

A Letter from the Editor:

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the January issue of *Hanna's Happenings*. This month I'm sharing a few recent adventures and learnings from my life as an amateur naturalist.

I have to admit, I struggled to put this issue together. *Hanna's Happenings* is a space to highlight my hobbies and creative exploration. But more than with any earlier issue, it felt strange to focus on my narrative while the world continues to be shaped by state violence, extractive systems, and cruel immigration policies.

I spent some time contemplating whether and how to continue this deeply personal yet public project. A walk in the woods helped me think it through. Time in nature always reminds me of what inspires me most: the perfect harmony of art and science, the endless beauty in the world.

It also reminded me of why I was motivated me to start this newsletter in the first place. Sharing observations, experiments, and explorations is a way of connecting with my community and noticing the beauty that persists despite everything. This issue focused on nature, which came together despite my doubts, feels especially suited to that purpose.

Thank you for continuing to follow along. I hope this issue inspires curiosity and wonder, or simply gives you a moment to appreciate your surroundings.

Please feel free to forward, reply, or share your nature pictures.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hanna Clements". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'H' and a prominent 'C'.



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Nature Notes Issue | Hanna's Happenings



Nature Close to Home

Stoney Creek is a tributary of the Brunette River watershed in the Fraser River basin. As its name suggests, much of the streambed is rocky and uneven, interspersed with gravelly patches and larger boulders. This lovely creek is only a short walk from my apartment, hidden in plain sight among mid-rise buildings and urban sprawl.

I've spent many hours wandering the banks of Stoney Creek and observing its inhabitants: salmon, black bears, coyotes, nesting great blue herons, and a dedicated group of volunteer

streamkeepers. I joined the group in 2024 to learn more about the ecology of Stoney Creek and the many threats the watershed faces as urban life continually encroaches on its banks.

Stoney Creek Spawner Counts

Through this community, I've had the opportunity to wade directly into Stoney Creek to help with surveys that track the health of the stream. This fall, I joined several spawner counts, collecting data on coho and chum salmon returning to spawn and die in the exact locations where they were born.

From my observations, one thing is clear: the natural world does not punish migration. It depends on it.

After journeying thousands of miles from our shared backyard to the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean, the salmon's return is both brutal and awe-inspiring to witness.

Art Inspired by Nature

My time counting salmon and my longstanding interest in orca culture inspired a tribute project I'd been scheming for months: a salmon hat. I learned a new technique, beaded embroidery, to create a coho salmon emblem and attach it to a toque. I often wear my salmon hat when I visit the coho in Stoney Creek.



Burnaby Black Bears

Black bears are curious, adaptable, and naturally shy of people. Along urban edges like Burnaby Mountain, however, that adaptability can become dangerous. When bears are drawn to human food and garbage, they lose their instinctive wariness, a shift that often ends fatally for *them*.



I sometimes see bears while driving up the mountain. Both of these photos were taken from the car, a reminder of how closely our daily routines overlap with their habitat.

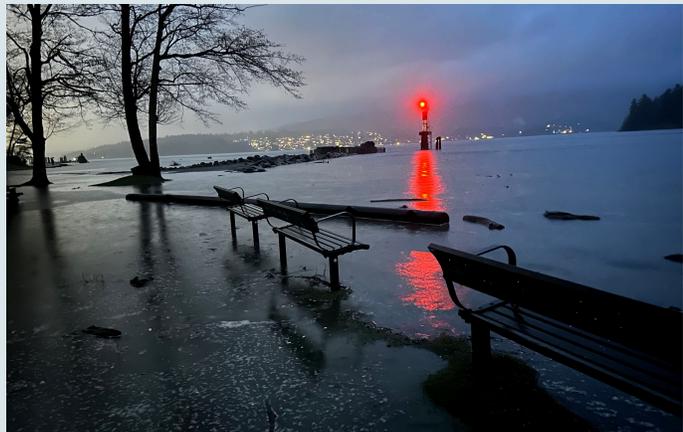


Fortunately, peaceful coexistence with bears is simple: securely store food and trash, and stay aware of your surroundings. These small steps make a difference for bears and people.

King Tides at Barnet Marine Park

Perigean spring tides, commonly referred to as King Tides, are extreme high and low tides caused by the alignment of the moon and sun.

In early January, I watched the shoreline at Barnet Marine Park retreat at low tide late one night and flood the park the next morning, fewer than ten hours later. The dramatic transformation of the familiar landscape was a vivid reminder of the powerful forces at work in the world around us.



Aurora Borealis

One bonus of long northern winter nights is the chance to see the northern lights. I occasionally glimpse nature's light show from my balcony, where this photo was taken.



Learning Native Plants of the Lower Mainland

In my Reading Recap issue, I shared how I fared on my 2025 reading goals. Unsurprisingly, I also set goals related to my other hobbies, including how I want to grow as a naturalist.

My main quest for 2025 was inspired by something I saw while doomscrolling: a post pointing out that most people can easily recognize dozens of corporate brands based on visual cues alone, yet struggle to identify even a handful of native species in their own backyard. I realized I fell squarely into that category when it came to plants.

Can You Name Ten Native Species?

Although I was fairly familiar with the indigenous fauna of the Lower Mainland of BC at the start of 2025, I was much less familiar with the local flora. I set a simple goal: learn to recognize ten native plant species well enough to correctly identify them on sight.

Here are some of the species I learned:

1. Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*)
2. Trailing Blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*)
3. Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)
4. Red Alder (*Alnus rubra*)
5. Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*)
6. Oso Berry (*Oemleria cerasiformis*)
7. Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*)
8. Beaked Hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*)
9. Alaska Yellow Cedar (*Cupressus nootkatensis*)
10. Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*)

Tools for Plant Identification

You might have noticed that many of these plants are edible. I found that foraging and mushroom identification courses taught by local experts were incredibly helpful for learning proper identification for foraging purposes. Some community centers offer these classes, and others can be found through local groups on Facebook and similar platforms.

I rely on a mix of identification tools, including guidebooks and apps like [Seek](#) and [iNaturalist](#). I most often turn to [Northwest Trees: Identifying and Understanding the Region's Native Trees](#) for my tree-related questions.

Mushroom Madness

I have quite the affinity for mushrooms, to the point that it is unnecessary to set goals about learning more about our fungal friends. It just sort of happens over the course of my outdoor wanderings.



One particularly beautiful fungi that I first observed this fall is the distinctive violet webcap (*Cortinarius violaceus*).



Interestingly, this species is one of only a few fungi that were named by [Carl Linnaeus](#), the founder of modern taxonomy.

Although *C. violaceus* is globally widespread it is rare. Luckily for me, this deep purple mushroom is relatively common in coastal British Columbia.