

CROMWELL BOTTOM WILDLIFE GROUP

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Welcome to the summer edition of the CBWG newsletter.

Summer is a great time to make the most of those long sunny days that we all enjoy. On those days when the sun is hot and the air is still we often feel like heading for the shade of an umbrella and relaxing with an ice cream or long cold drink. There is nothing wrong with that. But, those long summer days are also times when dragonflies are active on the reserve and they are not to be missed! Not the dragons of myth and legend! These dragons are much more real and tangible and every bit as awesome and fearsome as those captured in fables and they are here on the reserve for us to see.

Summer is the time when Dragonflies can be seen over and around the pools, ponds and waterways of the reserve hunting insects, claiming territory, attracting mates and producing the next generation.

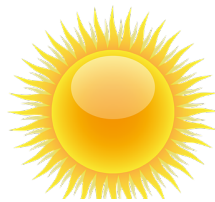
Dragonflies are amazing and beautiful insects, delicate yet powerful they have a predatory carnivorous lifestyle. They are the stealth fighter jets of the insect world. Agile aerial predators they are able to hunt their prey with amazing speed and maneuverability. These aerodynamic engineering marvels can judge the speed and direction of their prey, adjust their flight accordingly and then capture and consume their catch in mid mid-air. It has been calculated that they have a 95% success rate when hunting.

Thankfully, Dragonflies are harmless to us humans so take the opportunity this summer to watch, identify and appreciate them as they grace the reserve with their presence. On those hot summer days, resist the temptation to languish in the shade, instead head out into the reserve and start looking for those miniature dragons that will be on the wing and over the waterways. Look out for Broad-bodied Chasers, Southern, Migrant and Brown Hawkers, Common Darters, Black-tailed Skimmers and the mighty Emperor. You will marvel as you discover them for yourselves. We look forward to seeing you.

Allan Wolfenden (Chair, CBWG)

NEWSLETTER

**Cromwell
Bottom**
Wildlife Group



WORKING FOR CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
AT CROMWELL BOTTOM LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

News from the Monthly Bird Counts

Mike Henshaw reports

Summer is on its way and already some early spring migrants have arrived including Swallows, Sand and House Martins. Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Blackcaps are around the reserve too. We now await the next sightings of Whitethroat, Reed and Sedge Warblers in the lagoon area and all sightings are needed for us to plan our next phase of maintenance in this part of the reserve.

We live in hope that Cuckoo last seen on the reserve 8yrs ago may pay us a visit, also Lesser Whitethroat and Grasshopper Warbler may turn up as these are now rarities. I would like to add that 6 species of raptors turned up in the winter period - these were Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Red Kite and 2 Hen Harriers - ring tailed and a male - what a wonderful bonus for the reserve!

The story of Swifts

Article: Jane Uttley (with reference to and kind permission from, the RSPB Nature's Home magazine Summer 2017)

We shall soon be seeing some most welcome guests, Swifts. They come to our country to breed from their wintering grounds in Africa. They are the last arrival of the swallows and martins, though are not related to them and the first to leave in autumn; spending only a few short months with us,

Most of their lives are spent on the wing, feeding, sleeping even mating. They can often be heard as screaming flocks as they swoop around catching flying insects or drinking from stretches of water. A very iconic sound of summer.

Unfortunately not as many will be returning this year. We are not certain what is causing this decline, though loss of breeding habitats is one reason, and communities are trying to reverse it.

Swifts traditionally build their nests on buildings and because of our love of renovating and sealing soffits many nesting sites have been lost and as swifts are site specific and they have great difficulty in finding new ones.

Many councils in the U.K. are actively encouraging new developments to include swift nest 'bricks' in the walls of new buildings. In Calderdale, Hugh Firmin (Environmental officer) actively encourages this with all planning permissions. Special nest boxes can be erected on the outside of existing buildings. At Cromwell Bottom it is on our to-do list; if you are interested please contact us.



Spotlight On Volunteers: Meet Lyn Orchard

I first heard about the reserve at Cromwell Bottom through my Dad. He used to visit the area over fifty years ago with the Halifax Scientific Society under the guidance of the legendary Frank Murgatroyd. At the time the area was known as the Gravel Pits and the society used to go there to monitor the amphibian population and the plant species such as wintergreen. When I retired and decided that I needed to get out and about I thought it would be a good idea to visit. By taking my Dad with me I had my own walking, talking field guide and I began to learn about the plants and animals on the reserve.

We often used to encounter various members of CBWG who were always friendly as well as informative and after several cups of tea with Allan we decided to join. When the café opened there was a request for volunteers to help out on Sundays so I signed up. The driving force behind it is Nigel who travels all over the local area to buy the stock and works very hard to keep things running smoothly. Barry is usually around too. He makes sure that all the visiting canines get a biscuit or two as well as making drinks for the humans. I thoroughly enjoy helping out on Sunday afternoons. You meet interesting and very grateful people who can't believe their luck; refreshments and the opportunity to watch the birds on the feeders.



I think that Cromwell Bottom is special. It's peaceful, tranquil and a very relaxing place to be. Although it's not a huge area there are lots of different habitats. It's lovely to get to know your local patch really well. Looking out for the different plants appearing, hearing and seeing birds arriving marks the seasons. Helping to keep it all going, even in a small way, is a very worthwhile way to spend time.

THE LARGE BLUE BUTTERFLY

ARTICLE: ALAN PULLAN : Images obtained by Alan for the Newsletter.



The *Maculinea arion* butterfly is the largest and rarest of our blue butterflies, it became extinct in Britain in 1979 but a reintroduction has recently been made which was successful. It can be found in a few isolated locations in south west England where its food plant and a particular species of ant live.

Our story is of an unusual life cycle which starts in late June or July when the butterfly is on the wing. Eggs are laid on the flower of the Wild Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*).

On hatching the caterpillar feeds on these flower heads and casts its skin as it gets larger.

After the fourth stage the caterpillar falls to the ground and waits. This is where our story becomes really interesting as eventually a passing Red Ant (*Myrmica sabuleti* or *Myrmica scabrinodis*) is attracted to the caterpillar by a sweet "honey" secretion from the caterpillar and is then tricked into thinking it is one of its own ant grubs. The ant picks up the butterfly larva and takes it to the nest and places it with the developing ant grubs.

The butterfly larva is thought to give off a pheromone which together with behavioural mimicry enables it to appear to be an ant grub to the ant. Once in the ant nest the caterpillar starts to feed on the ant grubs. The caterpillar remains in the nest, overwintering there until the following spring when it feeds again by May or June it has become fully grown and changes into a pupa.

The cycle is complete in late June or July when our pupa hatches into the butterfly which crawls unmolested out of the nest to find a suitable perch to stretch its wings and renew the cycle.

CREDIT: IMAGE above supplied by Martin Warren, Butterfly Conservation Trust.

This Ant has a large blue butterfly in its mouth!

Image credited to Jeremy Thomas - Resident Professor
Oxford University





Look back at Spring

A DAY WITH AMPHIBIANS at Cromwell Bottom report: Shelagh Brooke: image Simon Day

On Wednesday 12th April, Steve Blacksmith from the Halifax Scientific Society led a group of adults and children around the Reserve to look for frogs, newts and toads, and for their spawn. Everyone learnt how to use a net to search for pond life, and how to identify different amphibian species.

Amongst various plants and animals found in the Reserve's pools were a common toad (superbly camouflaged on the side of the 'meadow' pond), and a palmate newt. A mystery that was encountered was the presence of frogspawn jelly that didn't contain the familiar black dots that are the developing tadpoles. A real possibility is that these embryos had been eaten by newts.



Very many thanks to Steve from all of those who attended the walk for making it not only really interesting, but also great fun.

MEMBER'S VISIT TO FAIRBURN INGS April 1st

A group of 12 people met at the RSPB reserve at Fairburn Ings near Castleford for a day's birding.

The weather started off showery, but quickly cleared to give a warm sunny day.

It was a typical day's bird-watching at this time of the year; some winter visitors (shoveler, pochard, teal and wigeon remained) but there were a few summer visitors coming in (sand martin flock flew over, willow warbler, sedge warbler and chiffchaff were heard/seen) and the exuberant singing of residents (gold and green finches, robin, and various tits) setting up territories and finding mates.

The morning was spent around the visitor centre, feeding stations, wet woodland and new pond dipping area. Here we picked up some ideas for Cromwell Bottom.

In the afternoon half, the group opted to do the 2 mile walk over the 'coal-spoil tip' and heard bearded tits 'pinging' in the reeds, willow warblers singing, skylarks with their glorious display song and the distinctive mournful sound of a bittern.

The other half took the cars to Lyn Dyke hide and found many more 'winter' ducks, curlews and little egrets (a great white egret had been seen earlier) and a buzzard.

We thoroughly enjoyed finding and watching birds and learning about the different 'courting' behaviour! We were pleased to experience the in-between winter and summer time in the birding year and to see how other reserves are providing different habitats.

Number of species : 48

report: Jane Utley

THE EVENING NEWTS

Report: Shelagh Brooke

Following Steve Blacksmith's daytime walk (see next page) around the Reserve on Wednesday 12th April, Robin Dalton, Calderdale Council's Area Countryside Officer, and Chris Tindall led an evening event looking specifically at newts. Again, this was attended by a group of adults and children. Chris, who has a license to handle great crested newts, showed everyone how to identify each of the three species found in Britain: the smooth, the palmate, and the great crested. For each species he explained how to distinguish between the female and the male. He enabled those present to handle some of the newts that he had brought, so that they could be observed closely.

As the daylight faded, Robin and Chris led the group around the Reserve's pools and ponds. Using torchlight, a number of palmate and smooth newts were seen, as well as other aquatic creatures such as a great diving beetle and water boatmen.

A big thank you to Robin and Chris from all who attended for a fascinating and memorable evening. One ten-year-old wrote at the end of the event 'I liked holding the newts and watching them swim', and she speaks for everyone who was there.



Further walks on the Reserve led by Robin will be held later this year.

Image: Barry Nield (shown for illustration purposes only).

TO RESCUE A TOAD OR TWO!

Steve Blacksmith, Amphibian and Reptile Recorder with Halifax Scientific Society

An evening activity from March to early April is Toad Patrolling. I've been doing it for years. The first I heard about it was when someone asked me if I'd seen the "March of the Toads". He meant the migration from their summer/wintering grounds to the ancestral ponds they breed in. When I went to look at the road he told me about, I was appalled to see how many toads were getting run over and no-one doing anything to prevent it.

I was appalled to see how many toads were getting run over and no-one doing anything to prevent it. There are colonies of toads that need help at Thornhill Beck Lane, Brighouse, also at the new road built at Copley (I predicted there would be a toad crossing here), and at Boulderclough Dam at Sowerby. Another new one has been found at Cottonstones where Charlotte Weightman has volunteered to be manager on the Froglife Charity register. If you do this, you get organising help, insurance cover, and volunteers pointed your way. In return, they ask you to send your records in.

What's it like to rescue toads? As soon as the temperature rises in mid-March to about 10c it's worth going along, it doesn't matter if it's wet or dry. They start popping out on to the tarmac from drystone walls and roadside herbage. They usually all head in the same direction, toward the pond. Very often there will be a male on the back of a female, (she is much bigger and quite able to carry him.) You often hear the chirping of the males. They do this when bumping into each other in the bucket, or when kicking out with their back legs to push another male away from the female he has clasped "in amplexus".

Toad on its way to the breeding pond
Image: Steve Blacksmith

Most of the toads move just after dusk, so staying an hour-and-a-half or couple of hours is quite adequate.

Sometimes drivers will stop to ask you what you are doing and are usually very interested. I think it is best to have hi-viz jackets, gloves, white buckets, torches, and put notices up near the crossing. The Council will help with these if asked, as will Froglife. When you get a good covering in the bottom of the bucket, it's time to take them to the pond. (Don't forget to count them and keep a notebook). If you can get near enough to the water you see them swim off to find mates, or if already coupled, the female swims with four legs, and the male with just his back legs - he's not going to let go of his hard-won female! As with frogs, which also clasp 'in amplexus', the male ejects all his sperm at once, just as the female is ejecting all her eggs. With frogs we can survey by the clumps of spawn, as each clump represents one female, but with toads the strings of different females' spawn often gets tangled, so the best way to survey them is count them while rescuing them on the road. You also sometimes find newts walking to their ponds. Frog timing has only a short overlap, as they usually spawn before toads, and they don't get run over so often, probably because they can travel much faster with their great big leaps.

Click on the link below for further information.

<http://www.froglife.org>



The Joy and Hazards of Spidering!

Article and image: Bruce Hoyle

My interest in spiders goes back many years, over 45. I remember when I took my intended wife home to see her future mother in law; Chris saw a few match boxes on my bedroom windowsill. On peering inside at the contents Chris was not too impressed by the wizened appearance of a few dry Tegenaria (House spiders). I cannot remember (thankfully) what she said after her initial horror! What could possibly go wrong with our relationship after only a few days acquaintance, what did she expect from a 27 year old boy, marbles, rubber bands and balls of string? Well 40 years later we are still together and I have even more spiders now. They are not in the house though, but a few are in Isopropanol in the outhouse.

I do not collect many now but get a kick from our member's interests when we see a nice specimen anywhere on site. We have at least 84 recorded species at Cromwell Bottom; there are over 600 in the U.K.

Further info:

<http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Summary/s/Araneus+quadratus>

One of the best looking to see is *Araneus quadratus* (picture below). This large orb weaver can be seen in long grass, and bushes. The females we have seen were picked up from the path close to the Cabin by some of our volunteers recently. The colour of this species is very variable and can be red, green, yellow or dark brown. They can reach 15mm long and are very fat when gravid (with eggs), the males are half that size. They are closely related to our common garden spider – *Araneus diadematus* and are harmless. They are active in summer and early autumn.

My I.D. skills are being tested a little now but the species we find are always a joy to identify for our visitors.

Araneus quadratus (f)



Tree Walk

Report and image : Simon Day

On Sunday 9th April, CBWG held the first of its 3 guided 'Tree Walks' around part of the reserve. It was led by Bel Hale and titled 'Bark, Branches and Buds'. Bel gave the group a fascinating insight into how to identify different trees from their bud formation, leaf structure and the shape of the branch scars.

Altogether she helped us identify 13 different species of tree - Dog Rose, Alder, Sycamore, Silver Birch, Hawthorn, Holly, Privet, Ash, Blackthorn, Oak, Pussy Willow, Crack Willow and Downy Birch. Only a small area of the reserve was explored suggesting there are many other species which exist.



A huge thank you to Bel for giving us the opportunity to learn so much about the trees on the reserve. A selection of photographs with further information about this event can be found in our cabin on the reserve. **More events are planned for Sunday 25 June at 1.30 and Sunday 25 October, meet at 1.30 in the car park (see Events page near the back of newsletter).**

Info: cromwellBottom@gmail.com



LOOK OUT FOR SUMMER!



Dragonflies

Article and images: Allan Wolfenden

Dragonflies are amazing and beautiful insects, delicate yet powerful, having a predatory and carnivorous lifestyle. It has been calculated that they have a 95% success rate when hunting.

Dragonflies can do this because of three amazing features they possess:

Firstly, Dragonflies have 360 degree vision, made possible because of the compound eyes they possess. Nearly all its head is made up of its eyes. Having 30,000 eye facets it can easily lock onto the prey it has selected.

Secondly, Dragonflies are able to move each of their four wings independently of each other thereby enabling them to fly and turn in any direction. They can turn quickly, hover for over a minute and reach speeds of 18 miles per hour.

Thirdly, they have fearsome jaws which they use to tear the wings off the prey they have caught. (The word Dragonfly means order of toothed ones) Once caught there is no escape, a terrifying thought if you are a Gnat, Mosquito, or other flying insect.

Please let us know if you see any dragonflies or damself flies this summer! Also, take a look at the British Dragonflies Society (click on the link below), they have loads of very interesting and informative information.

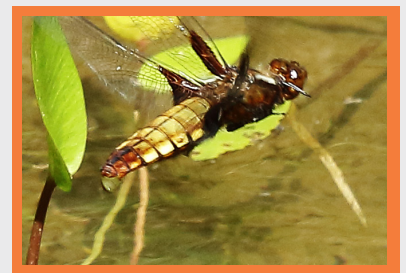
<http://www.british-dragonflies.org.uk>



Common Darters mating in new ponds



Broad-bodied Chaser (m)



Broad-bodied Chaser (f) over new ponds

WILL'S WILDLIFE QUIZ

Question 1 : What is Lesser Reedmace called in the USA?

Question 2: Which tree is named after the noise made when you break its twigs?

Question 3: If you wanted to have the trees in a river valley coppiced naturally, which formerly native mammal could do the job?

Question 4: Which mammals in Britain have had whole Acts of Parliament devoted to them?

Question 5: 0800 807060 is the phone number of which organisation?

Question 6: What type of incidents could you report using this number?



(answers on the back page, but no peeking!!)

- **BIRDS:** Contact Mike Henshaw or Jane Uttley for further info. **FREE EVENT.**

Third **SATURDAY** in every month: **10.00am** Monthly bird count, refreshments at end.

- **MOTH NIGHTS/MOTH MORNINGS** led by Barry Nield. **FREE EVENTS.**

SATURDAY 3rd June - night - meet in the Cabin at dusk for trapping and come along on the **Sunday 4th June around 9.30am** for identification of moths.

REPEATED ON:

SATURDAY 1st JULY - meet in the Cabin at dusk and **SUNDAY 2nd JULY 9.30am**

SATURDAY 5th AUGUST at dusk and **SUNDAY 6th AUGUST 9.30am.**

- **TREE WALKS** led by Bel Hale: the second and third in the series of tree walks:
FREE EVENTS

SOLSTICE SPLENDOUR!

SUNDAY 25th JUNE meet in the car park at **1.30** for a 2 hour walk on easy paths but this time observing and identifying trees when they are 'dressed' in their beautiful early summer foliage. Free event; donations welcome, refreshments available at the end.

AUTUMN GLORY

SUNDAY 29th OCTOBER meet in the car park at **1.30** for a 2 hour walk on easy paths to observe and identify the trees when they are 'wearing' their glorious autumn colours. Free event; donations welcome, refreshments available at the end.

- **NATIONAL MEADOWS DAY** - WALK led by Robin Dalton. **FREE EVENT**

FRIDAY 30th JUNE 1.00pm meet in the car park.

- **BIG BUTTERFLY COUNT** led by Steve Blacksmith (Chair, Hx Scientific Society)
FREE EVENT

FRIDAY 15th JULY meet in the car park at **10.30am**

OPEN DAY SATURDAY 12th AUGUST 2017

10.00am -4.00pm FREE EVENT

This Event is the Event to Beat All Events and promises to be **EVEN BETTER** than last year's! Birds of Prey display, pond dipping in our new pond, craft & photograph stalls, guided walks, refreshments, raffle, to name but a few activities! **BE THERE OR BE SQUARE!**

If you would like to volunteer on the day please click on the link below, or paste into email

cromwellBottom@gmail.com

Thank you to Tesco for donating a £20 gift card as a prize in our Open Day raffle



WILL'S WILDLIFE QUIZ - ANSWERS



1. Cat Tail.
2. Crack willow.
3. Beaver.
4. Badgers (1973) and Foxes. Quite possibly other Acts relating to pest species.
5. Environment Agency
6. Pollution incidents.

**** Call for articles and images - if you have something you would like to feature in our newsletter relating to Cromwell Bottom, please get in touch with our Editor (click on the Kingfisher below). We welcome all comments and submission (subject to editorial). Photos/articles - rights reserved by CBWG.*

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Volunteers are the foundation upon which our wildlife group is built. Our work helps secure the future of many precious habitats and species, enabling them to thrive. We have many jobs to do, so no matter how much time you have there is ALWAYS something for you!

THURSDAY MORNINGS weekly at 9.30am is a good time to come and help. Please check our blogsite for updates about access whilst Crowther Bridge is being repaired.

SECOND SATURDAY of each monthy at 9.30am are our work parties arranged with Calderdale Council. Please come along to either, or both, and again please check our blogsite.

We can promise good fun, a sense of achievement and a sit down with the group at the end for a well-earned cuppa!

HOW TO CONTACT US:



cromwellBottom@gmail.com : **For general enquiries or about membership.**



cromwellBottom.wordpress.com **For access to our Blogsite**



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