

# Arrowsmith Naturalists

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Arrowsmith Naturalists

new website is:

<http://www.arrowsmithnats.org>

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## President's Message

As this will be my last President's Report, my message is being written with a mixture of feelings. When the Election process is completed this November, we will have a new Executive including: President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. All of these positions need to be filled. I encourage EVERY member to give full consideration to making him/herself available to help fill the upcoming vacant positions. As previously emphasized, if we do not have a President and Treasurer, Arrowsmith Naturalists will have to fold! Ensuring that these positions are filled is that important. I'm sure you do not want to see this happen as the Arrowsmith Naturalists play a significant roll in our community.

I thank all those members who over the last six years have supported the organization and myself. These members include and certainly are not limited to:

- Maggie Little and her Invasive Species Removal Team, Betty Collins and her Kidsfest Team;
- The Executive from the last six years, Val Tinney and Alison Bakker for heading up the Young Naturalists.
- All those who have supported our efforts to promote and protect the Environment including Gary and Rhonda and their various assistants,
- All of those members who have arranged Outings and Programme Speakers; David Helem for stepping in to manage the website; Margaret Hill for taking over the newsletter editing from Pat Audley;
- And last but not least, all those who have stepped forward to help out when requested.

On a positive note I feel confident people will step forward when needed and I expect to support the Executive and organization...albeit from a less managerial position.

Best wishes to Arrowsmith Naturalists and its future Executive.

Roger Simms

**The Arrowsmith Naturalist** is published three times a year --- in February, June and October. Articles on birding, travel, botany and environmental matters are welcome by the end of the month prior to publication. The next deadline is January 2010, for the February 2010 edition.

Hand-written or typed articles are accepted, some editing may be required for length or held off for another edition according to available space. E-mail articles to [mmhillm@shaw.ca](mailto:mmhillm@shaw.ca) or send by snail mail to 194 Valdez Ave, Qualicum Beach B.C. V9K 1R8

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#### General Information:

An information pamphlet on Club membership is available at both of the public libraries, or write to Arrowsmith Naturalists, Box 1542, Parksville, B.C., V9P 2H4. Annual membership is \$35.00 per family, \$22.00 single or \$12.00 junior (up to 18 years). Membership includes monthly meetings (talks and/or slide shows), regular hikes (bird watching, botanical focus), BC Nature newsletter four times a year and the Club newsletter in February, June and October.

A reference copy of the current newsletter is available at each of the libraries at Parksville and Qualicum Beach.

“**Meetings and Outings**” sheets are available at Mulberry Bush Book Store in Qualicum Beach and Parksville.

Website: <http://www.arrowsmithnats.org>

## BULLETIN BOARD

#### Parking

If you find you have to park in the over-flow lot down the street from the school, be aware that the gates are locked at 9:30 p.m. One of our members found herself locked in and had to phone for a ride home.

#### No Smoking

Smoking is not allowed anywhere on school property

#### Sunshine

If you know of an Arrowsmith Naturalist, who is ill, in hospital or recently bereaved, please call Maggie Little at 250- 757-2387

#### Club Stewardship

Stewardship of the Englishman River Estuary is an on-going club project which seeks to monitor and eradicate invasive species from the Estuary. Members meet on the last Friday of each month (weather permitting) for a couple of hours to carry out project work. Come on out to share in an important cause, as well as enjoying some lively social time. **Contact: Maggie at 250 757-2328 for more information.**

#### YELLOW JACKET

*Genus – Vespula*



By: Margaret Hill

Throughout the summer, more than usual it seemed, we were persistently pestered by the above named insect. In October, the source of the problem was discovered at the base of a rotting wood block. With a bit of research, the wasp has been identified. However, the fascinating aspect of this backyard nature story is the location and size of the paper type nest or hive.

Martin took photos of the nest which measured 10” in diameter and reached up into the wood 10” and into the ground at an 8” depth. *See photos on p. 10.* Indeed it is the size of a basketball with probably 4,000 to 5,000 worker wasps...suggestive of why the persistent pestering.

More information on the Yellow Jacket, wasp, can be found at:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow\\_jacket](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_jacket)

## Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve

“Which trails would you recommend for seeing wildflowers?” was inevitably our first question directed to staff as we visited each new National and Provincial Park along our route across Canada during the summer of 2007. The trails suggested never disappointed and as we headed east and the summer season advanced, so ever new species, as well as the more familiar ones were sighted. Generally, we were the only folk wandering these flowering trails, whether in prairie grasslands, forest or coastal wetland habitats. We eventually arrived at the Pistolet Bay Provincial Park at the tip of the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland, and were planning to visit the nearby L’Anse Aux Meadows National Historic Site, the following day, but in answer to our “flowers?” question the warden recommended the Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve in nearby Raleigh. Upon hearing that daily guided tours were available in the morning, natural history took precedence over archeological history.

The Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve is one of the most important botanical sites on the Island of Newfoundland because of the incredibly rich variety of flora and number of rare species unique to Limestone Barrens. The Cape is narrowly attached to the Northern Peninsula by a sandy isthmus and definitely visiting with a guide is recommended because of the fragile nature of the 3.6 square kilometre area with its more than 300 species of plants tucked almost invisibly into the gray angular gravel. (Taking photos was not encouraged because even squatting down for a close-up could cause unwitting damage, so extreme self-control had to be practiced by David, but he managed a few photos in the “safer” areas.)

During the short drive to the Reserve, Elizabeth, our guide, gave a brief historical introduction and the explanation of the climatic and geological features which make the area so unique. In the early 1900's, a Harvard botanist, M.L. Fernald visited the area and soon recognized the significance of the plant life, but gradually botanical interest faded in the following decades, and was replaced by commercial and domestic interest for limestone gravel quarrying. Fortunately, by the 1990's, local residents of Raleigh, with the help of a botanist raised awareness of the threatened species extinction. So began the long bureaucratic process of getting the area protected permanently with the Province giving the Burnt Cape full ecological reserve designation in 2000. The Nature Conservancy had also provided generous support, which enabled two people from the area to be trained as guides/guardians and funds for a brochure. The climate can be distinctly chilly on the Cape, with frost occurring any month of the year, winds are constant, summer fog is common, and average annual precipitation reaches almost 1300mm. How lucky we were to have a bright sunny and clear morning for our visit and Elizabeth to ourselves. However, she mentioned that gradually the numbers of visitors has grown from about 100 in 2001 to 1000 in 2006/07.

Although she visited on an almost daily basis, Elizabeth was so enthusiastic and informative about each species as we tried to step as delicately as possible in our boots around the incredible miniature gardens in the gravel. Many of the species have adapted to the extreme cold and windswept conditions in the tundra-like soil and short growing season and would otherwise grow only in the Arctic. Tiny conifers and prostrate arctic willows formed a dwarf equivalent of an old growth forest, branches barely 15-20cm high sought protection from the constant winds by stretching along the ground for metres. Some plants are so tiny, the flowers measure less than a centimetre in diameter. We were marvelling over some exquisite little orchids when our guide excitedly called us over to see

the bright yellow Dwarf hawk's beard (*Crepis nana*), which, she explained, we were lucky to see in flower. It is a relict of an arctic calciphile (limestone-loving) plant that now ranges across the northern parts of Nth America, but only known place in Newfoundland was here at Burnt Cape. It grows a distinct round of flower buds 3-10cm across each year till it blooms – about 3 years, then dies. Further along a more familiar plant... fireweed? A relative called River Beauty (*Chamerion litifolium*) with large showy pink flowers 2-5cm across but short reclining stems barely 10-15 cm high. Another of the special species was Fernald's braya, which was added to Canada's endangered species list in 1997. A member of the mustard family but with slightly fleshy leaves and tiny flower clusters barely 10cm high. The Memorial University's Botanical Garden in St. John's contributes to the conservation of threatened status of the braya by operating a seed bank.

The puzzling shapes in the gray gravel, we learned were "frost polygons", known to geologists as "sorted patterned ground", where surface stones looked to be arranged in circles, polygons or long lines in the more exposed areas. They are caused by intense freeze/thaw cycles, when temperatures range above & below zero degrees in a matter of hours. Over the years this constant freezing and thawing of groundwater in the loose gravel gradually pushes the larger rocks away from a "pressure centre" of finer-grained material where the water is retained, leaving remarkable geometrical shapes.

We were told that the Cape was an excellent place to watch birds and whales, but on this occasion our heads were always looking downwards. All too soon our tour time ended and Elizabeth apologised for not taking us round to far end of the Cape, but it was rumoured that a polar bear had wandered onto the land from an iceflow!. We would certainly recommend a visit to the Burnt Cape Ecological Reserve, should you find yourself on that other big island off the eastern coast of Canada.....it was a highlight amongst our wildflower wanderings, which so far,( before gas price increases), had taken us along some equally fragile alpine, arctic and desert trails.

An interesting link on the web you may want to visit to see more flower pictures of western Newfoundland.

[http://www.giorgiozanetti.ca/newfoundland/flora\\_newfoundland/flora\\_newfoundland\\_07.html](http://www.giorgiozanetti.ca/newfoundland/flora_newfoundland/flora_newfoundland_07.html)

Naturally submitted by  
David & Pam Helem

## DECEMBER 2009, CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

**Mark Your Calendar** 

**Our 19<sup>th</sup> Parksville Qualicum Beach Christmas Bird Count will take place on Sunday, December 20, 2009.** Birders in the field and Feeder Counters are needed !

For more info & to sign up contact: Sandra 250-248-5565

In the meantime ... check out this very informative website ... current and historical results, annual summaries, photos, research. <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/>

## Vancouver Island's Raptor Migration

By: Sandra Gray

For the last 10 years Dan and I have enjoyed our end of September visit to East Sooke Park for the annual hawk migration. This year was well worth the journey. Fueled for a day at the shore with coffee, picnic items and the pleasure of Autumn foliage on the way down-Island, we arrived at 11 a.m. as the rising warm air currents were starting to produce some results. While still in the parking lot, three Cooper's Hawks, a few Red-tails and suddenly 5, 20, 50 Turkey Vultures (TUVU) were overhead. While pausing in the apple orchard a flock of 25 Band-tailed Pigeons came out of a nearby Douglas-fir veteran, wheeled about then headed East over the water toward Rocky Point. Dan headed down to the beach to start a painting...*see below*: 'Raptor View' from the beach at East Sooke Park looking toward Rocky Point..and I set up my scope in the open field to check out the clouds of black specks on the horizon over Rocky Point. Three kettles, each with 100+ TUVUs were visible right away.

As the hawks spiraled up and outward, often spreading out in different directions searching for favorable southward wind currents, many seemed to be heading our way across Becher Bay. Over the next 4 hours I saw at least 600 TUVUs heading across Juan de Fuca Strait toward the Olympic Peninsula or they disappeared to the west toward higher ground at Beechey Head, likely to cross later in the day or the following day. Highlights from the day: 850+ Turkey Vultures, 12 Red-tail Hawks, 6 Cooper's Hawks, one Buteo that I could not ID, Heerman's Gulls, 100+ Rhinoceros Auklets, 200+ Ancient Murrelets, a few Marbled Murrelets, American Pipits, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Band-tail Pigeons.

When we left at 3pm there were still at least 250 TUVUs visible over Rocky Point ... the numbers are staggering and I am not the only birder to wonder what the true population of TUVUs is that come through Vancouver Island in the Fall. Some must be breeding here on VI, in northern BC and likely eastward, perhaps finding favorable westward winds out of the prairies, then the landform of Vancouver Island to lead them south. Many other species also use this route, check out the Victoria Rare Bird Alert for sighting details.



Artwork by: Dan Gray

### Raptor View

From the beach at East Sooke Park

See original on Dan's website

[members.shaw.ca/dfgray](http://members.shaw.ca/dfgray)



## THE OKANAGAN VALLEY BIRDING TRAIL

By: G. Allen Poynter

For over 40 years, I've enjoyed Spring birding trips throughout the Okanagan Valley...many of them while carrying the Cannings book, *The Birds of the Okanagan Valley*, to both assist me in identifying some of the desert species as well as directing me to the best birding locations.

The four major natural history groups in the valley have produced what I consider to be one of the best regional publications on bird finding that I have seen to date. I can not wait until next year to explore birding sites that I was totally unaware of. The publication contains 32 pages of detailed instructions on how to get to 64 local birding sites complete with lists of birds that can be looked for in each location as well as notes on viewing areas, bird and habitat photographs in colour as well as large scale maps showing the general location of each site. Pages 2 and 3 introduce the reader to this fantastic desert valley and surrounding habitat with simple to read instructions on how to use the publication, including a site legend that is extremely easy to understand and apply.

No birder or naturalist should explore the Okanagan Valley without this publication, even without visiting the valley the publication is a delight to read. I recommend it to everyone that has an interest in our provincial birds. The Natural History Groups throughout the Valley should be congratulated on this publication that can be purchased through any of the Natural History groups in the valley for the unbelievable price of only \$5.00.

## MYRA CANYON TRESTLES

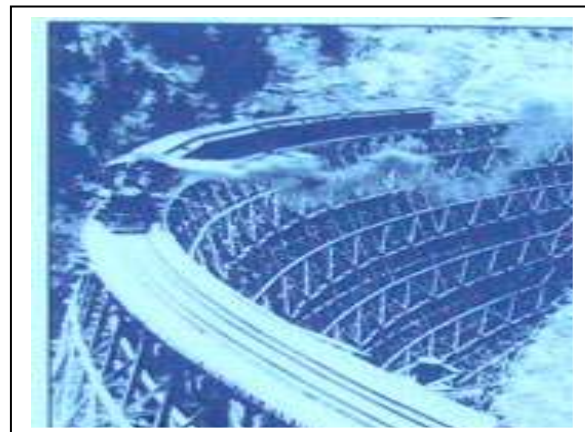
An Okanagan Valley Hike

By: M. Hill

One of our cycling trips this summer took us to the Kettle Valley Railway (KVR) trails. The most impressive section being the Myra Canyon Trestles, rebuilt after the 2003 fires, these constructs qualify as the world's 8<sup>th</sup> wonder. Other than cycling, one of the best ways to see the trestles is to take a shuttle from Kelowna. Plan for a days outing and walk the trestles to enjoy flora, fauna and spectacular views. It was great to see many folks of all ages enjoying the walk with both young and old marvelling the 18 trestles, engineered by Andrew McCulloch and J.L. Newman with completion in 1915.

*A view of the West Fork Canyon Creek Bridge – Originally a frame trestle, it was replaced in 1931-32 with steel. The bridge consists of 12 steel through-plate girder spans on steel towers. It is the longest and the highest trestle/bridge in the Myra Canyon.*

Photo by: Martin Hill



## Young Naturalist Club News

By: Alison Bakker

The news from the Vancouver Office is sad for us, because due to the lack of funding our annual fees for the club have had to be increased from \$15.00 to \$25.00 annually. I know this will be difficult for some families.

Apart from that our club has increased their membership and we have some interesting events to come.

On October 18th we have an outing with Rhys Harrison to Englishman Estuary (Shelly Road entrance) for a birding adventure.

November 15<sup>th</sup> Mike Recalma is giving us a tour of the Big Qualicum River Fish Hatchery.

There will be no December outing as this is such a busy month for families with activities at school and celebrations at home. We encourage them to take advantage of the Bird Feeder Count.

## Kidfest 2009

By: Betty Collins

The day was perfect for a children's festival – sunny, warm and throngs of people! Dave Hutchings, Bill Campbell, Robert Mercer and I began collecting live animals and plants at French Creek Beach at 7:30. We had great luck – sea stars, crabs, anemone, oyster, barnacles and more. Set up was underway by the time we arrived at the Parksville Community Park – Martin and Margaret Hill delivered the tables, and Allison Bakker and Val Tinney were unpacking the Young Naturalists' display items. With the help of Penny Marshall, Marilyn Futer and Laura Termes we were able to display a great array of live plants and animals and shells including quizzes for hundreds of children and adults. The site was very popular – sometimes lined up to get a chance to touch and feel.

We were very fortunate to have some live animal species provided by Island Scallops – “baby” and adult oysters, gooey ducks, sea urchins and a nudibranch. One young girl ran over just before the end of the day, held up three fingers and said she was squirted three times by the gooey duck and ran back for some more viewing. A family from Germany spent considerable time at the Young Naturalists table and was super pleased with the opportunity to visit the display – they came back again later in the day. Three teenage girls said they came to the festival to baby sit a younger sibling but were thoroughly enjoying the day. I'm sure that each of the volunteers will have a story to relate about the day and people's enthusiasm for our display.

Robert Mercer and I would like to thank everyone who helped make the day a success.

To see photos of Kidsfest...go to the website: [www.arrowsmithnats.org](http://www.arrowsmithnats.org)

## THE NEW – MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORMS

Information provided - By: Pat Bourgeois

This year our club will use a new membership enrolment form which will include a 'Release of Liability Waiver'. When you pay this year's membership dues you will need to, first, read the 'Release of Liability Waiver' and only then fill out the form and, of course, pay your dues!

To help everyone with this new form you will be given two options:

- a) The new form will be emailed out to those of you who are on the e-mail list and mailed to members without e-mail;
- b) The form(s) will be available at Monday, General meetings, Oct 26th & Nov 23.

We are also working towards adding the form to our club website.

[www.arrowsmithnats.org](http://www.arrowsmithnats.org)

There is one very important note about this change.

This information is being sent to you a month in advance...to fulfill our legal obligations regarding the release of liability waiver. Please do read this waiver. After all, it's not that long! Then fill out your membership form.

We would also ask that, if you decide to print off your own membership form to fill it out and drop it off at a club meeting, you **must** also print out the waiver form and either staple it to your membership form or (save paper!) preferably, print the waiver out on the reverse side of your membership form. The waiver form is part of the membership form.

Please help out our overworked and certainly unpaid membership volunteer, Gail Armstrong. She is going to be buried in new paperwork, forms, receipts and perhaps even money!

In summary:

1. Fill everything out clearly and legibly.
2. Ensure that the waivers have been read and are attached.
3. Include your dues and drop the package off at a meeting or mail them to our club address: Arrowsmith Naturalists, Box 1542, Parksville, B.C., V9P 2H4

Looking forward to seeing you in the coming year!



**ARROWSMITH NATURALISTS MEETINGS AND OUTINGS  
NOVEMBER, 2009 TO MARCH, 2010**

**Wed. Nov. 4th - Little Mountain.** A short walk along the loop trail to the impressive cliffs of, Little Mountain with a spectacular view inland. If we are lucky, we may see numbers of varied thrushes feeding on arbutus berries. Enjoy a hot coffee afterwards in Parksville. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m. Leaders: Chris and Dave: 250 752-1613.

**Sun. Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> - Bowen Park, Nanaimo.** A pleasant, easy walk through 36 hectares of an urban park with interpretive trails, mature forest and the meandering Millstone River which has carved out an interesting course of sharp mini-canyons and small waterfalls. Bring lunch or eat out at your favourite spot. Meet the Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m. or Arlington at 9:45. Leaders: Chris and Dave 752-1613.

**Mon. Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup> - General Meeting at Springwood Middle School - 7:30 p.m.**

Speaker: Haida Bolton will speak about her involvement with Camp Uganda, an educational camp in the Wildlife Education Centre for underprivileged Ugandan children and their parents

**Wed. Nov. 25<sup>th</sup> - Little Qualicum Hatchery.** One of our easiest and most attractive walking areas, a home to many bird species and the annual fall run of salmon which can be viewed in the meandering spawning channels. Meet at the Qualicum Beach Tourist Office at 9:30 a.m. Leaders: Chris and Dave 752-1613.

**Wed. Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> - Legacy Marsh and Brickyard Cove, Nanaimo.** We travel inland first at the Lantzville turnoff to see what the Marsh has to offer, then back to Brickyard Cove for the seabirds and lunch. Bring lunch. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m. or Arlington at 9:45. Leaders: Chris and Dave 752-1613.

**Sun. Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Bird Count and Pot Luck Dinner.** This will be the 19<sup>th</sup> year for the Parksville- Qualicum Beach Christmas Bird Count. If you would like to take part, call Sandra Gray at 250-248-5565. Sandy also has information on the Feeder Count which will take place on the same day, same area.  
The Pot Luck/Wrap-up dinner takes place at St. Anne's/St. Edmunds Church Hall in Parksville (behind Wembley Mall) from 5-8 pm. Everyone welcome. Bring a pot luck dish to share and come to hear the tall tales of the day. Bring your own plates, cutlery and mug, etc. Robert and Penny (250-248-6769) have volunteered once again to do the set-up and would welcome assistance.

**Sun. Jan. 17<sup>th</sup> - Qualicum Beach Heritage Forest - The Brown Property.** This 50 acres of old coastal Douglas Fir has remained relatively undisturbed for the last 100 years. It is the home also to a number of species of red and blue-listed species. The forest trails make a comfortable morning's walk in an area where time stands still. Afterwards, if time permits, get out your binoculars for some winter birding on the QB waterfront. Bring lunch or treat yourself to lunch in one of QB's many cafes and restaurants. Meet at the Qualicum Beach Tourist Office at 9:30 a.m. Leaders: Chris and Dave 752-1613.

**Mon. Jan. 24<sup>th</sup> - General Meeting at Springwood Middle School- 7:30 p.m.**

**MEMBERS' NIGHT:** An eagerly anticipated occasion, this is the night of our nature-related slide show and raffle. Bring some of your favourite slides to show or a disk

of your digital images. Bring any items you'd like to donate for the raffle. Raffle tickets are 3 for \$2.

**Wed. Jan. 27<sup>th</sup> - Englishman River Regional Park.** This area is one of the newest developments in the Nanaimo Regional District's regional parks programme. After a short drive in, the area adjacent to the Englishman River Hatchery affords the opportunity to walk level trails beside streams, through a mature mixed forest and out to the Englishman River near the sand bluffs. Our club was glad to take part in displaying the park to the public on Earth Day, 2009. Bring lunch and good footwear in case there are wet or muddy patches. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m. Leaders: Chris and Dave 752-1613.

**Wed. Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> - Hemer Park, Nanaimo.** An easy, pleasant walk through second-growth forest along Holden Lake. Pit toilets available. Bring a picnic lunch or splurge on a pub lunch at the Crow and Gate. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m. or Arlington at 9:45. Leaders: TBA

**Mon. Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>- General Meeting at Springwood Middle School - 7:30 p.m.(Note the change from usual date.)**

Speaker: Guy Monty, our local expert birdman will share his knowledge of the Brant Geese, whose annual stopover in the Oceanside area and their migration north has been a fascinating field of study for several years.

**Sun. Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> - Fanny Bay Conservation Area and Ships Point.** A walk along the dyke and shoreline for winter birds. Wear good footwear for mud. Meet at the Qualicum Beach Tourist Office at 9:30 a.m. or Sunny Beach Rd. in Qualicum Bay at 9:45. Bring lunch to eat on the spit. Leaders: TBA

**Wed. Mar. 3<sup>rd</sup> - Wildwood Demonstration Forest.** Wildwood is Merve Wilkinson's 60-year-old model of sustainable ecoforestry. Much studied, the forest is now preserved and administered by the The Land Conservancy as both a heritage site and a working forest. This specially-arranged forest tour will be led by the TLC site manager, Jay Rastogi. However, there is a fee of \$7.00 for non-TLC members. Members are admitted free. Bring lunch or dine at the Crow and Gate Pub. Meet at Craig and Jensen at 9:30 a.m. or Arlington at 9:45. Leaders: Chris and Dave 752-1613.

Wood block tipped over; a layer of larvae cells exposed



Entrance to nest which was at ground level; cream coloured specs are hatched larvae

Large mushroom

**YELLOW JACKET NEST**

