



President's Report

I hope you've enjoyed a happy Thanksgiving! While there are a lot of awful things going on these days, we still have much for which we can be truly thankful. We're all part of this wonderful Arrowsmith Nats group and each of us care about each other and the beautiful nature all around. Thankfully too, our members make ours a very active club committed to stewardship, research, monitoring, and education aimed at the betterment of local estuaries, other highly biodiverse wetlands, creeks, rivers, forests, coastal—and now—our urban areas as well.



Image by alexas_fotos-686414, Pixabay

Many times I've heard people say things like, "The Arrowsmith Naturalists is a real powerhouse" or "Oh, yes, I know about the Arrowsmith Nats. I've gone on two outings and will join at the next meeting," or "We count on Arrowsmith Naturalists to help get (restoration planting, surveys, invasive plant removal, etc.) done." Our actions have earned respect in both the stewardship community and in our local communities.

Every time we are "out there" on field trips, brooming in the Englishman River Estuary, on bird counts, hosting club displays at events, guiding tours at Hamilton Marsh, participating in research, or lending a hand at local restoration efforts, we're encouraging others to take action to preserve the nature that drew most of us here (and that we all depend on.)

I am thankful to be a member of such a wonderful group of caring, dedicated people who are truly making a difference in our area. I'll bet you are too!

Lynne Brookes

We respectfully acknowledge that we live within the unceded traditional territories of the Snaw-naw-as people and the Qualicum First Nation, the traditional keepers of these lands.

Today, many First Nations and Métis peoples continue to live, work and play here as do we.

We intend to nurture better understanding and pursue opportunities for collaboration with our First Nations neighbours.

Officers and Contacts

President: Lynne Brookes **Vice Pres:** Derrick Grimmer
Past Pres: Sally Soanes **Speakers:** Committee
Stewardship: Dave Hutchings **Promotion:** Maggie Little
Exec. Secretary: Mark Mazurski
Mtg. Secretary: Elizabeth Salomon-de-Friedberg
Membership: Bonnie Mullin **Treasurer:** Helen Davidson
BC Nature: Antonia Wyckoff **Outreach:** Sue Wilson
Conservation/Enviro. Gary & Ronda Murdock
Directors: Claire Summers, Maggie Green
Archivist(s): Dianne & Jim Goodwin
Email & Zoom: Duncan Campbell **Website:** Kerry Baker
Facebook: Tom Constable **Newsletter:** Sylvia Riessner

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

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

Looking ahead...

Dates ... **Sunday, October 22, 11am-4pm** – Join us at the Coombs Fairgrounds, 1014 Ford Road, Coombs for our annual Mushroom & Nature Festival – a celebration of fungi, food and nature.



Thursday, October 26, 7pm – Anats General Meeting – Join us (members & non-members welcome) at church hall, St. Anne & St. Edmund, 407 Wembley Road, Parksville. Our speaker will be Gary Allan from the SWELL Wolf Education Centre in Nanaimo.

Friday, October 27, 9am-12pm Volunteer planting event at the Parksville Wetlands, sponsored by City of Parksville (contact Sally Soanes ANats gmail)

BC's Marvellous Mushrooms exhibit, at Courtenay & District Museum (Sep 8 to Dec 9) – Royal BC Museum's traveling exhibit at CDM features interpretive graphic panels, hand-sculpted models and local photos and news items about mushroom pickers during the 1970's.

New ideas...

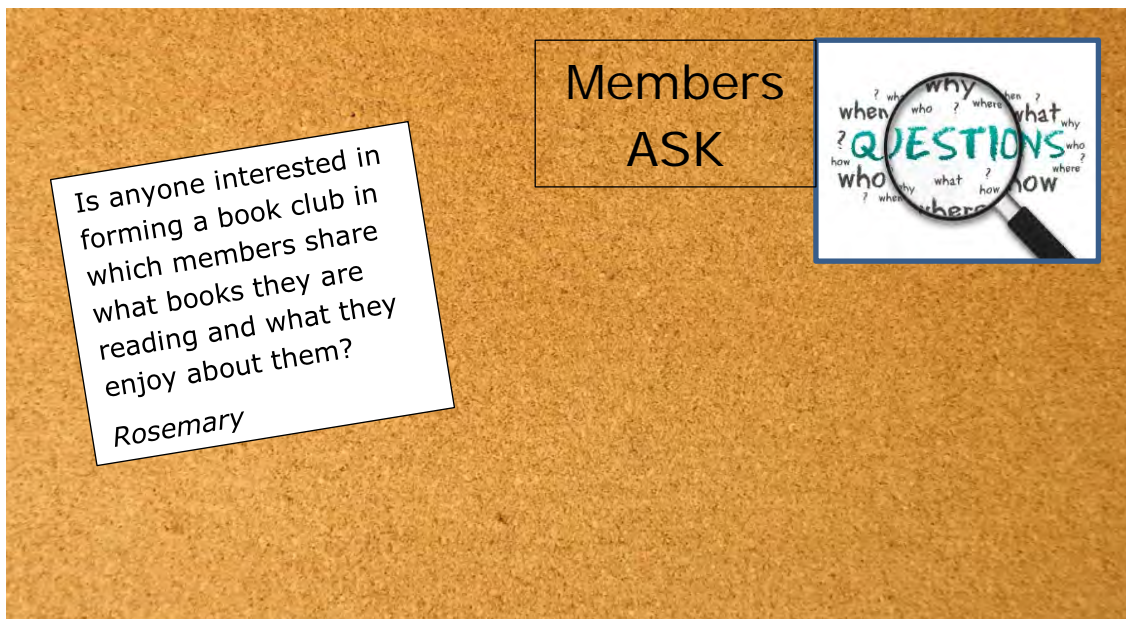
A new format for General Meetings

Members of the Executive have been talking about ways to make general meetings more interesting and engaging for members. They've discussed a number of possibilities and decided to begin small. During the recent general meeting (Sept), you may have noticed that less time was spent reviewing administrative details and more time was allowed to encourage members to share nature sightings. As well, we want to encourage people to attend to ensure that the speakers we invite feel that the time spent organizing and presenting to our group is worthwhile.

If you attend the upcoming October meeting, we hope you enjoy the speaker (see listing above) and that you stay afterwards as, after a short break, we will invite you to share your nature sightings or any other comments of interest to the club. If you have suggestions or feedback, please let one of the board members know. Enjoy!

A newsletter bulletin board?

Rosemary suggested that members who wanted to share something or ask a question of other members might appreciate a place to post their "ask" – what do you think? If you want to voice an opinion or post an ASK, contact Sylvia (coastsyl at gmail.com) or speak with Rosemary at a meeting?



Membership Update

Bonnie Mullin

By mid-Sept we had 139 members; it is a continuous flux with a few leaving and new members joining each year.

We are happy to welcome our new members. As we are able to meet in-person again, we encourage you to join the [monthly ANats meetings](#) (last Thursday of each month).

Memberships are due again! To be paid by December 17. \$25 for single and \$35 for family

Memberships are due annually, in the month you joined the club. If you're not sure when you became a member, please contact me by email. All memberships must be paid by **December 17** as we receive a bill from BC Nature for \$20 per member at the end of the year. The payment to BC Nature supports their work to protect nature in our province and ensures that you will receive four magazines per year, and have insurance for outings or events.

Please let me know if you do not wish to renew (it saves me a lot of work.) Email: live2hike@shaw.ca or phone: 250-927-8889. Thank you so much, *Bonnie Mullin*

HOW TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

1. Go to <https://arrowsmithnats.org/> and click on What We Do. Select [Membership](#).

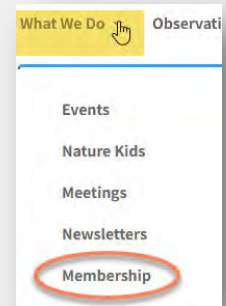
Look for the downloadable forms: Club Membership and Release of Liability (clicking on the link will download the form)

2. Fill out and sign the forms (both forms MUST be completed). There are three ways to get them to Bonnie:
 - a) Hand them to me in person
 - b) Scan them and email them to live2hike@shaw.ca
 - c) Mail them to:

Arrowsmith Naturalists, Box 1542
Parksville, BC V9P 2H4

3. How to pay:
 - cheque or cash
 - e-transfer directly to Arrowsmith Naturalists at anatsmembers@gmail.com

I will be at General meetings or mostly on outings and will have forms. If I am unavailable, please give them to Helen or another member of the executive. Feel free to email me with questions at any time.



AGM 2024 – Planning Update

Toni Wyckoff, AGM Coordinator

The planning for the AGM is going along nicely. Our theme is “Taking Action for Nature.” Keep an eye out for the teaser advertisement in the fall BC Nature magazine.

Sally contacted well-known Loys Maingon, a retired Registered Professional Biologist who “specializes in limnology and riparian ecology” and leads interpretive nature walks in the Strathcona wilderness and Comox Valley area. He is an experienced and knowledgeable presenter and we’re happy to say he’s agreed to be our headline speaker!

Lynne recruited [Sylvia Campbell](#) and [Denice Foster](#) who each have their own huge success stories to share. Lynne is now working on a panel of MLAs, MPs, and city councillors to find the best way to work with elected officials on environment issues. We certainly want to hear them as laws will need to be changed to allow us to move forward. That is why we elect them—to save our planet for future generations.

The catering for the banquet has been ordered and it makes my mouth water when I read the menu. Hot herbed chicken, spinach and ricotta cheese lasagna, lots of hot veggies and salads, and then come delectable deserts. You will be able to buy tickets for beer and wine (thanks to Ron for getting us a liquor licence.)

All outing leaders for Friday and Saturday have been recruited. Nature Nanaimo said they can lead the Sunday outings, which are in their neck of the woods.

The rest of the organizing committee is working just as hard but you won’t see the results yet. We have another meeting this month to finalize things before the schedule gets sent to BC Nature for the Winter magazine. We are trying to keep the costs down as best we can, so most of you will be able to register when the Winter magazine is released.

I will be recruiting volunteers in the new year for other jobs and still have your names if you sent me an email in the past. The website will be up-dated as things are finalized.

WORD FROM THE OUTINGS COMMITTEE

We all had such a successful 2023 that the seven of us decided to do it all over again. We hope everyone got out into nature in spite of smoke.

Our first outing on Saturday, Sep 23, to **Little Mountain's Boulder City** was a repeat from last year because the numbers were restricted and a few got left off. It was a great hike as Mark informed us of the Ice Age involvement in the formation of conglomerate and the massive boulders along the trail.

Unfortunately the Oct 4th outing planned for Maplehurst Trail in Port Alberni was changed due to the parking problems with the residences along the road. [Rogers Creek Nature Trail](#) is a very nice alternative and we haven't done it for a few years.



Image by Toni Wyckoff



Image by Rob Shippers

The Saturday, Oct 14 outing to [Saysutshun \(Newcastle\) Island](#) is another beautiful autumn walk. The last day for the ferry is the 15th so hope that the weather cooperates.

Keep your eye on [our website](#) as the outings are all listed and if anything changes, it will be updated.

Please note: When answering Mark back, DO NOT just hit the return button. Click on his email address. Type the name of the outing in the Subject field of your email reply. Give him your answer. When hitting the return button, you send it back to Arrowsmith gmail. ANats' gmail is monitored by Duncan, who may be in a different time zone. He is very good at passing the messages on but, when the outing has an attendance limit, your chances are slimmer.

Be aware that the estimated time of a walk will vary with the number of people who attend. We suggest you always bring a snack, in case it runs into lunch or afternoon tea.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Dave Hutchings

I don't know about you, but I'm so glad that the recent rains have brought some relief from our prolonged drought (although most soils are likely too dry to absorb moisture readily.) The resultant runoff, however, has caused water levels in some creeks and rivers to rise noticeably, allowing salmon to access their spawning grounds.

For the stewardship gang, this has been a relatively quiet summer. Once most of the spotted knapweed had been pulled, we took a vacation from the hot, dry weather. Until mid-September, our only work at the Englishman River Estuary (ERE) had been one morning of TLC with the Nature Trust, carried out on the site that was planted last December. A big THANK YOU to all those who came out to pretty-up the site and place protective wire cages around some of the young trees and shrubs.

Our first scheduled day of work saw our usual crew back and eager to carry on pulling invasive ivy, spurge laurel (daphne), the odd stem of scotch broom and, cutting back and pulling holly. What made the occasion more remarkable was the arrival of seven students from VIU.



Stewardship Report *(continued)*

These eager young people volunteered with us as a component of a “community engagement” module of their teacher training degree program. Taylor Koel, our Nature Trust Field Operations Technician, coordinated the students’ work as they cleared a sizeable area of invasives. What a joy to work with these young people, even if the morning’s effort was a “one-off”.

The next months of stewardship may be a little more challenging than the last few years. Scotch broom, although pervasive and pernicious, involved a focused effort to seek out, and then cut or pull. However, our next group of invasives—holly, ivy and spurge laurel, etc.—can be tricky to locate and will involve a variety of methods to remove. I’m hoping that our usual dogged persistence will be as effective with these new targets as it has been with Scotch broom.

We invite any ANats to join us, if only occasionally, for some exercise, fresh air, conviviality and the satisfaction that comes from helping to mitigate human impacts on the natural world. Usually our sessions involve about 1-1/2 hours each; we meet on the first and third Thursday of each month, weather permitting. We may occasionally deviate from this schedule to join the Nature Trust crew in a special project.

If you wish to join us in our stewardship of the ERE, please feel free to contact me at dhutchings40@shaw.ca or 250-927-4462. We even loan out some tools for those who need them.

Editors Note: Due to size and timing issues, the following articles regarding the important research at French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve will be posted on the Arrowsmith Naturalists website in the near future.

French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve Understory Surveys

By Kyla Seward, Senior Research Assistant, MABRRI, edited by Lynne Brookes, Project Coordinator

Understory Vegetation Subplot Surveys

On August 25, 2023 a team of five Arrowsmith Naturalists volunteers (Liz and Jim Thorne, Liz Bredberg, Maureen LaFleche, and Lynne Brookes) met with Kyla Seward, Senior Research Assistant, MABRRI, to begin to mark and survey understory plants within 12 study subplots in the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve (FCENP).

The purpose of creating these smaller plots was to survey understory vegetation to gain an initial understanding of species composition and richness within the two large interior and two large edge forest plots in which all trees had been marked, identified, measured and mapped during January- March 2023.

Two More Baseline Surveys at the FCENP —Completed!

By Lynne Brookes

Background: In early 2022, the Arrowsmith Naturalists and the Mid-Vancouver Island Habitat Conservation Society received much appreciated two grants, one from **BC Nature/ BC Naturalists’ Foundation** (\$2,500) and one from the **BC Conservation Foundation** (\$4,263) to conduct baseline surveys of insects and of avian aerial insectivores found within the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve (FCENP). Dr. Scott Gilmore organized the entomological surveys, secured curation of FCENP voucher insects at the RBC Museum, and developed the volunteer conducted butterfly survey protocols, training, and materials. Heidi VanVleet, RPBio, developed the protocols for the swift, swallow, martin and nightjar surveys along with planned incidental counts of other birds heard or seen while onsite. Arrowsmith Naturalists volunteer Lynne Brookes, PhD, managed these two projects and secured and coordinated volunteer participation. These two survey efforts commenced in the spring of 2022.

However, due to the onset of negotiations between BC Parks Foundation and the erstwhile property owner for the purchase of this property, the seller unexpectedly withdrew prior permission to allow access to this property due to liability concerns with a pending sale. Fortunately, both funders granted our request to roll over the project funding to allow these surveys to begin anew in 2023. Fortunately too, Dr. Gilmore was willing to conduct the entomological survey the following year and, while Heidi VanFleet planned to begin again in 2023, she subsequently took a new position. A well-recommended experienced colleague of hers, Alysia Boudreau, biologist and avian specialist, was able to conduct the avian aerial insectivore surveys as planned in 2023.

Entomological Surveys 2023

Planned and conducted by Dr. Scott Gilmore, PhD, Biology

(Survey overview with selected excerpts from Dr. Gilmore’s Final Report, provided by Lynne Brookes, will be posted on the Arrowsmith Naturalists website soon.)

The purpose of the entomological surveys of the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve was to create a baseline understanding of insect diversity over time to help determine the success of the planned habitat restoration at FCENP. To involve the community, Dr. Gilmore designed a butterfly survey to be completed by community volunteers, and an insect inventory to determine species that inhabit the site. Voucher insects will be curated at the Royal BC Museum.

Avian Aerial Insectivore Baseline Surveys 2023 Conducted by Alysia Boudreau, biologist and avian specialist (Overview with selected excerpts from researcher's Final Report provided by Lynne Brookes will be posted on the Arrowsmith Naturalists website soon.)

This baseline survey, primarily focused on avian aerial insectivores, also funded by the grants provided by BC Nature/BC Naturalists' Foundation and the BC Conservation Foundation was designed to inform habitat restoration efforts within the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve (FCENP). The results will provide data against which to compare future similar survey data as restoration activities proceed to be better able to measure the impact of restoration efforts.

POLLINATOR NOTES

Rosemary Taylor

I haven't had any recent news from members about their experiences with pollinators this summer. Toni did share a report in the June newsletter.

I've heard incidentally through conversation that the bees are missing, or to the contrary, gardens are full of bees buzzing everywhere, but no-one else wrote me any notes, and Sally and I are still plodding on, hoping that eventually municipalities like QB will get in on the act like most other authorities right across have long since done.

As for bees in our own garden, as spring arrived the bees didn't, and got me quite worried as they were not to be seen anywhere, despite our pollinator plants that start with crocus early on, and of course the 'weeds' in what little lawn we have. But during the summer things improved, and even now we have Michaelmas daisies and two lovely caryopteris bushes in flower which the bees love.

What's happening – Hamilton Wetlands

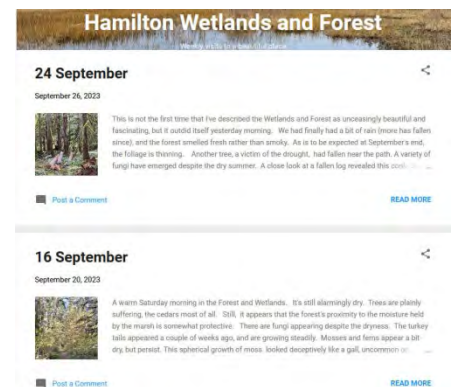
Sylvia Riessner

September: If you follow the blog, you'll have seen that sandhill cranes were spotted along with other geese. Despite the drought conditions, turkey tails were growing and the recent rains should see more fungi (just in time for the October Mushroom Fest.) As well, two merlins were flying low and apparently hunting dragonflies. On a clear day mid-September, Liz caught a beautiful image of Mount Arrowsmith rising above the trees on the far side of the marsh area.

August: Signs of heat stress from the drought and some local smoke from the fires. Sighted cabbage moths, a common wood nymph, a striking green stinkbug, and a complacent bullfrog in the water. Dragonflies abound and the watchers shared a picture of a red meadow hawk and a juvenile song sparrow that had captured a blue skimmer. Snow patches still visible on Mount Arrowsmith.

July: A scary fire event along highway nearby – luckily fire trucks extinguished it quickly. Observations of a cedar waxwing, a common yellowthroat, fern shadows, and ripening blackberry, thimbleberry and salal berries. An impressive bald wasp nest 'pinata' and a common whitetail dragonfly on the dock.

Hamilton Wetlands and Forest Blog - <https://hamiltonmarsh.blogspot.com> Members of the Arrowsmith Naturalists visit the Hamilton wetlands and forest frequently, taking pictures and logging their observations on a blog (web log).



Ongoing nature-related concerns

Teri Hitch

Remember the heat dome (about two years ago?) As I swim every day and walk local beaches frequently, I've been monitoring the foreshore (informally) to see how the animals and plants are recovering. Here are my amateur (and naked eye) observations of the Qualicum Beach foreshore.

The eelgrass meadows, which many species depend on, have a long way to go in their recovery. The meadows of common eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) and dwarf eelgrass (*Zostera japonica*) had almost disappeared with the extreme heat. Thankfully, the sand dollar population appears to be recovering nicely, and I haven't seen any invasive green crabs. The other crab populations seem significantly reduced. There have been relatively few pinnipeds and cetaceans this summer and almost no jellyfish (only a few moon jellyfish, but no lion's mane jellyfish or "fried egg" jellyfish, all which were abundant previous years.) It does seem there are fewer fish jumping, and I miss seeing the minnows at the water's edge...

Other ongoing concerns:

1. Oceanic industrial noise impacts on cetaceans – new documentary Thrown to the Wind available for viewing (free, donations welcomed) <https://expose-news.com/2023/09/21/the-film-to-save-an-entire-whale-species/>
2. Activist Post article, Oct 3, 2023: Cell Tower Blamed for Bee Colony Disappearance <https://www.activistpost.com/2023/09/89-year-old-leads-fight-against-cell-tower-blamed-for-bee-colony-disappearance-putting-communitys-economy-health-and-safety-at-risk.html>
3. Adverse effects of light pollution on birds: San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory - Blinded by the Light! How Light Pollution Affects the Behavior, Physiology, and Ecology of Birds

Editor's Note: adverse effects of lighting on moths cited by Royal BC Museum entomologist emeritus, Rob Cannings during CBC North by Northwest [Insect Series interview](#).

Listen and Learn

During September, CBC Radio's North by Northwest program, hosted by Margaret Gallagher, offered a series of interviews focused on insects. If you like to listen while walking or gardening or just relaxing on a log at the beach, you may find you learn a lot by listening! You can download the CBC Listen app to your mobile device or tune in from a computer browser.

- Sep 2, 2023 16:06 [Insect Series: Entomologist Rob Cannings on Dragonflies](#)
- Sep 9, 2023 14:15 [Insect Series: Claudia Copley, Insects and Friends: Spiders](#)
- Sep 17, 2023 12:00 [Insect Series: David Holden on Moths](#)
- Sep 24, 2023 10:14 [Insect Series: Yasmin Akhtar on Edible Bugs](#)

Observe and Learn

There are many environmental groups and organizations that provide useful resources to help us learn more about nature. One resource that caught my eye recently was a two-page, laminated, full colour interpretive guide from [Habitat Conservation Trust Fund-Education](#): Autumn Animal Signs and Autumn Colours in Nature. These [Notice Nature seasonal activity pages](#) feature BC flora and fauna and are good starting points to enrich your rambles or hikes in the outdoors.

I noticed that many of the interpretive resources have a Free Download button or a Download Free PDF Version option. I checked with the Victoria office and was told that they encourage people to use these resources (for personal use - you can print them in colour or download the pdfs to your mobile device) BUT they appreciate people who check the [Online Store](#) too. The resources they sell are to cover the cost of production (and shipping).

I recently ordered a collection of ID cards (waterproof and easy to carry) and didn't have to pay postage, just the cost (very reasonable).

THE SOIL MICROBIOME

by Terry Taylor

Soil bacteria ecosystems have been called the last unexplored habitat on earth. To a great extent, this is due to the fact that they are so difficult to study. Soil bacteria are incredibly complex, but are invisible to us. The classical way to investigate them was to grow bacteria on nutrient agar in a Petri dish. These techniques did not reveal very much about the complexity involved. Modern DNA studies, however, have given microbiologists a glimpse of what is taking place within the soil.

What have they revealed? They have shown that a nutrient-rich handful of soil contains over 10,000 bacterial and archaea species. Archaea used to be considered bacteria, but their biochemistry is very different. And in the nutrient-rich areas around roots—in what is termed the rhizosphere—there may be as many as 50,000 species. These estimates are based upon extracting the DNA in a sample and doing statistical analysis of how much time it takes for pieces of the sample DNA to combine with known sequences of DNA.

Such research has shown that 99% of bacteria cannot be cultured. All the named bacteria are listed in a multi-volume work called Bergey's Manual, which lists only 5000 species! All the others are known only from DNA sequences, or from estimates based on statistical analyses. Why virtually all bacteria cannot be cultured has been an enigma, but recent research is revealing some fascinating clues.

Bacteria, like higher organisms, live in complex ecosystems, and some of them depend on neighbours for survival. They cannot live alone. These ecosystems have much more species diversity than those at our level, to a great extent due to the small size of these organisms and habitats. The average bacterium is about a thousandth of a millimetre in diameter.

The Soil Microbiome *(continued)*

Another factor to consider is that most soil bacteria are dormant most of the time. When conditions are right they begin to grow and divide. When unfavourable conditions return, they go back into suspended animation.

Bacteria also communicate, both between members of the same species, and between different species. This is a form of chemical communication known as quorum sensing. Chemicals are released into the surrounding environment and when the concentration reaches a certain level, messages are received to undergo a change of life style. One of these messages tells bacteria when to reproduce. Some disease-causing germs are not pathogenic at low population levels, but as the number of cells increase the amount of the relevant compound increases. At a critical level, the message goes out that there are enough cells to successfully become a disease pathogen. Bacteria are not as simple as we thought they were.

The majority of our antibiotics are produced by soil bacteria; most of which are from the genus *Streptomyces*. There are active research projects in many universities that are looking for currently unknown medicines in soil bacteria. Because of the vastness of the diversity all around us, there are probably thousands of valuable compounds waiting to be discovered.

MY SUNFLOWER BEE

by Sylvia Riessner

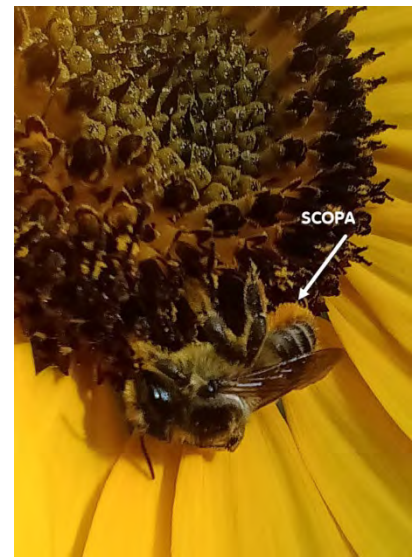
While working in my front yard this summer, I caught a glimpse of an oddly coloured bee; it was flying oddly too. Looked a little tipsy I thought. But I lost sight of it as it flew behind the grape arbour.

A few minutes later, I saw it again – this time closer. It had a bright, pale green body!! As it buzzed upwards over my head, I realized that I was seeing, for the first time ever, the bee that had been cutting partial circles from the grape vine leaves and other plants around the garden. It was my first view of a leafcutter bee flying upwards with a piece of leaf tucked under its belly.

I enjoy the many pollinators that visit my garden but rarely manage to capture a good photo of them. This summer I had some success as I had some bees who were regular visitors to the sunflowers that grow near my front door. They tend to be less shy (or they feed differently?) so I was able to get some close-up photos. I was uncertain about what kind of bee or fly I had visiting but thanks to iNaturalist I found out that one was likely a Western leafcutter bee (*Megachile periherta*). Apparently these solitary bees use the neatly-clipped leaf parts they collect to build brood chambers for their larvae (see Satinflower Nursery's [The Weekly with Daly column](#)).

One morning in September, I came out early and found her absolutely still, huddled near the bottom of the dark disk flowers. I wondered if the cooler nights had caught her unaware and stranded her there overnight. I was able to take a picture that shows the distinctive yellow pollen-covered, [furry \(scopa\) layer](#) on the underside of her abdomen (characteristic of hairy belly bees.)

But she wasn't asleep for long. Whether it was the noise of my shutter, or I came too close, she had enough and calmly flew off to a more peaceful flower face nearby.



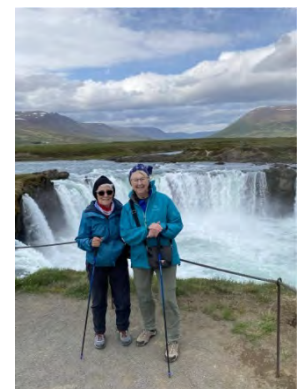
Iceland: Land of Fire and Ice

by Bonnie Mullin

In June of 2023 I travelled to Iceland with my friend Betty. Betty grew up in Gimli, Manitoba and her grandfather emigrated to Canada from Iceland in the late 1800's. I thought Betty would be the perfect companion on a 9-day circle tour—Iceland Explore with Exodus.

Iceland is a small island country, with a population of about 375,318 people. The largest city, Reykjavik (Bay of Smokes), has 137,618 people. Other Icelanders are scattered around the coast. The interior is a volcanic plateau made up of sand and lava fields, mountains and glaciers. Inland Iceland has virtually no arable land; it is lava rock covered in moss and lichens.

Every day was a new adventure and another beautiful waterfall. We traveled with 13 Brits and our tour guide, Jon. We visited the largest ice cap in Iceland, **Vatnajökull** (Glacier of Lakes). Vatnajökull Glacier National Park is one of [three UNESCO heritage sites](#).



Godafoss Waterfall

Iceland: Land of Fire (*continued*)

Iceland's glacier-fed rivers and streams provide some of the purest water in the world. Along the south coast we saw where volcanos had erupted and learned about the damage that occurred.

Although there is little arable land, small areas are farmed for vegetables or to grow hay. Cattle are not raised here but sheep can forage. The well-known Icelandic horses are beautiful; stocky with heavy coats.

I watched the weather for the last year; it does not vary a lot. Winter temperatures are similar to ours while summer temperatures are cooler (may get to 20 degrees C). Inland in the mountains is colder of course. Lots of wind! Storms come in from the south, so the north of the island is more sheltered even though it is close to the Arctic Circle. They get a lot of rain, but we were lucky and only encountered a few showers.

We were there just before the summer solstice, so nights were never totally dark. It was still bright at 11am; sunup again by 3am! As we toured, our overnights were in small local hotels, or often in guesthouses on farms. We ate lots of lamb and fish! Yummy!!!



Gullfoss Falls

Historic sites we visited:

- [Thingvellir](#) (world's oldest existing Parliament est. in 930AD)(UNESCO site);
- [Eiríksstadir](#): the Viking longhouse here was the home of Erik the Red for a time, perhaps was birthplace of son Leifur Eiríksson. There is a reconstructed turf house, and we had a tour and description of life in Viking times. Several places there were hot springs with pools for swimming; we saw Geysir (hot water geysirs & boiling pools) and Namafjall (fumaroles and mud pots) (more UNESCO sites).

Wildlife we saw:

- reindeer (introduced in 1700s, hunting by permit keeps population down to about 6000).
- seabirds around the coast: eider ducks, nesting northern fulmars, Arctic terns, puffins, black-headed gulls, common guillemots, harlequin ducks, cormorants (they call them shags), whooper swans, graylag geese, barnacle geese and even oystercatchers (at one spot nesting in the parking lot at our guesthouse).
- small songbirds: redwings and Eurasian blackbirds, plus some unidentified.

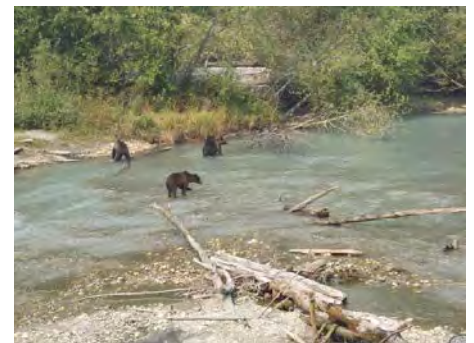
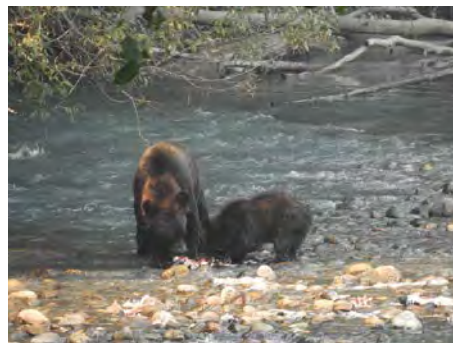
We enjoyed every moment! Very kind people, helpful and not in a hurry. There is so much more to tell but I just wanted to share a snapshot. Betty was able to find the general area her grandfather came from and discovered through Icelandicroots website that Jon is her 8X cousin!! Iceland is a special place in the world.

Grizzly Bear Tour Sep2023

by Toni Wyckoff

The grizzly bear tour finally came to the top of our bucket list. Booking a tour wasn't that easy as there are numerous sites out of Campbell River. Ron did find one that we could cancel if Covid took us down.

West Coast Adventures offered an 8 hour tour (that actually lasted 9) across the pond to Toba Inlet on Sept 8. The sea was perfectly calm all the way across; although we did take a little detour to watch three dorsal fins flying through the water. The tour included a substantial bag lunch that we ate on board. The only handicap was the forest fire smoke as we crossed to the mainland. We could not see the tops of mountains as we went up the inlet.



Near the end of the inlet we stopped at a logging operation where we were welcomed by the Klahoose First Nation. They loaded the 12 of us on a small bus, drove to the Klite River where they have several lookout towers. We quietly

Grizzly Bear Tour *(continued)*

exited the bus and climbed five steps up the tower. OK, I know a grizzly could stand up and look us eye-to-eye if he wanted to, but we had three Klahoose men to keep us safe. NO, there were no guns involved.

A mother and cub kept us entertained by catching and eating chum salmon. The mother caught one pink salmon and threw it back (fussy they are.) One of the guides spotted a sleeping male in the river. The bear opened his eye every once in a while to look at us and the action up stream (mom and cub) Yes, he knew we were there. Finally the dozy guy got up and proceeded to catch and eat three huge salmon.

As we moved farther up river, we found another mum with two larger cubs. When they left we headed back to the first lookout and saw a mother came out of the woods with a very small cub. The big fellow was still eating and then one big monster of a bear caught a salmon downstream. We boarded the bus to leave and the driver stopped as the bear lifted his head for another quick photo shoot. Everyone was very happy—we saw a total of nine grizzlies (various sizes).

We detoured twice on the return trip to see three orcas and 1 humpback. All the pictures taken went to six different countries. There were only three Canadians on board. Everyone was very satisfied.

Exploring along 19A to Port Hardy

by Rosemary Taylor

This summer we decided to follow our noses north along Highway 19A to Port Hardy. On Sally's recommendation, our main destination was a small cabin on the First Nations resort at [Cluxewe](#), near Pt. McNeill. The resort stretches along the shoreline, with many cabins and what looked to be permanent RVs and a big woodland camp site.

Wandering the beach at any time of day revealed long lines of seaweed; the big bull kelp that washed up on shore created a long line that seemed to extend all the way to Campbell River.

One evening at sunset we noticed some little birds dibbling amongst the pebbles and seaweed. They were so well camouflaged that we only noticed them when they stopped for a moment, and were able to see that they were sanderlings in winter plumage.

Just across the water Pt. McNeill, are Malcolm Island and Cormorant Island. We wanted to learn more about Sointula and the U'mista Cultural Centre at Alert Bay, so we drove to the small ferry terminal—no booking, no waiting, no problems, just drive on!

Sointula, the site of a Finnish utopian settlement in the early 20th century, has a fascinating [museum](#). Among the many fascinating items on display were small, fluffy green floor mats woven from disused gill nets. Talk about resourceful—a reminder of the well-known mats plaited from scrap materials in the Maritimes. We asked the young man at the reception desk if there were any descendants left from those early settlers. Yes, he said, he was one of them, though one could never tell from his dark hair! His grandma landed there in 1902, and he'd lived his whole life on the island, commuting back and forth to the 'mainland' of Vancouver Island for school.

Another morning was spent at the [U'mista, Alert Bay's Cultural Centre](#). At one time there was just one main room, detailing the travails when the Indian Agent controlled the First Nations in the area, banning cultural practices such as the potlatch. Now the building has been extended to include stories and legends, and many artifacts, while the original room houses a vast collection of masks, some of which managed to evade the Indian Agent, while others were sold to private collections, museums and other institutions overseas. Repatriation (or perhaps the preferred word might be rematriation) has recovered many of them, that are now displayed together in one area.



Next on our list was to follow the 19a to the end at Port Hardy to check out Carrot Park. We found details of the 80 year struggle of local residents to have the road paved from Campbell River onwards. Various governments dangled carrots (promises) but never took action (is that unusual?). So the tables were turned, and Port Hardy residents held a Carrot Campaign to shame the government and eventually the highway was completed.

Further along the highway, there's a small and insignificant turn-off to Fort Rupert, formerly the site of a Hudson's Bay fort in 1849, but now a small First Nations village. While chatting to a Port Hardy local, we learned that Storey's Bay should not be missed. We headed in that direction and found two entirely different cultures. Storey's Beach had lavish houses, almost 'McMansions', in a secluded wooded area on a big bay with lots of grey sand; Fort Rupert had modest homes, totem poles and the Big House of Fort Rupert.

We spent quite some time in Fort Rupert, when we eventually found it. We were the only ones there and found many totems, and small graveyards with their own small, unpainted totems along the roadside. The only reminder of the earlier Fort—a cannon, looking more like a pea-shooter—stood in front of this blue and white building. There were no

signs to tell us what the totems stood for or why they were there, but obviously they were meaningful to those who lived there, rather than being a tourist photo-op.

Now it was time to turn south and we stopped in Campbell River for a couple of nights at a waterfront hotel. We watched cruise ships passing by right outside our window, with their lights glowing against the night sky. The channel is so narrow there the boats are really close to shore.

We revisited Quadra Island, where we had hiked the year before. At that time, while sitting on a log on the beach at the end of our hike, passers-by kept asking if I knew where the sasquatch was. WHAT??? A SASQUATCH! Come on... the only one I know of lives in Hemlock Valley, 100 miles inland on the Lower Mainland. However, this year the mystery was solved. There is indeed a sasquatch, on the shoreline behind [campsite #163 near Rebecca Spit](#).

That was not the only surprise that Quadra Island had in store. At one point a car pulled up alongside ours when we were parked beside the road; a lady got out to ask if we needed help. It was so kind of her to make sure we were fine. I was pleasantly amazed that such courtesies still exist and people look out for each other.

While chatting she told us about a tree, just a few paces down the road, with masks in it. Odd things kept happening all the time and this was just another one. So we checked it out... And just like she said, there they were. What that finger was pointing to, who knows!



There were more treasures packed into our wanderings that day. There are many First Nations totems, among which are the ornate poles in an area with a shelter, and some boulders with petroglyphs, and a lovely canoe outside the Band Office

Finally back in Campbell River, not letting Quadra Island hold the monopoly in driftwood sculpting, a big humpback whale now graces the waterfront right by the main road, keeping its beady eye on activities out at sea.

JEDIDIAH ISLAND TOUR

by Claire Summers



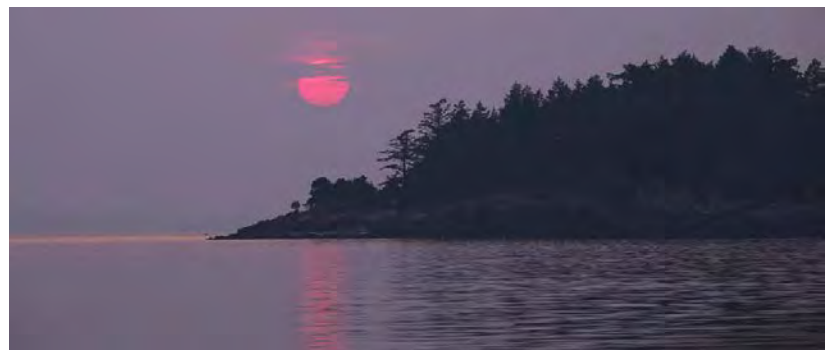
On Aug. 25th, a group of Seafaring Anats took sail in the comfort of the Jedediah Dawn. for a day cruise. Captain Wes treated us to many sightings of sea animals and interesting neighbouring islands.

The highlight of the day was landing at Jedediah Island, located between Lasqueti and Texada islands. There, we were surprised to see a number of wild sheep helping themselves to the fruit from the orchard at the old homestead. They seemed quite willing to share the crop of apples, plums and pears with us.

The view from the house offered a sense of tranquillity, coves and bays.

A quick stop at the Lasqueti Pub for supper and then back to French Creek, all the while in the presence of a lovely sunset and then guided home by Grandmother Moon.

Note: Mary Palmer's memoir of 45 years living on Jedediah Island is available from Harbour Publishing – [Jedediah Days: One Woman's Island Paradise](#).



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If you have any problems accessing the hyperlinks embedded in the text (to save space), contact Sylvia – I can send you the full URL.

Any constructive feedback about the contents of this newsletter are welcome! Please contact Sylvia (coastsyl at gmail dot com) or through the general ANats email arrowsmithnaturalists@gmail.com