



Arrowsmith Naturalists Newsletter  
Volume 31, Number 2  
June 2026

Hamilton Marsh, April 2026

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

### **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

Hello Fellow Anats! And happy spring/summer, whatever it thinks it is. As climate change progresses, so does my confusion. However, it's lovely to see the flowers out on the many outings. Have you noticed the outings are coming more frequently this year? Randy Richardson is the powerhouse behind getting them lined up and us out to enjoy nature! Many thanks to him. Jim and I went into the Mosaic back woods today and found Rhododendron Lake. It is one of the few places in BC where native Rhodos grow. This is their northern range limit. They were in full bloom, a lovely shade of light pink but the road in had some potholes. We had a good time though and the bumble bees appeared happy. Please have another look at Liz Bredberg's call for interest in getting active on the Decline of Shorebirds file. Just sitting and watching it happen is just too upsetting. Doing something about it is good for everyone's mental health and blood pressure. Is this something that would interest you? Drop her a line. Our new meeting location is great in some ways and not so great in others. We're working on the sound system challenges and hope to have them sorted out in the next couple of meetings. Thanks to Jasmine Tomczyk and Vickie Walters for taking on this puzzle. And finally, people with a Shaw email address aren't getting our emails. If you know a member with a Shaw address, please forward them our emails. It's often the only way we can communicate with everyone. Apparently, this is a universal problem. It's not just us. Liz B is currently experimenting with a Swiss company (can you believe it?!) \*

Through all of life's aggravations, we still have the birds, the flowers and all of nature's beauty to enjoy. So get out and enjoy!

Til next time.

Liz Thorne (Pres.)

\*Editor's postscript—Barring further weirdness from Shaw, Liz *thinks* she's resolved the internet problem with an account from Swissmail.org. Fingers crossed.

## OFFICERS AND CONTACTS

**President:** Elizabeth Thorne

**Past President:** Sally Soanes

**Vice President:** Marion Lea Jamieson

**Treasurer:** Helen Davidson

**Executive Secretary:** Randy Richardson

**Membership:** Bonnie Mullin

**Special Projects:** Lynne Brookes

**Website:** Kerry Baker

**BC Nature Representative:** Jasmine Tomczyk

**Newsletter:** Liz Bredberg

**Facebook:** Claire Summers

**Outreach Contact:** Sue Wilson

**Stewardship:** Dave Hutchings

**Email & Zoom:** Liz Bredberg

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## CLUB ACTIVITIES

### MEETINGS

Arrowsmith Naturalists meetings take place at 2 pm on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month. Their location has changed from St. Edmund's church to the Qualicum Beach Community Hall, 664 Memorial Drive. (by the Farmer's Market)

### OUTINGS

ANats continue to be enthusiastic participants in outings, and members provide abundant photos.

**4 March.** Duncan Campbell led a walk at Deep Bay and Ship's Point

**18 March.** Maggie Green led a walk through old growth forest, along Nile Creek.

**27 March.** Jeannie and Rob Schippers led a walk to **Claybanks** on the Englishman River. Spring wildflowers were abundant.



*Fawn lily*

**2 April** Toni and Ron led a walk at **Piper's Lagoon**. The tide was low, and a variety of wildflowers were observed.



**15 April** Dianne Anderson led a walk through the old growth forest at **Stamp River Provincial Park**.



**22 April** Maggie Green led a 4km hike along **Thames Creek**. The walk is along one side of the creek, and back onto the other side.

**1 May** David Helem led a walk from Lotus Pinnatus Park to Harewood Plains. Many species of wildflower were in bloom, including camas and the rare lotus pinnatus.



**6 May** Toni and Ron Wyckoff led an outing around the **Stoney Hill Loop**, with Douglas Fir, Arbutus, and Garry Oak forest, and a splendid view across Sansum Narrows to Salt Spring Island.



**13 May** Helen Davidson and Toni Wyckoff led a tour of Steve's Loop to observe the unusual vegetation, including mycotrophic/parasitic plants.



**20 May**, David Helem led a walk to the **Jack Point/Duke Point Sandstone Formations**, with a view of Gabriola Island, and spring wildflowers. (See also Terry Taylor's article in Nature Notes, below.)

## EVENTS

**The Hamilton Marsh Ribbon Cutting.** After decades of advocacy and community effort, the Nanaimo Regional District (RDN) has purchased the entire 360 hectares of Hamilton Wetlands and Forest. Arrowsmith Naturalists have been deeply involved in the preservation of this remarkable area, leading many guided walks, taking part in public activities, and bringing impressive numbers of their presence and advocacy known at RDN meetings.

The purchase was finalised on March 27<sup>th</sup>, and on April 7<sup>th</sup>, a ribbon-cutting event took place at the entrance to what has now become Hamilton Marsh Regional Park and Conservation Area. Dignitaries, funders, supporting organisations and media attended. Members of ANats were among those invited to the event, and who took part in guiding visits to the shore of the Marsh.



### **Coombs Family Day—16 February**

ANats has taken part in the Coombs Family Day over many years. Again, it was well attended, and great fun. ANats and children and family in attendance had an enjoyable day. (We must not fail to mention the free hot dogs and popcorn!)





## Brant and Wildlife Festival 10-13 April

Parksville marked its 35<sup>th</sup> year of the annual Brant and Wildlife Festival this April, marking the epic return journey made each year by migrating brant geese from Baja California to Alaska and the Yukon.



A variety of events took place in the three days of the Festival.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56cfcb3b4c2f859ac50bcbef/t/69d94a72ddbdc6182e24c639/1775848050641/2026+Brant+Festival+Events+updated+April+3%2C+2026.pdf>



(left to right: immature Bonaparte's gull, two greater yellowlegs, 1 brant)

**Brant Count--** The traditional brant count (in its 30<sup>th</sup> year) took place each week from 23 February through 27 April. ANats gathered each Monday, in times set by the tides, and completed a survey that included brant and other waterfowl and shorebirds. A weekly report was filed with MABRI, and a final report <https://arrowsmithnats.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/PQBWMA-Brant-Count-Report-2026.pdf> assembled and provided analysis of the weekly findings. As in previous years, that final report has been sent to the Provincial West Coast Region of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Coordinator for Key Biodiversity Areas, and Nature Trust. It is also on file in the Arrowsmith Naturalists Website.

## STEWARDSHIP

Arrowsmith Naturalists have long served as stewards of the Oceanside region.

Dave Hutchings has organised the removal of invasive species from the Englishman River Estuary, and submitted this report:

### Englishman River Estuary Spring, 2026

This Spring has marked the return to our usual haunts at the south side of the Englishman River Estuary (ERE). It's not that the Mariner Way site in San Paniel is all "done"; instead, we have paused our efforts for the time being. Over the fall and winter, Yana Maltais, Marion Jamieson and Liz Thorne had collected seed from a variety of native plant species, germinated the seed and lovingly raised the seedlings for transplanting at Mariner Way. However, our unusually dry Winter and Spring meant that planting conditions for this Spring were much less than ideal and, as a result, planting out will be delayed until the Fall. The same holds true for wild seedlings of pine, fir and garry oak which had been

potted up for new “homes” at Mariner Way.

Returning to the south side of the ERE has felt - as David Helem put it - like “returning home”. Once again, the hunt was on for those telltale yellow blossoms of Scotch broom. Fortunately, only a few mature broom plants remained in thickets where they had eluded previous “hunts”, and those remnants have been dispatched. For the most part, the remaining broom have been heavily browsed low to the ground without producing much in the way of blooms and seed. Who knew that the ERE’s resident deer population would find Scotch broom so tasty! Nevertheless, the next couple of months will entail monitoring and cutting any broom which manages to bloom, and then moving on to our small patches of spotted knapweed.

Walking through the ERE at this time of year - or at any other time of year, for that matter - is a glorious experience. The scent of the Nootka roses, the songs of nesting birds, the surprise sightings of deer and rabbits and the waving of the grasses in the fresh sea breezes all display Nature at her best. If you’d like a enjoyable ramble in the best of Nature, why not join us one sunny morning - if only for a walk and a look at where our ANats stewards have enjoyed a twice-monthly time of fun work and some terrific camaraderie. If you’re tempted, drop me a line at [dhutchings40@gmail.com](mailto:dhutchings40@gmail.com) or 250-927-4462, and I’ll update you with times and dates.

Dave Hutchings  
Stewardship Coordinator



Englishman River Estuary Stewards

## French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve

### What's New at the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve?

By Lynne Brookes

#### Restoration

Arrowsmith Naturalists volunteers continue to work on the restoration of this human activities impacted yet habitat-rich and biodiverse special place. On Tuesday mornings dedicated members are onsite year-round removing invasive plants. During the dry season there is also a Tuesday morning watering team onsite caring for the native plants we've installed. The image below shows some of the new plants (marked with red flags) growing in the recently restored 200 sq. meter section near the pond. Jasmine T. can be seen providing some water.



Image by: Sue Bingham

When working out there we are often treated by the sights and sounds of Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, ducks, kingfishers and lots of colourful songbirds. Last fall, we sometimes spotted a beaver mother and her kit!



Image by: Dave Erickson

#### Baseline surveys:

To measure progress being made toward the overarching goal of increasing native species biodiversity over time within the Nature Preserve, we need to understand the biodiversity onsite at present. With present time “baseline” surveys designed by scientists and carried out in part by ANats volunteers, we will be able to compare future biodiversity survey results with the initial “baseline” surveys.

Future surveys can be conducted onsite at any time(s) and would replicate the same methodology used in the initial “baseline” surveys. Whether there is a survey every five years, or in ten years, or one fifty years in the future, the results of each would be compared with the initial “baseline” surveys we are presently conducting. Comparing future survey results against data from the initial surveys should indicate biodiversity increase, no change, or decrease over time.

To date, working in collaboration with and funding through the VIU/Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI) and working with RDN Parks we have created within the Nature Preserve forest tree study plots, understory study plots and conducted terrestrial insect surveys, avian aerial insectivore survey, a reptile survey, and a year-long amphibian and hydrology survey. In 2026, we received funding from BC Nature to enlarge the initial 2022 insect survey by incorporating aquatic and nocturnal insect surveys. One of the results of this endeavour will be a permanent portable display about the diversity of insects within the MABR, their importance in ecosystems, threats they face and how insects can be better supported.

The following images were taken on April 25 th during the first nocturnal insect survey with Dr. Scott Gilmore and six ANats members.



Image by: Dave Erickson



Image by: Dave Erickson

The final aquatic and nocturnal insect surveys with Dr. Scott Gilmore will take place this summer. If you're interested in participating in one or both of these efforts, just let me know!

## ADVOCACY

### Viking Way Land Purchase

Advocacy and fundraising continue for the purchase of the 1 hectare adjoining the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve (FCENP). In addition to clearance of invasives in the FCENP, ANats have taken part in flyer distribution to homes in the area, film evenings that included displays of the work of local nature photographers, and other media events. An evening of film will take place in Qualicum Beach on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June:

## Life in the Nest A Nature Film Presentation

### Help Protect the Viking Way Heron Colony

An intimate video of the Viking Way Great Blue Herons in their nests. Witness courtship, nest building and tender moments between the adults and their chicks.

**Date:** Tuesday, June 2nd

**Time:** Doors Open at 6:30, Presentation 7-8pm

**Adult Admission by Donation, Children 12 & Under Free**

**St. Stephen's Church Hall, 150 Village Way, Qualicum Beach**

Plus spectacular wildlife photography by Deborah Freeman, Marnee Pearce, Randy Findlay & Wayne Duke.  
Wildlife cards for sale at event.



Presented by the Save Estuary Land Society & Arrowsmith Naturalists Club  
Visit Website: [saveestuarylandsociety.ca](http://saveestuarylandsociety.ca) Email: [saveestuaryland@gmail.com](mailto:saveestuaryland@gmail.com)

## NATURE NOTES

### Shadows

Shadows - how often do we notice them or think about them? They have a long and storied history, and have been around since the sun first shone on planet earth. In pre-history's earliest days, the shadow of a simple stick planted upright could be used to tell the time of day, the seasons of the year, and even to measure the height of the pyramids. Points of the compass could also be determined as shadow orientations changed throughout the hours of daylight.

Sundials evolved using the sun's shadow to indicate the time of day, where the shadow-making element is set pointing to the North Star, and from these were developed the timepieces we carry round with us today, no sun or shadows needed. But think of the enormous amount of learning that resulted from those simple observations, upon which our present knowledge is built. Some sundials are still used in their original way, but most are now ornamental and interesting additions to the environment.

Much was learned by the ancients from shadow size, direction, and movement, and come to think of it, there are some really large shadows - think solar and lunar eclipses. Who isn't overawed by the the moon passing between the earth and the sun, its shadow falling on planet earth as it goes? People

will travel far and wide to experience a solar eclipse, to watch the world dimming in daylight hours until, for a few brief minutes, total darkness arrives and the natural world becomes quiet and still. There's a thrill and excitement as the long-awaited 'diamond ring' appears in a bright ephemeral flash of light as the moon's shadow moves slowly onward, gradually leaving the sun to shine once again.

A lunar eclipse is very different. This time the earth passes between the sun and the moon, so it's the earth's shadow causing the moon's surface to assume a reddish glow at full eclipse. So, to some extent, we are looking at ourselves as we move through the universe, it's OUR shadow we're watching!

Nighttime, on the other hand, is caused when we (the planet) get in our own way. While one face of the earth is turned toward the sun, sunlight to the other face is blocked by the earth itself, causing the shadow we call night. Fortunately, the earth's rotation sees to it that we all take turns in facing the sunlit side, unlike the back of the moon, which is always in the dark.

However, coming down to earth, right in our own backyards, and within our four walls, will be all sorts of interesting shadows. Hang a crystal in a window where it will catch sunlight at some point during the day, and rainbow streaks, dots or other shapes will appear from time to time. Notice at what time they appear, watch them move across the wall, ceiling or floor where they happen to land, and if there are consecutively sunny days, see how the time they appear varies from one day to the next, and for how long they may be visible. Such short-lived experiences are not to be taken for granted - they have stories to tell.



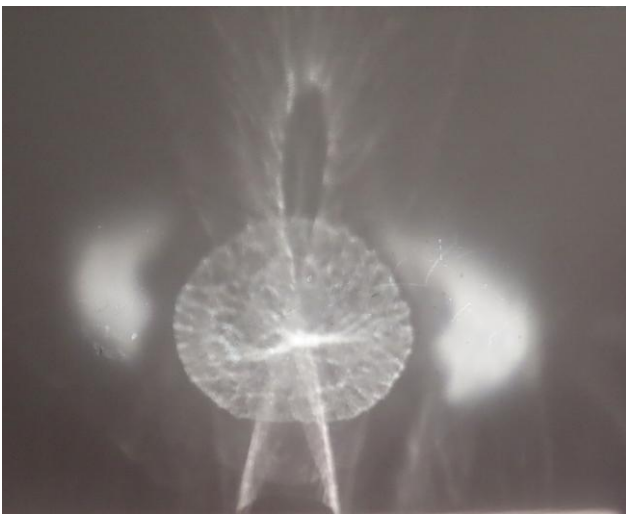
Having just cleaned and refilled a bird bath in the garden on a hot day last summer, thirsty wasps were lining up to drink. Like water striders, I discovered they could land on the water without breaking the surface tension, and when one landed on the water in the centre of the green garden saucer that acted as a dish, its shadow appeared immediately below it, as shown in this photo.

We also have guardian angels in our house! Really! After a rain shower, when the sun has dried most of the wet window, there are still a few drops of water right at the bottom. Catching the sunlight, their shadows fall on the inside windowsill, and our guardian angels appear - some as females in long gossamer dresses, some like traditional men, and yet others like elderly angels leaning on a stick! Seriously. And sometimes they come with us in the car, appearing on the dashboard right beside the windshield. Move over, house insurance and ICBC, we have guardian angels to look after us!



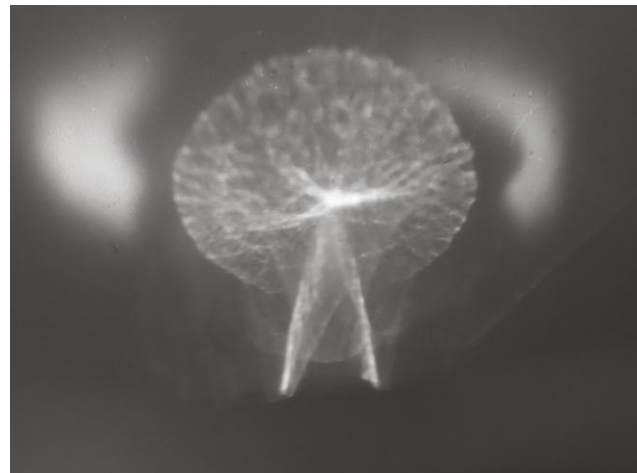
Most curious of all, just recently an empty small heavy china plate on a table caught the setting sun, resulting in this shadow appearing on the nearby wall. Sometimes Dr. Google can be helpful in suggesting what the subject of a photo might be, so at least one know where to start looking further for confirmation of identity. However, this particular shadow got him really confused. First it was described as some sort of nudibranch, another try suggested it was the seedhead of some extremely rare plant, but third time lucky, sort of, when it was described as an image similar to those created by ancient Chinese 'magic mirrors'.

And that was quite right insofar as the effect is created by slight variations of the curvature of the mirror's surface - the china plate in this case. It then continued to add that "the image often depicts Buddha surrounded by emanating rays of light" but like all things Google, that last remark should perhaps be taken with a very large grain of salt!



My own shadow of course comes with me on sunny days, and can be one of the most

useful items in my photographic toolbox. When trying to take a photo of some bright object on or near the ground, a



well-placed shadow can do a great job of reducing the glare which would otherwise blow out any picture. But there again, just pause to think for a moment. Shadows are ephemeral, they come and go, they turn up anywhere and everywhere, they may never be the same twice, but at the same time they are also be a permanent fixture. My shadow is attached to me, and no-one else, whether I like it or not. I can't sell it, buy another one, or exchange it for a later model! So it's both ephemeral and a constant at the same time.

And just to end with, needless to say photographs containing shadows can provide all sorts of forensic evidence if carefully scrutinised. As a simple example - by checking this photo of feral chickens in Rarotonga, it not only tells you that, like Kaua'i, chickens have taken over the place, but it's clear without a doubt the almost exact time that this photo was taken. I'll leave you to work it out!



Rosemary Taylor. May, 2026

### **The Grottoes of Jack Point**

Along the trail to Jack Point there are a number of interesting geological features. The most interesting of these is located in a sandstone cliff, where a short trail descends to a small cove. In this cliff are several large, rounded holes that are so large you can climb into them. They are essentially gigantic examples of the honeycomb weathering patterns, called tafoni, that are so common in sandstone cliffs at the seashore. The attached photograph shows them. It also shows some of the native plants that grow here. The grayish tint above one of them is stonecrop, and the yellow is the flowers of gold stars. It is a rare annual wildflower in the daisy family.



The beautiful patterns that occur in sandstone are caused by seawater. When the water evaporates the salt is left behind, but it is not just deposited upon the surface of the rocks. When salt crystals grow they dislodge the sand grains from that surface. The process, however, is not as simple as it may seem. It is still not known exactly how they do that. So many common things still retain elements of the mysterious.

Just before reaching the cove, there are some other interesting structures, but these are in shale, not sandstone. They are rounded structures, and they are caused by the decay of previously living organisms. Shale is made from clay. When this clay was deposited on a seashore over 70 million years ago, some of it buried dead organisms. Substances from these decaying organisms seeped into the clay, making it harder than the surrounding sediments, and more resistant to erosion. On Hornby Island many small concretions have been found that contain fossils of ammonites. The shells of these animals still exist because the hard concretions have protected them. They have rotted away in the softer sediments that have encased the concretions.

We need a geologist in the club, to learn about such things. A local geologist on Gabriola Island, Steven Earle, has written a free, online textbook, Physical Geology, <https://opentextbc.ca/physicalgeology2ed/> which contains information about western Canadian geology, and is very worthwhile consulting. A useful and interesting book is West Coast Fossils by Rolf Lundvigen and Graham Beard. Although it deals mainly with Vancouver Island fossils, it also gives a good introduction to the geology of Vancouver Island.

--Terry Taylor

## COMING EVENTS

**2 June 7 pm**, St. Stephen's Church, Qualicum Beach. An evening of film in support of the heron population of Viking Way.

**19 June 10 am**, MABRI Education Centre ts'xwelikwshenawtxw, 124 West Second Avenue, Qualicum Beach iNaturalist training session

**20 June 10 am-2 pm**, Qualicum First Nation Open Air Market, Qualicum First Nation Campground

**26-28 June MABRI Bioblitz** <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/2026-mabr-bioblitz>

**12 July** Qualicum Beach Day

**29 August, 6:30 pm** —Wild Salmon Blues--**Qualicum Beach Civic Centre**  
an event in support of the 'N̓amgis First Nation's return to court to protect wild salmon.  
<https://magiccanoe.org/events/wild-salmon-blues>

## CLOSING THOUGHT

### **The Last Bee**

After the last bee  
had buzzed its last buzz,  
the birds and the butterflies  
did what they could.

But soon the fields lay bare,  
few flowers were left,  
nature was broken,  
and the planet bereft.

*Rian Ilston*

