like a shiver of sharks. My personal favourite even though nobody ever asks me!

We were extremely fortunate to receive a donation of \$5,000 from a very generous anonymous donor. Although my long list included Hamilton Marsh, that was a big ask. But we were able to purchase a set of 11 good quality binoculars (see articles by Sheri and Lynne). We send many thanks to the [Backyard Wildbird & Nature Store](#) that gave us a wonderful deal! We also purchased an electric chainsaw and batteries (watch out big broom!); signage; a new table display system; new

revised pollinator bookmarks; and more. A huge THANK YOU to the donor!

The mushroom festival is well in hand with a great committee at the helm. We have the entire Coombs Fairgrounds this time, so there should be lots of room. We won't have speakers but lots of vendors, and [Bill Helin](#), First Nations artist, storyteller and author, will be at the bandshell providing sessions of drumming and singing and to talk about/do some carving. Claire has done an amazing job getting vendors both new and old plus she's found several food trucks. Toni is busy looking for volunteers so please think about putting your hand up. You absolutely do not need to know anything about mushrooms. I sure don't but I have a good time and there's food for all volunteers (a plus in my book!)

The latest good news is the donation to the Nature Trust of BC of 71 acres along the Englishman River! See Lynne's article about this latest TNT BC acquisition.

I'd like to remind everyone of the upcoming AGM in November. We really need people to step up and keep our wonderful club going strong. I can't tell you how much I've enjoyed and learned from you all. Thanks so much for your patience and guidance. I hope to keep very much involved as I see the Arrowsmith Naturalists as one of the most active, contributing and interesting groups in this area with a terrific rapport with all the other nature-based groups. The next president may or may not wrest the gavel from me!

Thanks once again for allowing me the opportunity to lead this most excellent group. We've accomplished so much and I'm so proud to be involved.

With much hope and gratitude, *Sally*

Officers and Contacts

President: Sally Soanes **Vice Pres:** Derrick Grimmer

Past Pres: Lynne Brookes **BC Nature:** Antonia Wyckoff

Stewardship: Dave Hutchings **Treasurer:** Helen Davidson

Exec. Secretary: Mark Mazurski **Speakers:** Duncan Campbell

Mtg. Secretary: Elizabeth Salomon-de-Friedberg

Membership: Bonnie Mullin **Promotion:** Maggie Little

Conservation/Enviro. Gary & Ronda Murdock

Directors: Claire Summers, Maggie Green

Archivist(s): Diane & Jim Goodwin **Sunshine Contact:** Pam Helem

Email & Zoom: Duncan Campbell **Website:** Kerry Baker

Facebook: Tom Constable **Newsletter:** Sylvia Riessner

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Club/Membership Information

Check our [website](#) or [Facebook page](#) or request information by writing to:

Arrowsmith Naturalists, Box 1542,
Parksville, BC V9P 2H4

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Bonnie Mullin

We currently have 127 ANats members. We have had several new members, happily, join in 2022. Meetings have been a mixture of Zoom and in-person, plus a couple on the beach this summer. We have also had several outings and with a new team of leaders the future is bright.

Memberships are due again!! To be paid by December 18 \$25 for single and \$35 for family

We have to collect early as our partner BC Nature charges us \$19.55 for every membership on our books by December 31. This covers the cost of BC Nature membership, which includes four great magazines a year, and insurance coverage. It also helps BC Nature support many good activities promoting nature.

If you are considering NOT joining for 2022, please let me know as soon as possible: live2hike@shaw.ca or phone 250-927-8889

We hate to lose you but you can always rejoin at a later time.

Please honour the deadline as it takes time to get all the updates done.

All the best, *Bonnie Mullin*

Process for renewing your membership:

1. Go to the Arrowsmith Naturalists webpage and click on the [Membership link](#) at the top of the page. Download and print the Membership and Release of Liability forms (clicking on a link will download an Adobe pdf file).
2. Fill out and sign the forms (both forms MUST be completed) and mail them, together with a cheque made out to Arrowsmith Naturalists, to:

Arrowsmith Naturalists, Box 1542
Parksville BC V9P 2H4

We are working on being able to fill in forms online and send money by etransfer, but it is not available yet.

If you plan on attending any of the upcoming Outings, you can hand the forms and cheque to Bonnie or Helen or other members of the Executive that are there.

If you have problems with these options, contact me by email and I will send you forms. I will have forms and be present at the General meetings at St. Edmunds Church if you are attending in person.

Meet Iris Bitterlich**NEW MEMBERS****Why did you decide to join ANats?**

I have a life-long love of nature. So, when I lived in White Rock and Osoyoos I joined the naturalist groups local to those areas. I enjoyed the talks, hikes and walks organized by those groups and spending time with people who, like me, value the natural world. Now that I am living in Parksville, it was a given that I would join ANats.

**I understand you are an agrologist - can you briefly describe what your work involves?**

I am a consulting agrologist working for different clients, mostly on issues related to crop protection and integrated pest management. In practical terms this means chairing grower meetings to identify problematic pests and diseases, researching management tools, and working to make the tools available to growers.

Are there things you would like to learn about (nature-related) from Arrowsmith Naturalists?

I have a particular interest in native plants, birds, bees and wasps. However, that being said, I am pretty well interested in anything in nature, especially organisms that have interesting life histories. So, anything club members want to share with me that is nature-related is most welcome!

NEWS FROM THE OUTINGS COMMITTEE

by Toni Wyckoff

A very big thanks to **Claire Summers** for organizing the outings for the past four years; the last three years being the toughest for anyone. With COVID, lockdowns, heat domes, atmospheric rivers, and gas prices, just to name the major ones, Claire did a fantastic job.

Claire has asked, several times, for someone to take over the outings. We know it's a tough job so we have organized a committee of seven to take over from one. The new **Outings Committee** includes:

- Mark and Judy Mazurski,
- Jeannie and Rob Shippers,
- Maggie Green,
- Toni and Ron Wyckoff.

Hopefully we can live up to Claire's organizational skills. We will each take a month to organize so the work is distributed. Mark has volunteered to do the notifications and updates on the website. The notifications will be sent out twice so you can plan ahead. When circumstances occur and trips have to be cancelled, we will try to reschedule so no one is disappointed.

We realize how important it is to get out into nature and still learn and enjoy. We will try to find new and exciting walks with the help of the membership. Feel free to talk to any of us if there are places to explore. Feel free to lead hikes that you have enjoyed. We realize COVID is still with us and need to respect others wishes. Not everyone is comfortable with sharing rides or being indoors.

We still have most meeting places (with parking) except for Parksville. If anyone has an idea where we can park, please let us know. If you do car pool, a \$5 donation is made to the driver unless you are travelling far – for example, to Duncan.

We are still following all the rules:

- Everyone signs in on the trip sheet.
- If you bring a guest they need to bring the Waiver and Day Membership forms, plus \$1 for insurance.

All forms and sign-in sheets will be given to Mark; he will pass on the \$1 to Bonnie Mullin our membership secretary.

September 14th Outing: **Seal Bay Nature Park**

We started off the season with a trip to Seal Bay Nature Park with 12 members. It was a very pleasant outing with 7km of ever-changing forest.

Hopefully you can join us on our future planned outings for 2022 (on ANats website):

- Dashwood Loop,
- Englishman River Falls,
- Thames Creek,
- Nymph Falls,
- The Notch,
- Enos Lake, and
- Rubble City at Little Mountain.

Did you
know...

Hover flies are important pollinators but they play a different role when they are in the larval form. What are some of the unique features of these larvae?

Hover fly larvae can be terrestrial or aquatic. They are known as "bum breathers" as they have a tube on their rear that lets them breathe while feeding on decaying organic matter.

THE STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Dave Hutchings

It seems that we're in an endless summer in mid-October. Some might say that climate change is messing with our sense of the seasons; others will see all of this as a warning of drastic changes to come. Whatever your belief, there is ample evidence that something different is coming our way.

At the Englishman River Estuary (ERE), our assault on invasive plant species continues. Although there are few mature scotch broom left, there are plenty of their progeny eager to take hold. Areas that were cleared of plants still see new seedlings emerging. The good news is that the new plants are easier to deal with and tend to grow in areas that are more accessible.

But we still have other invasive candidates to seek out: English ivy and holly, spurge laurel, and so on. One piece of good news is that there has been much less spotted knapweed. Whether this is because of our diligence or the impact of hot, dry summers remains to be seen.

Much of our success in tackling mature broom is due to David Helem's generosity. David used his battery-operated chain saw to quickly cut through the thick stalks. Not wanting to lean on David's generous nature and due to some strong lobbying by our workers, we decided to go shopping for our own saw. At the same time, the ANats received a generous donation, through BC Nature, to purchase some much-needed equipment...and we added a short-bladed electric chainsaw to the list. The newly-acquired saw is now charged up, oiled and ready to use. (See the accompanying photo of Helen, eager to "get using".)



But the ANats have attacked invasives elsewhere also. When Sue Wilson discovered large patches of lamium in her neighbourhood Shelly Creek Park this past summer, she engaged the Invasive Plants Council to demonstrate best practices for eradication of this highly invasive plant. She organized some neighbourhood volunteers and invited our stewards in on the project. They cut and pulled the plants and covered the infected areas with heavy cardboard to inhibit regrowth. Hopefully, next summer will see far less lamium in Shelly Creek Park.

The Nature Trust of BC (TNT), under whose invitation we carry out our stewardship, has had a busy few months. After the TNT acquired the Mariner Way property, Shawn Lukas—the TNT Major Projects Coordinator—has been busy organizing the removal of the structures on the land. The buildings were cut apart and the sections taken/floated away by Nickel Bros. building removers. Other infrastructure, such as cement slabs, septic tanks, etc. is being removed by heavy equipment, to make way for the eventual naturalizing of the area.

Another Nature Trust project has been to add some large woody debris (a.k.a. large tree stumps) secured in places along the banks to preserve and create habitat for salmonid smolts and fry, as well as stabilizing the banks of the Englishman River. The work meant the removal of some trees and vegetation, which will be replaced later in the year with new plants (a project which may well involve the Arrowsmith Naturalists.)

To highlight both of these projects, Shawn Lukas will lead a tour starting at 9:30 a.m. on **October 13**. The event will begin at the Shelly Road entrance to the ERE. Please come out to show our support for this vital work.

Several of our ANats have been assisting Curtis Rispin—a TNT Restoration and Monitoring Technician—in spring and fall migration bird surveys at the Estuary. Although Curtis has not yet entered all the data for the year, he reports that:

"...this year seemed to be a bit quieter for shorebirds than the last few. I didn't see quite the same numbers as last year, but somewhat similar to... previous years (this is for both spring and fall migration as shorebird surveys get lumped together):

(continued on next page)

The Stewardship Report *(continued)*

Curtis Rispin – report before data has been entered

“ Total species and count (shorebirds only):

2017	8 species, 459 birds
2018	8 species, 565 birds
2019	10 species, 247 birds
2020	no surveys completed due to Covid
2021	13 species, 841 birds
2022	13 species (to be confirmed), unknown total

The highlight bird was a Long-billed curlew, observed on August 22 from the old lookout tower, but other birds I saw this year were:

Killdeer, Greater yellowlegs, Long-billed dowitcher, Black oystercatcher, Western sandpiper, Least sandpiper, Baird's sandpiper, Dunlin Semi-palmated plover, Black-bellied plover, Lesser yellowlegs, and Short-billed dowitcher.

Birds that I did not see, and have seen in previous years, were:

Semi-palmated sandpiper, Sanderling, Ruff, Pacific-golden plover, and Wilson's phalarope.

I believe overall numbers will be down, especially over last year's count, as the peeps (Western, least and semi-palmated sandpipers) seemed far lower this year.”

Curtis will be starting waterfowl surveys in November and he welcomes the ANats to come along. Extra eyes are always helpful.

And finally, a great big **“THANK YOU”** to all the ANats volunteers who come out faithfully to support our stewardship. It's important work.

Our next work session is **October 20**, starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Shelly Road entrance.

Upcoming Events

The Mid Island Mushroom Festival

by Terry Taylor



We are having the Mid-Island Mushroom Festival again on Sunday October 23, 2022 from 11 am to 4 pm. Join us at the Coombs Fairgrounds at 1014 Ford Road.

There will be food trucks and artisans on the grounds and lots of opportunities to learn more about mushrooms inside the building.

★ We need LOTS of mushrooms. ★

We are asking that you bring them to the Fairgrounds **the day before the event** – Saturday, October 22 from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. They will be identified and set out for the Sunday display.

Ford Road is the road next to Station Road.

Upcoming Events (continued)

Arrowsmith Naturalist's 32nd Annual Christmas Bird Count

by Jim Goodwin

The Parksville Qualicum Beach - Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held **Sunday, December 18, 2022.**

Last year weather was an influencing factor on count day. The sky was mostly cloudy; the temperature was from 0 to 4 C. with showers at mid-day. Inland there was 2 inches of snow and many roads were impassable. Not a usual year!

Sponsored by the Arrowsmith Naturalists the 2021 CBC was conducted by 58 field observers and 40 feeder counters surveying a 24 km. diameter count circle, centred at French Creek Marina and divided into 12 zones, counting a total of 25,304 birds of 113 species.



Our count results will contribute to the [123rd National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count](#),

North America's longest-running citizen science project. Each year upwards of 2,000 circle counts are held in the Western Hemisphere by volunteer groups, with British Columbia conducting more than 90 counts.

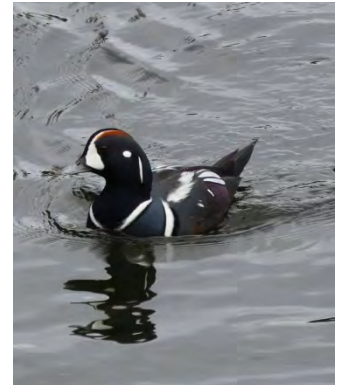
More details will be available soon for interested volunteers.

Field Observers contact:

Jim Goodwin 250 248-0049 good_one@telusplanet.net

Feeder Watchers contact:

Lynne Brookes 250 586-4595 rppsolar@yahoo.com



NatureKids BC Oceanside

by Sheri Plummer

Our first fall NatureKids BC Oceanside outing, organized by Sheri Plummer and Maureen LaFleche, was to hike and explore the French Creek Estuary at the new eagle sanctuary. We greatly appreciate the huge effort made by the the BC Parks Foundation; Dax Dasilva, Age of Union; the RDN; and the community at large for acquiring this beautiful biodiverse park for our kids and their families to experience and learn about nature.

Parents, grandparents and 16 eager NatureKids arrived 10AM Sunday, Sept.25 to get their new badges and greet our favourite friend and mentor, Lynne Brookes who led this activity. After a thorough examination of a somewhat startled but gently handled terrestrial garter snake, we trekked the forest path to learn about forest life.

We stopped at the creek for a lesson on the importance of the estuary's salt water/fresh water combination for fish and other wildlife and how to be good stewards of this waterway.

After this, the new Arrowsmith Naturalists' binoculars came out and the older kids gathered around to learn how to care for, and then how to use the binoculars to enjoy the wildlife around us. Not to be outdone, the younger kids with Maureen and I, explored along the bank listening to the killdeer and finding crickets. Then, what a discovery — another large garter snake was curled up in a bush enjoying a meal of fish! All we could see was a body and tail but likely it was a sculpin.

Photos by Randy Findlay



NatureKids BC Oceanside (continued)

At noon we gathered back together to say goodbye and passed out some fun homework. To finish, we opened a little library of nature books, which our helper Dee Horne organized, so that we could track the books and be sure they were returned. *Bonus! Just as we were leaving, two Great Blue Herons flew into the lot!*

Our next Explorer Day will be **October 16**. If you have a child or grandchild who might be interested, please contact me.



New Club Binoculars

by Lynne Brookes

Thanks to a wonderful anonymous donation and the generous discount provided by Colin Bartlett, owner of the Backyard Wildbird & Nature Store in Nanaimo, our club now has eleven new durable, lightweight, Vanguard Veo ED 8x42 binoculars. They will provide important support for our citizen science efforts and for the NatureKids BC.



Many people do not have binoculars—or adequate binoculars—for use in the citizen science efforts we undertake such as: the Christmas bird counts; Brant counts; insect and bird surveys. It is also rare for binoculars to be available for use in educational programs. Teaching the basics of binocular use to aspiring or potential birdwatchers, coupled with opportunities to practice, can lead people of all ages to care more about birds and, hopefully, their conservation. When the baseline insect and bird surveys take place next year, these binoculars will be of great assistance to volunteers who don't have their own.

The first use of these new binoculars occurred during the September NatureKids BC Oceanside program (see previous page). After a short lesson, it was great to see how captivated the eleven older children

were (and their parents/guardians) as they used the binoculars to look at birds, treetops, insects, boats and all around the estuary.

These kids will have other opportunities to use these tools during the Christmas Bird Count Feeder count; the Brant counts; and some may wish to participate in a season of feeder watching or in nest watching!

WETLANDS EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR PQB

by Lynne Brookes

In the fall of 2021, the Arrowsmith Naturalists applied for a grant from the BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF) to provide the Parksville-Qualicum Beach area with a Wetland Education Program, "[Map Our Marshes](#)." Our proposal was supported by the Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society ([MVIHES](#)), the Friends of French Creek Conservation Society ([FFCCS](#)), and the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute ([MABBRI](#)). In the spring of 2022, we were notified that our grant request was successful and a flurry of activity began as Sally Soanes, Barb Riordan (MVIHES president) and I started preparing for the workshop to be held on August 20th and 21st.

The "Map Our Marshes" program was structured with a four-hour introduction to wetlands (presented by BCWF presenters), followed by a full day of field experiences. The BCWF program is valuable to decision-makers and those who work with local wetlands so we invited staff from Parksville and Qualicum Beach to register early as attendance was limited to 25 for the field day.

We chose to offer the introduction virtually to enable us to reach a wider local audience. We selected three wetland sites for the field day: The Parksville Wetlands, the Englishman River estuary, and Hamilton Marsh. MABR provided support by contacting the property owners for formal permission to access their properties and also provided deli lunch trays and beverages for the field day event.

On Aug. 20, Sally, Barb and I met with the three BCWF presenters to take them on a tour of the three wetland sites. That evening, the presenters delivered the four-hour introduction via Zoom from their motel room. Everything worked well and the session was well attended.

On Aug. 21, the 24 registrants—including four Parksville staff— met at the Parksville Wetlands. After brief introductions and opening remarks, off we went to take soil samples, identify wetland-obligate and other indicator plants, and to discuss impacts on, and restoration of, this wetland area. We went to Rathtrevor Provincial Park for a lunch break after which we continued on to the Englishman River estuary to view and discuss tidal marshlands.

Hamilton Marsh was the final wetland area to visit. We collected several soil samples from under the shallow water along the dock, and from a nearby open area at the "peaty" edge of the marsh. We discussed what the sodden soil cores contained and represented—these sample cores can tell us a lot about the history and health of our marshlands.

The BCWF provided an enjoyable and informative entry-level workshop to help participants learn about different types of wetlands, and how identify and measure them. We appreciate the access to wetlands provided by Nature Trust of BC (Englishman River estuary) and MOSAIC (Hamilton Marsh) and the support of MABBRI and other groups. Thanks to this BCWF Map Our Marshes workshop, participants should have a better understanding and appreciation of wetlands in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach area. And, hopefully, this will lead to better protection of these and other wetlands in the future.



Pollinators Project – Observations

Rosemary Taylor

During the summer, people sent me their observations and nature notes about pollinators. My hope is that many will enjoy learning more about our pollinator project that has been running quietly behind the scenes for almost three years now. A downloadable collection will be available on the Arrowsmith Naturalists website shortly.

Notes from Maggie Little

I have been weeding and gardening and on my knees for the past few weeks, so now have a good idea of the winged visitors.

The butterflies are mainly the Cabbage Whites. But lovely sighting of a Red Admiral 2 days ago, and a Woodland Skipper today both visiting my veggie garden. The squash, cucumber and zucchini flowers and herbs seem to be the main attractants.

The Lavender bushes are always very well attended.



Three Swallowtails
on their lavender
bed
– Judy Mazurski

FRENCH CREEK ESTUARY – INSECT SURVEYS PROJECT

by Lynne Brookes

We received some great news this summer that the French Creek estuary land was being purchased by the BC Parks Foundation. The not-so-great news was that the seller restricted access to the land during negotiations due to liability concerns. This meant that the researchers and volunteers were unable to carry out the baseline insect and aerial insectivore surveys as planned and for which we had already received funding. Thankfully, the two grantors were willing to reschedule the surveys to 2023.

Despite the delay in the project start, Dr. Gilmore was willing to provide volunteers with additional training to reinforce our familiarity with the iNaturalist app and insect ID. With funding for this effort generously provided by the Mount Arrowsmith Region Research Institute (MABRRI), we were able to offer a 3-hour practical field experience at the Englishman River Estuary on July 10th. Sixteen volunteers registered for this training including two MABRRI participants.

Starting from the Shelly Road entrance, we walked along the wide path through the forest towards the estuary. We looped back to the exit near Mills Road to walk back to our starting point. Along this route there are many types of habitats for insects—trees, shrubs and shady, moist forest floor litter; dryish, sunny estuarine shoreline; and shrubby areas along the west side of the estuary. We found many insects of all sorts! We learned how to locate, capture, photograph, identify and release insects.

Many of us have walked this route often but had *no idea* what has been around us all this time. Ranging from minute springtails to a cicada in the forest and from metallic bees to grasshoppers along the estuary, we were blown away by the diversity and abundance of insects at this site! What we were learning was practical *and* thrilling -- in no small part due to Scott's and his son Zeke's enthusiasm. We all admired how Dr. Gilmore's young assistant was able to dash off headlong through the brush with a net after butterflies—something none of us but Helen tried!

When we returned to Shelly Rd., Jenica and Alanna of MABRRI brought out some much appreciated snacks and juices to top of a terrific experience for us all.

As we snacked and talked about the day, setting up an iNaturalist site for this estuary was discussed. Elizabeth Bredberg volunteered to do so with guidance from Dr. Gilmore. Liz Later let us know that she had to create a new site name because she found an earlier, incorrectly identified and mapped, existing site. The new **correct** iNaturalist site is named the “Englishman River Estuary, British Columbia” with the link: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/englishman-river-estuary-british-columbia>

The next time you visit the ERE—look around even more closely—you'll be surprised how not alone you are!

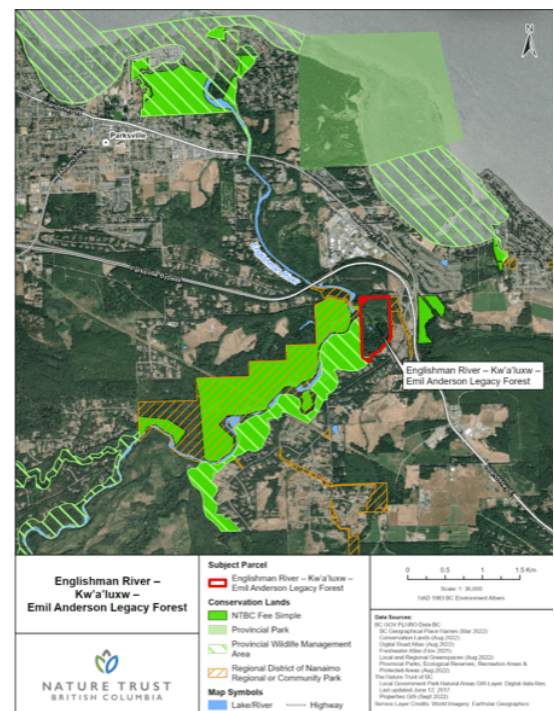
71 Acres Protected Along Englishman River

by Lynne Brookes

The Nature Trust of BC (TNT BC) held a celebration on September 26th of the recent acquisition of 71 acres that lie along the east bank of the Englishman River, above Top Bridge Regional Park. Most of the approximately 22 invited attendees were directly related to the Englishman River and estuary through stewardship and/or its preservation. Thanks to this donation of ecologically sensitive land by the Emil Anderson Group in honour of its founder, this land within the rare and threatened Coastal Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zone is now protected from development, logging and, hopefully indiscriminant trails along the slope.

Also announced was a new stewardship and management agreement with the local Sna-Naw-As First Nation that recognizes the nation as a rights holder to the land and will see them manage long-term conservation of the property. Sna-Naw-As Nation Council Member Chris Bob described Monday's announcement as a "beautiful moment."

This new acquisition will greatly benefit diverse native plants and wildlife found there and in the salmon-bearing river below. And, importantly for Parksville, the banks along this section will not be impacted further by human encroachment that can negatively impact the City's primary water source.



71 Acres Protected (continued)

In my opinion, if the City of Parksville would now protect the *lower* reaches of the Englishman instead of considering further “development” along this watershed, the local water supply would be even less threatened. This is why so many residents are concerned about development plans at the Greig Road site and other locations near this much beleaguered river.

The Nature Trust of BC has been doing a lot of good work on Vancouver Island as well as throughout the province. Locally, it has protected 847 acres (343 ha) to date in the Englishman River watershed from the estuary and on up the river corridor as properties have become available — eleven so far.

It’s heartening to have more good news following the earlier TNT BC acquisition of nearly 7 acres (2.8 ha) at the end of Martindale Road through a \$6M donation from the Wilson5 Foundation and the recent BC Parks Foundation’s acquisition of 18 acres (7.2 ha) aided by a \$1M donation from the Age of Union, the RDN and community raised funds to create a 23 acre (9.3 ha) eagle sanctuary in the French Creek estuary land.

Next to be preserved—the 360 hectares of forested wetlands containing and supporting Hamilton Marsh!

FIGHTING THE YELLOW ARCHANGEL IN SHELLY CREEK PARK

by Sue Wilson

Shelly Creek Park is a precious second-growth forest remnant, and it shades the last fish bearing stream in the City of Parksville. Unfortunately the invasive *Lamium galeobdolon* (lamium or Yellow archangel) has taken up residence in the park, where conditions are perfect for its spread. It has escaped, or been tossed, from hanging baskets and planters. Native plant species don’t stand a chance.

In May 2022 I met with Warren Payne, Parks Foreman. He told me that the [Coastal Invasive Species Committee](#) (CISC) had been contracted to deal with the lamium and that the use of herbicides was being seriously considered. I worried about the health of the Cutthroat trout, the native plants, the insects, the birds and the amphibians that are part of the ecology of our beloved park.

Hoping to recruit enough people to make manual removal a possibility, I launched the **Friends of Shelly Creek Park**. Friends and neighbours answered the call and I soon had about 25 volunteers. It was especially heartening to have support from the [Arrowsmith Naturalists Club](#) (ANATS) and the [Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society](#) (MVIHES).

Heidi Grant, Project Director at CISC, and Warren Payne were quick to encourage community stewardship. With the cooperation of city staff and the union, a “Weed-athon” was scheduled for four days in June. Four sturdy signs were posted to let the public know about the event. Herbicides were no longer a part of the current plan!



Yellow archangel was well established in the park: it twined its way up and over stumps, around logs, through ferns, and among stinging nettles and blackberry runners. Brave volunteers waded in and yanked out armfuls of lamium. We attempted to dig out the stolons and roots and seeds as much as possible. Every part of the plant went into black garbage bags for burial. Garden waste composting is NOT suitable for invasive plants; they just laugh. Ninety bags of lamium were removed from the park in four days.

As we were clearing the lamium, we uncovered several little tree seedlings that had been struggling for light. The hope is that they will now flourish along with other native plants in the park such as thimbleberry, red huckleberry, sword fern, oceanspray, Oregon grape, salal, salmonberry, and snowberry.

Heidi and her assistant, Taylor Koel, showed us how to spread cardboard to smother the lamium. First we picked off the packing tape from the cardboard, which was donated by volunteers, neighbours, bike shops, and local stores. (Dumpster diving was involved.) The unsightly brown carpet is now being covered in leaves and should rot away by spring. Underneath, the lamium is looking quite sickly.

Since June, faithful volunteers have come out regularly to continue the attack. They are mostly the same ANATS folks who pull Scotch broom at the Englishman River Estuary. Their help is very much appreciated.

Fighting the Yellow Archangel (continued)

The campaign to rid invasive plants from Shelly Creek Park will be a long-term project. In early spring we will reassess this year's efforts and then hopefully start work on untouched patches of lamium. To receive updates, or to help us restore the natural ecosystem in the park, please email me (Sue Wilson):

friendsofshellycreekpark@gmail.com



May 2022



September 2022

Mid-Island Nature Walks With Terry Taylor

This summer Terry Taylor and John MacFarlane have walked through old forests and urban forests, along quiet intertidal zones and estuarine ecosystems – making videos. As they walked, Terry would pause to talk about what he saw around him, identify key plant species, how they live, and their role in each unique coastal ecosystem. John acted as the videographer, checking light levels, camera settings and determining when to include close-ups or panning back to provide a sense of each natural space.

While Terry is known to most of us as a knowledgeable interpreter of nature through his vegetation surveys, writing for nature newsletters, leading interpretive outings for ANats, and of course, as an integral part of the annual (until COVID) Mushroom Festival, video is a new medium for him.

"John thought I should put out a book," Terry explained. "But I'd rather spend my time hiking." Luckily, John MacFarlane is a fellow naturalist who knows how to make videos and share them through social media.

For those who don't know John MacFarlane, he moved to Qualicum Beach in the late 1990's after working for Parks Canada for many years. He has a strong interest in nautical history and developed [Nauticapedia](#) was Director and Curator of the Maritime Museum, and is both a successful author and a webmaster.

If you'd like to learn more about local ecosystems and nature, check out John's Youtube channel [Micro Naturalist](#) and look for the Terry Taylor playlist. Here's a brief synopsis:

- [Glimpses of the Coastal Rain Forest](#) - 21:44 - an interpretive walk through the Qualicum Beach Heritage Forest as an example of Pacific Rain Forest.
- [Beach Strand Sensitive Plant Community](#) - 09:28 - Terry introduces a sensitive boundary ecosystem on the oceanfront, near St Andrews Lodge in Qualicum Beach.
- [Englishman River Estuary](#) - 09:50 - a walk along the estuary to observe the successful restoration work by Nature Trust, Arrowsmith Naturalists and other volunteers.
- [Big Biodiversity in a Small Urban Park](#) - 14:04 - A walk through Foster Park, a small neighbourhood park in Parksville that protects biodiversity and provides park space and play areas for the local community.

Keep your eye on the [Micro Naturalist](#) Youtube channel for more Terry Taylor videos.

Can you
name...

What do you call a group of vultures feeding on a carcass? Hint: It's not the same as what you call vultures sitting in a tree!

A wake of vultures, if a group of vultures is seen in a tree, call them a committee; if they are flying they are called a kettle.

RAVENS ARE MAGIC

by Sally Soanes

I wanted to share a story about a very special raven I encountered at the [North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre](#) in Errington. I've volunteered at NIWRA for 16 years now so I've passed by a lot of ravens. Trickster, who died last year, was special.

One day, as I wandered around answering questions from visitors, I came across a young native family with three children about 12, 10 and 8. They were delightful and I really enjoyed talking to them. As I was leaving I noticed they were standing in front of Trickster's enclosure so thought I'd go and say goodbye. There was no one nearby as I approached and, just as I reached them, the children started to sing. Beautifully. Honestly they could have been professional. Trickster crouched and stared. I was mesmerized. And then Trickster danced. He threw his head back and listening to those amazing children sing, he danced. It went for quite a few verses in their language and the whole time he danced.

When the song finished I realized I had tears pouring down my face. Trickster stopped when the singing stopped, and then carried on as if nothing had happened. The parents explained that what they sang was the raven song in their language. It was, by far, the most amazing thing I'd seen out there and it's stayed with me all these years and always will.

I will always be grateful to NIWRA for allowing me to volunteer there as what I've learned has enriched me immeasurably. It's a wonderful spot that has brought much joy and tears but also magic.

The Faithful Leafcutter Bee

by Iris Bitterlich

During August and September you may have seen the female faithful leafcutter bee, *Megachile fidelis*, in your garden. She would have been foraging on flowers of the aster plant family such as Rudbeckia, sneezeweed (Helenium) and blanket flower (Gallardia). In Canada, she is mainly found in two locations: the southern Okanagan Valley or here on the east coast of Vancouver Island, as far north as Campbell River.



She belongs to a family of bees called leafcutters or Megachilidae. Like other bees of the leafcutter family, her scopa or pollen-carrying hairs are located on the underside of her abdomen. However, unlike all other Megachilidae in our local area, she is unique in having broad, even bands of yellow hairs running across the top of her abdomen.

Like the blue orchard mason bees, she nests in hollow plant stems, empty beetle tunnels found in wood and bee boxes. But she is picky, and will only nest in the tunnels if they have a diameter of about 5 mm.

For her brood, she builds cells of finely chewed up plant leaves mixed with mud. Each cell is provided with a pollen ball and only one egg is laid before another cell is constructed. To keep insect predators and parasites from

attacking her brood, she plugs the tunnel entrance with roughly cut and sometimes resinous leaves.

The faithful leafcutter bee has another common name: the horned-face leafcutter bee. This name is given to her because she has two small projections or "horns" found on the lower part of her face. The horns are very difficult to see with the naked eye and are best seen if you can get a good close-up picture of her face.

Science Fact or Science Fiction?

In the past, I recall reading that the adult female bee uses her body to block the entrance of the tunnel to protect her brood. This is why she was given the specific name "fidelis", which means faithful in Latin. However, I cannot find any scientific references to this behavior. So, until I have a chance to observe the faithful leafcutter bee in action at her nest, this behaviour, in my mind, remains questionable. And maybe you too, inquisitive reader, might like the challenge of finding an answer to this question?

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Whale Trail Signs

Several years ago, ANats member Teresa Hitch began volunteering her time to assist the [B.C. Cetacean Sightings Network](#) to install whale and marine mammal information boards at strategic locations on the east side of Vancouver Island. These signs are part of the [Whale Trail](#) and are found at potential viewing sites along the coast from California to northern British Columbia.

An active member of the citizen science reporting network in the Oceanside area, Teri understands the importance of sharing sightings and learning more about the various cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises) and other marine mammals along our coastline. She reported that signage is now installed at [Milner Gardens](#) and the [Deep Bay Marine Field Station](#).

The BC Cetacean Sightings Network is a research and conservation organization of Ocean Wise's Marine Mammal Research program, that collaborates with Fisheries and Ocean Canada to increase public awareness.



Photo of sign – Teresa Hitch

Fall-Winter Reading Ideas

How to be a Climate Optimist: Blueprints for a Better World

Chris Turner, Random House 2022

KerryB: A very worthwhile read! Chris Turner has been writing about climate change solutions and global energy changes for 20 years. His latest book (now in paperback) shares uplifting information about good things that are happening. He cuts through the doom-and-gloom we hear every day while still acknowledging that a lot needs to happen to address the situation.

Never Get Bored Outdoors

James MacLaine, Sarah Hull, Lara Bryan, Usborne Publishing UK 2019

SylviaR: A kids book that appealed to me because of the diversity of ideas (useful for adults too!) This book goes way beyond bingo-card ID activities. Check out the 128 things to do instead of being bored. A copy is available from the Vancouver Island Library but I've bought one for my own learning. Well-worth reading (and doing).

The Vancouver Island Bumble Bee

By Iris Bitterlich

There is a bumble bee that you can only see on Vancouver Island and the surrounding islands of the Salish Sea. Unsurprisingly, it is called the Vancouver Island Bumble Bee, or to give it its scientific name, *Bombus vancouverensis ssp. vancouverensis*.

It was only discovered by science in 2020 after a genetic study revealed that the Two Form Bumble Bee, *B. bifarius*, was actually two different species: *B. bifarius* and *B. vancouverensis*.

The Vancouver Island Bumble Bee can be recognized by the cream-white hairs on her face and thorax, which no other bumble bee species in our area has.

Here is a Queen in early May getting nectar from heather flowers in the garden. The corbicula or pollen basket on her hind leg is empty (white arrow). This means she has not yet found a place to nest. If the corbicula had a pollen load, it would mean she had found a place to start her first brood of daughter workers.



Later in May, smaller worker bees were seen foraging for the colony, but since then none have visited the garden.

Inside a Bumble Bee Colony (Videos)

If you want a peek inside a bumble bee nest here are a series of three excellent English language videos done by IWF Wissen und Medien, a German institute that makes science films. While the short films are about European bumble bee species, the bumble bees in our area, depending on the species, have similar life histories. All videos are ad free and you do not need to join or subscribe to anything to watch.

Inside a Bumble Bee Colony (continued)

[Development of Colony and Nest in the Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*](#) (31 minutes)

This video looks at the complete annual life-cycle of a bumble bee colony. The species, *B. terrestris*, has been studied intensely by science and is the one on which most of our knowledge about bumble bees is based. However, there are over 250 bumble species in the world so there is still much to be learned.

[Providing the Brood with Pollen Nutrition in the Bumblebee *Bombus pascuorum*](#) (7 minutes)

This video shows how *B. pascuorum*, a "pocket maker" bumble bee species, feeds its brood communally. Other bumble bee species like *B. terrestris* are called "non-pocket makers". Like honey bees, they feed their larva individually. This you would have seen in the previous video above.

[Nest-Building Activities of the Bumble Bee *Bombus lapidarius*](#) (10 minutes)

A fascinating video showing *B. lapidarius* building a wax roof over its nest. Some scientists think the wax roof might help to regulate humidity and temperature within the colony.

Pollinators Project – Observations

Notes from Toni Wyckoff

"Here Comes The Rain Again..." In April I always worry about nothing blooming to help the Queen bees establish their new brood. Off to Cottonwood Nurseries to buy pots of Heather. I place them in a warm sunny sheltered spot against the house. It only takes a few hours before the large Queen Bees find them. They have to warm up against the sun-soaked siding many times as they feed.

Soon they disappear to find a spot to lay their eggs and hopefully don't drown in the torrential rain of May and June. Blooms appeared 2 weeks late this year and far fewer bees appeared on the flowering Maples, Locust Bean, Cascara, and Bitter Cherry. The Mason Bees are usually finished laying in a month. This year it was 6 weeks, due to the cold wet spring, but they persisted.

Bees and their cousins are very much like humans; they love the sweet nectar from fruit trees, berries and herbs. Humans for centuries, and insects for eons, have used HERBS to fight off ailments. Our gardens are the insects' pharmacy. WE need to supply them with the arsenal to fight off the dreaded VARROA MITES.

Planting herbs for succession of blooms is needed for pollinators to stay healthy and feed. Most herbs are perennial, or reseed themselves, and take little care.

It is not long before the Alliums, Oregon Grape, Salmonberries and Salal are covered with bees. The Day Lilies are now colouring the yard with orange, yellow and purple to attract the hundreds of Anise and Western Swallowtails. The odd Pine White Butterfly will fly past.

The first thing in the garden is Borage. It provides a continuous supply of nectar and pollen until the end of July. Gardeners curse Borage as it is a very messy plant that takes over all the space but is very important for the health of bees. Here comes the poppies, raspberries, lavender and thyme in June. Before I even know it the peas and tomatoes are forming and hundreds more young pollinators are born and working their hearts out.

Read more by downloading the Pollinator Observations document from the ANats website or contact Rosemary Taylor (rtaylor99@shaw.ca)



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p14 IWF Wissen und Medien (English videos)

Development of Colony and Nest in the Bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*
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Providing the Brood with Pollen Nutrition in the Bumblebee *Bombus pascuorum*
<https://av.tib.eu/media/17107>

Nest-Building Activities of the Bumble Bee *Bombus lapidarius*
<https://av.tib.eu/media/17105>

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