

Arrowsmith Naturalists Newsletter
Volume 31, Number 3
October 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

And boom! Just like that it is fall. From one day to the next maples began to change colour and drop their leaves. Thimbleberries we've been watering all summer at French Creek turned brown and crackled. Birding in Saanich this morning the golden and white crowned and savanna sparrows were back from the hills.

Summer was cooler this year but still so dry! A warmer and drier fall season is predicted and more plants and animals will be under stress. Not to mention the humans of Parksville who really need to get their water supply sorted out.

And then last night a friend told me that her daughter, who has lived on waterfront property in Courtney for 20 years, is now getting water and driftwood landing on her front step during king tides. She and her partner have bought the lot behind the house which is up a 200 foot cliff, and are building a new home.

With all the turmoil in the world and the urgent need to arm ourselves, develop more and bigger industries and to hell with endangered species and protected areas, I think it's important that we all begin to speak up much more than we have been doing. Mark Carney is a great man for the moment but he can't be allowed to decimate the environment.

Writing letters to politicians is, of course, one option. We have municipal elections coming up soon. We need to ask questions at public meetings.

Signing petitions is another. Writing a letter to the local paper brings it a bit closer to home. Raising the topic at social gatherings is a bit riskier (believe me, I know!). But I think it's important that it happens. Too many people don't hear a peep about climate change because they listen only to happy music and talk.

We're annoyed because 80 million Americans didn't vote because they didn't think it made any difference. Even more people world-wide are plugging their ears and singing la la la regarding climate change.

Let's all come up with a story we can tell at Thanksgiving that is true, illustrates the point well and is unlikely to offend anyone. I'm going to tell the story of my friends' daughter.
Happy fall everyone!

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

BC Nature Representative: Jasmine Tomczyk

Website: Kerry Baker

Newsletter: pending

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 4th 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) **note: this location is subject to change. Members are advised to check the website for confirmation.**

**Attention**

It's Membership Time!!

All memberships are due by **December 1st!!!**
The exceptions are those who newly joined since
June 1, 2026.

Please read carefully!

NEW Waivers this year!
BC Nature has created new waivers.
They will be perpetual! Once you fill one in and I
submit it to BC Nature it is good for your lifetime!
Every individual need to fill in their own waiver.

Membership Forms
Membership forms will need to be filled in and
submitted every year as usual. Nothing has
changed on them. Couples need only one form.

How to get the forms:
1. I will have paper forms with me when I am at meetings, etc.
2. Forms available for print on the website:
www.arrowsmithnats.org
3. Or just email me and I will send them to you.

How to get them to me:
Deliver them to me at an event or October or November
meetings or mail them to the address on the Membership form.
Another option is to email them to me.
Payment can be cash, cheque or e-transfer directly to
Arrowsmith Naturalists at anatsmembers@gmail.com

Any questions? Contact Bonnie at live2hikebonnie@gmail.com

EVENTS

Annual Picnic

Arrowsmith Naturalists gathered in Rath Trevor Park for their annual July picnic. There was, as ever, a silent auction for the many invaluable items members had donated.

The traditional quiz was a bit different this year. We marked the 80th birthdays of two of our members—Toni Wyckoff and Bonnie Mullin. (All of us find it incredible that these two magnificent ANats have turned 80, but we must trust their veracity, so yes indeed, what splendid octogenarians they are.)



In their honour, we had a quiz reflecting Bonnie's and Toni's full and eventful lives. *And we had cakes!* Toni had created a wonderful chocolate cake; Liz B did her predictable carrot cake (local rabbits feel a bit deprived).

It was a delightful evening. ANats have many strengths, not least of which is our ability to picnic.

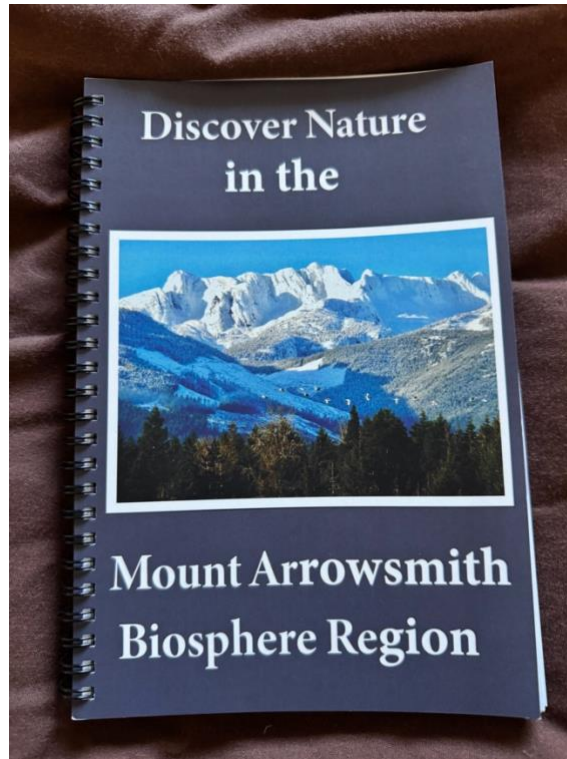


Calendar production and marketing

It's possible that the epic calendar project is incorrectly presented under the heading of "Events," Early this year, Nancy Randall presented ANats with the challenging idea of developing a perpetual calendar featuring "the remarkable landscapes, wildlife, and communities that make the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere a special place." A committee was formed and put in many hours of unstinting labour to produce a volume in time for the September EuroMAB event, a gathering of stakeholders from 308 UNESCO biosphere reserves in 53 countries across Europe and North America.



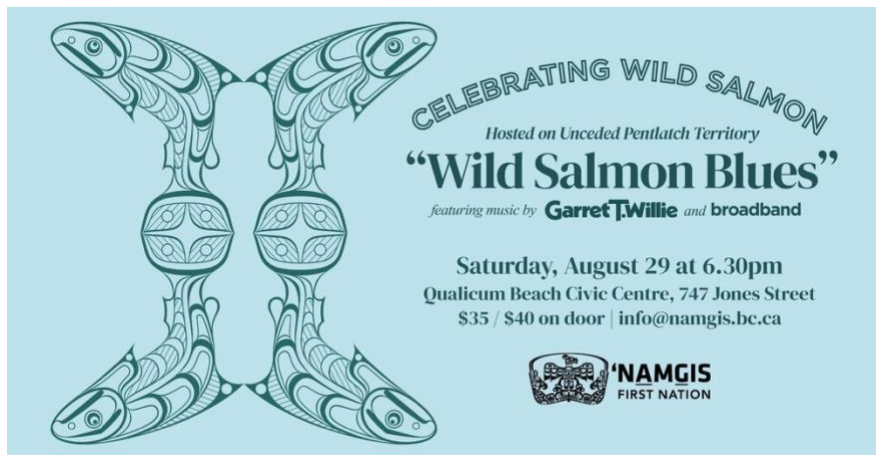
...Here's the Calendar:



It costs a very reasonable \$24.95, available at Mulberry Books, Milner Gardens, the Parksville Tourist Office, Parks West, NIWRA, and Bayside. Copies will also be available at Arrowsmith Naturalists' meetings.

Wild Salmon Blues

On August 29th, the 'Namgis First Nation presented an evening of music, speeches, and a splendid silent auction in the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre. Many ANats attended, in support of the 'Namgis' continued legal battles to ban salmon farming.



Rivers Day took place on September 27th in Parksville Community Park. ANats tended a table, informing the public about our club and the importance of protecting our watersheds.



National Day for Truth and Reconciliation On September 30th members of the Qualicum First Nation, of Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Research Institute, of Arrowsmith Naturalists and other community members came together to listen, reflect, remember, and be together - honouring Residential School Survivors, their families, and the children who never came home.



It is a day meant for remembrance and reflection. ANats should reflect on how to realise to their nominal commitment to “nurture better understanding and to pursue opportunities for collaboration with our First Nations neighbours.”

OUTINGS

Throughout the summer ANats have continued to take frequent part in group outings:

On **June 24th**, David Vey, RPBio of MOSAIC, led a group of Arrowsmith Naturalists to observe a nest of goshawks.



On **July 11th**, **Jasmine Tomczyk** led a group of very impressed ANats on a tour of the Food Forest that she has developed in her back yard.



On **July 26th** , Randy and Doug Fraser (from Nanaimo) led a tour of **Buttertubs Marsh**. It represented a first—a collaborative outing between Arrowsmith Naturalists and Nature Nanaimo.



Randy Richardson led a visit to **Milner Gardens** on August 14. In addition to the beautiful gardens, visitors had the opportunity to enjoy a sumptuous lunch (tea?) in the Garden's café.



On September 5th, **Dianne Anderson** led a walk on **Black Brook Trails**.

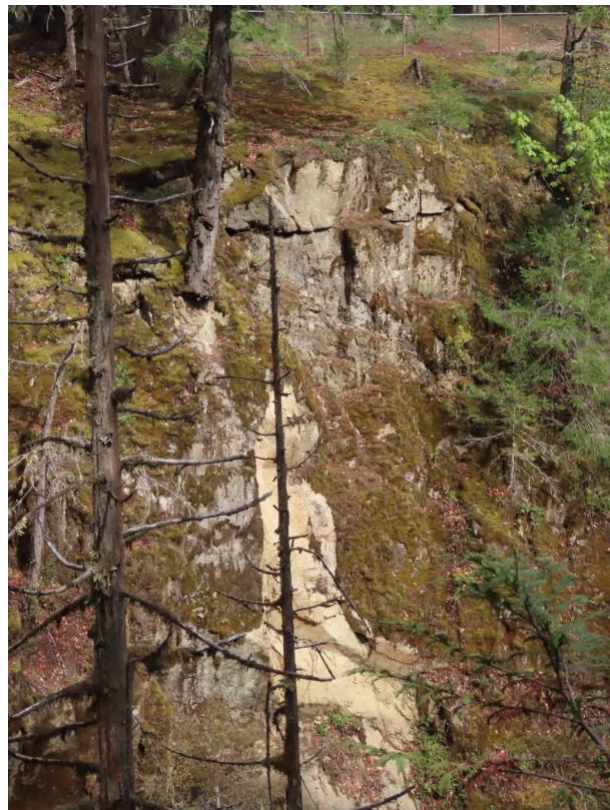


Toni and Ron Wyckoff led a visit to **Seal Bay** September 14th.





On September 23rd, **Alan Gilchrist**, retired professor of geology at the University of Victoria, led a very popular tour exploring the geology of the **Little Qualicum Falls**.



BIOBLITZES

Arrowsmith Naturalists' New Bioblitz Series

At the request of Ray Woroniak of the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region, Arrowsmith Naturalists has launched a new series of monthly bioblitzes. A Bioblitz is a short outing to a natural spot with the aim of identifying and recording as many species as possible within a few hours. It is a citizen science initiative that yields useful scientific data on biodiversity in the Biosphere Region.

Our first bioblitzes were held at Hamilton Marsh, the Englishman River Estuary (Mariner Way), and Top Bridge. The Mariner Way bioblitz was the most productive, with 17 observers recording 129 species ranging from red rock crabs to black oystercatchers to sea milkwort in bloom.



We are now conducting bioblitzes on the 2nd Thursday of each month, with each at a different spot within the Biosphere Region. If you'd like to join us, the schedule through next summer can be found on our website at <https://arrowsmithnats.org/anats-mabr-bioblitz/> with locations and times. A notice with details is sent to our members about a week in advance.

STEWARDSHIP

Arrowsmith Naturalist has a long history of stewardship.

Dave Hutchings has long organised and inspired work on the **Englishman River Estuary**. This is his report for the past summer.

Our work on the Englishman River Estuary (ERE) has continued over the summer, albeit at a somewhat relaxed pace. Once the blooming Scotch broom had been mostly dispatched, we turned our attention to cutting the remaining more mature plants, many of which the deer had browsed low to the ground and which will be our targets in the coming months. Although our months-long drought is a concern for our aquifers and our forests, there seem to be a somewhat positive side effect at the ERE. Our other invasive plant of the summer - spotted knapweed - seems to be struggling. And that is good news. Whether the knapweed is diminishing because of our persistent efforts to prevent the setting of new seeds or because of the intense drought is hard to determine. What we have seen, however, is that knapweed required far less of our efforts this summer. Time will tell. On September 17th, a few of us (see photo) attended the “soft” opening of the Nature Trust site at Mariner Way on the outer portion of the Estuary. Although the public had been given access to the Nature Park at the entrance of the site several weeks before, Tom Read and Shawn Lukas of the Nature Trust hosted a low-key appreciation event for those who had helped to bring this restoration project along. In addition to expressing their thanks for our support of the Mariner Way project, Tom and Shawn laid out their plans for the next year or two. Because the site is so exposed to the elements and the soil is poor, the introduction of new plants will be put off for the next year or so. Not surprisingly, a number of the new plants which were introduced in did not thrive and plague of invasive thistles threatened to take over much of the area designated for planting, so much so that a herbicide had to be applied as a last resort. Leaving the site to Nature for a year or two may be the wisest decision. On an encouraging note, however, we have spotted new seedlings of shore pine, douglas fir and arbutus which have sprung up spontaneously. The Nature Trust has done a good job of readying the public portion of the Mariner Way site. Apart from the handsome picnic shelter, the fine trails and viewpoints, some attractive interpretative signage highlights both the value of the site to the natural evolution of the Estuary as well highlighting the migratory and resident species which birdwatchers can expect to spot during various seasons. Even more signage will be added in the coming months.

Once again, if you value some meaningful work in the service of nature preservation and the sense of satisfaction that goes with it, as well the fresh air and companionship as added bonuses, come join us. As most of you know, we meet at the ERE at 9:30 a.m. usually on the first and third Thursday of each month. If you contact me at dhutchings40@shaw.ca, I can add you to our email call out list. Come once, come occasionally, or come out often. You are guaranteed a hearty welcome.

Dave Hutchings, Stewardship Coordinator



The ANats team and BC Nature Trust staff.

French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve

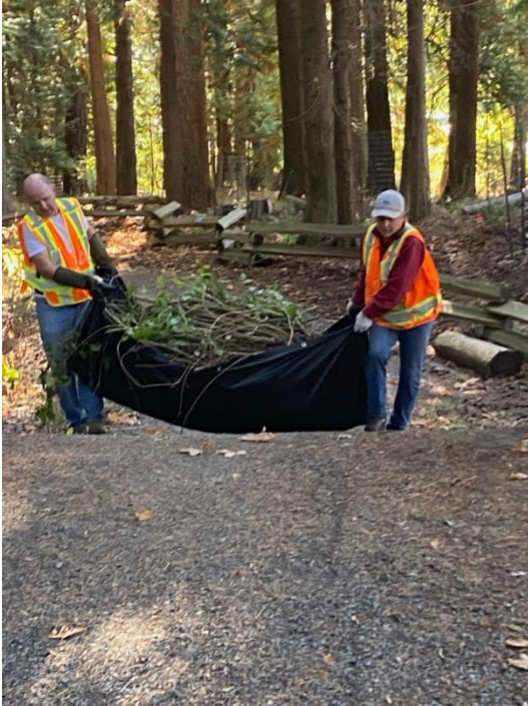
Hurray for Volunteers !

Volunteers are hard at work at the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve, working to increase its biodiversity by planning, conducting, and implementing habitat restoration projects and research studies.

From January to August 2026, volunteers dedicated over 800 hours to these initiatives:

- 697 hours removing invasive plants and watering recently planted native plants
- 109 hours doing Amphibian, Terrestrial, and Aquatic & Nocturnal insect research studies

Volunteers hauling out tarp loads of invasives, watering native plants and having fun!



Hardy volunteers use pickaxes, crowbars & shovels to dig out blackberry roots and knuckles in a rocky area beside French Creek.



Blackberry knuckles—very tough customers!



Jasmine models the latest fashion in headwear!

ADVOCACY

Viking Way Land Purchase Fund-raising efforts toward purchasing the remaining 1 hectare of land adjacent to the French Creek Estuary Nature Preserve continue. "Movie nights," showing the charming video "Life in the Nest," and photos by local nature photographers, have been well attended and have attracted generous donations.

Shorebird Population Decline

In response to the 42% decline in shorebird population at a national level reported in Birds Canada, ANats have formed a committee to examine the state of shorebirds within the Parksville Qualicum Beach Wildlife Area.

Our intent is twofold: Initially, to gain information about the current conditions among shorebirds within our region (the Parksville Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area—PQBWMA),

Having gathered information, to share our findings with local communities and with authorities and government agencies and to advocate for meaningful interventions to support the threatened avian populations we observe.

We have begun by initiating contact with expert birders on Vancouver Island and have had encouraging responses to our plans. Our group is small—we've been meeting once a month--additional interested participants would be welcome.

NATURE NOTES

Karen Hodgson has sent us this account of a battle between two barred owls.

The Big Fight

I was walking in the Parksville wetlands the day after the first nice rain of the season. All was fresh and I was amazed by how lush with growth the wetlands have become in the 3 short years I have been walking there. (Many thanks to all those who volunteered to help with planting and restoration of this pleasant wetland.) The dampness and breeze released a range of pungent vegetation smells as I happily made my way along the trail. At some point along the loop, I heard what sounded like yelling up ahead. There were few people in the park and I wondered if someone was chastising a dog, and just what the commotion was about. As soon as I came around the bend, not one but two large beings flew screaming out of the woods right over the trail in front of me. I froze and quickly realized it was a pair of locked owls, grabbing at one another with sharp talons and smacking one another with their big, rounded wings. An aggressive series of attacks on one another then ensued, as they flew back and forth above me bashing together, cracking through tree branches, and repeatedly lashing out with splayed talons and no shortage of very assertive pecking. It was clear they were Barred Owls with their characteristic stripes, pale faces and deep "who cooks for you" hoots interspersed with screams. Relative to the many mature Barred Owls I have seen, they were on the smallish side so perhaps they were 2 youths scrapping over territory. They broke apart periodically and sat on branches a metre or two apart in between attacks. I continued to fumble with my cell phone which had

been in my pocket (and turned off), but managed to get a shot of one of them glaring at me. I kicked myself of course that I failed to hit video. They seemed annoyed by me standing there mouth agape, and eventually flew off in separate directions - leaving me astounded by the improbability of witnessing the violent intensity of an owl fight. I carried on, exhilarated. I stopped briefly along the trail and checked over my shoulder hoping for a last glimpse of the owls. It was then I was promptly inspected beak to nose by a busy female Anna's Hummingbird. I kept still, smiling and could see every detail of her iridescent olive coloured feathers shimmering in the sunlight a foot away. A great day in the Parksville Wetlands.



Terry Taylor has sent us this account of the autumn emergence of two uncommon fungi.

BONDARZEWIA IN THE HERITAGE FOREST AND THE DESERT PUFFBALL NEARBY.

When September arrives my interests shift from plants to mushrooms, and I start to look for fungi. This year on September first, during a visit to the Qualicum Beach Heritage Forest, I did not expect to see very much, as the soil was extremely dry and parched. But surprisingly two uncommon species presented themselves.

Beside the trail from Hemsworth Road there was a yellow brown fleshy pore fungus, *Bondarzewia occidentalis*. Most pore fungi are hard and woody like the bracket fungi, but this one is very different. It is soft and mushroom-like, and quite uncommon. The only other one I have seen in Oceanside was at the Big Qualicum Hatchery. It grows on the ground in coniferous forests, as a parasite on tree roots. It looks like a big pale brown fuzzy mushroom with white underside, and pores not gills. But *Bondarzewia* is a very strange pore fungus. It is not closely related to most other pore fungi. Its relatives are brittle gill (*Russula*) mushrooms, which are mycorrhizal with tree roots, not parasites.

After crossing Crescent Road, my attention was drawn to a patch of what looked like small white mushrooms on the edge of the golf course. That was rather surprising considering how dry it was. On close inspection they turned out to be small puffballs, but very strange puffballs. Something I had never found before, and never expected to see around here. They are desert puffballs (*Tulostoma*). They have been found around Victoria, which has a drier climate than we do. But, as far as I know, have never been found around here. They are white in colour with a small round hole. When you touch one, a dense cloud of brown spores shoots out of the hole. They grow from a woody little stem that looks like a miniature tree trunk.

There are lots of interesting things all around us if we look closely.



Bondarzewia



Desert puffball

COMING EVENTS

8 October Bioblitz Little Qualicum Hatchery. 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

17 October Qualicum First Nations Centre—Indian Tacos and Loonie Toonie evening

24 October Natural Asset Management/Ecosystem Services Open House, MABR 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

25 October Annual Mid-Island Mushroom and Nature Festival, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre

12 November Bioblitz Bonnell Creek 1:30-3:30 pm

Nature is not a place to visit. It is home.

Gary Snyder