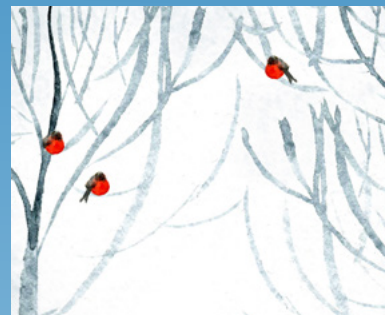


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JAY ON LOG IN WINTER CREDIT ALLAN WOLFENDEN

NAME THESE ANIMAL
FOOTPRINTS IN THE
SNOW



ASK IN THE CABIN FOR ANSWERS!

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Nuthatch gathering seeds on the Reserve

Winter can be a tough time. Who can forget the Beast from the East which last winter brought ice, snow and extremely harsh temperatures to the UK? Memories of the cold weather we experienced reminds me that winter, especially for our wildlife, isn't just something uncomfortable to endure, it involves a battle for survival.

In order to survive the winter our wildlife adapts different strategies. Some birds, like Swallows and Swifts will migrate long distances where the insects they need to feed on are more numerous. Other birds, like Robins, Blackbirds and Thrushes, will change from eating insects and grubs to eating berries and seeds.



Many birds and mammals will hoard or stash food when it is plentiful in order to feed when food is in short supply in colder weather. Jays will hide acorns, Nuthatches and other small birds stash seeds that may see them through tough times brought on by cold weather.

In order to survive other strategies get adopted. Small birds form winter flocks, some like long tailed tits and wrens adopt communal roosting. This helps maintain their body temperature during cold nights by saving energy.



Squirrels will build winter drays and develop thicker coats in order to keep warm during the winter months. They will also stash acorns, hazel nuts and other food as part of their survival strategy.

The Badgers strategy to help them through winter is to spend longer sleeping in their underground chambers. This enables them to use less energy. For them and other mammals the fat reserves they will have built up during the autumn will be of critical importance in any prolonged cold spell. Winter is not just about survival of the fittest, it is about the survival of the fattest.

Another major strategy for surviving winter is hibernation, but more about that inside.

Allan.

Images credit Allan Wolfenden

AN UNEXPECTED GIFT OF BIRD BOXES!

On Sunday 7th October the newsletter team were beavering away in the Cafe when a couple of people arrived bearing gifts - lots of bird boxes! Imagine our surprise at this sudden influx of new homes for our blue tits and great tits!



Robin and Carol McDermott, from Pudsey, had been to the Wildlife Group's Open Day on 4th August this year and had spoken to one of our trustees about their passion for building homes for wildlife. The 7th October was the chosen day for the grand delivery. Robin has made loads of bird boxes with a 25mm hole, suitable for blue and great tits. He has also been commissioned by the Bat Conservation Trust to make bat boxes for them and will be calling down with some for us too. Robin volunteers with Rodley Nature Reserve in Leeds, so quickly thinking ahead the newsletter team thought we would pay them a visit and you can find our article further on in the newsletter.

CBWG WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ROBIN AND CAROL AND HOPE TO SEE THEM AGAIN IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

CROMWELL BOTTOM LAGOON AND REEDBED CONSERVATION PROJECT

SHELAGH BROOKE

LAGOON FROM THE EASTERN BUND



IMAGE CREDIT MARGARET CONROY



IMAGE CREDIT SIMON DAY

CLEARING THE REEDS

You may have seen some notices about this project either at the Reserve, or on the Wildlife Group's blog. The plans to conserve and enhance the lagoon and associated reedbed form a current part of the now long-standing collaboration between Calderdale Council and the Group.

Reedbeds, if left undisturbed, are impermanent, and will undergo a natural succession from open water, through progressively drier reedbed, to scrub. Ultimately they dry out completely, and become broad-leaved woodland. As you have probably observed, there is ample evidence of this progression at Cromwell Bottom, despite attempts to slow it by undertaking some reed cutting each year, and by coppicing the scrubland trees. Members of the project partnership are very mindful of the ecological importance of this area: reedbeds are one of the rarest habitats in the UK and are of high conservation value. The one located at Cromwell Bottom is unique within Calderdale. (Comments from many visitors to the Reserve indicate that they also find it very beautiful.)

The methods traditionally used to rehabilitate reedbeds are to grub out areas of scrub, and to lower the reedbed and/or to raise the water level. The plan for Cromwell Bottom is to use a combination of these methods, the works to be carried out in phases as and when funds become available. New and improved viewing areas will also be developed. (You will have seen Hayley Cottrell's article in the last newsletter, and will thus know that it is the Wildlife's Group's great good fortune that members of the Brighouse Ladies' Circle are currently fund-raising for the installation of a viewing platform, overlooking the reedbed, that will be accessible to people who use wheelchairs. Thank you for this!)

The project planning involves consideration of a wide range of complex issues. The process to

date has included reference to relevant literature, ecological evaluations of the site, topographical surveys, liaison with a wide range of individuals and organisations who have specialist expertise (eg representatives from the Environment Agency, the Canal and River Trust, and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust), and a consultation process in August 2018 involving the public and special interest groups. (Very many thanks to all of those who provided feedback.)

Phase 1 of the project will involve removal of all or part of the scrub in the northern part of the lagoon basin, and as a result the creation of open water and some islands. The Wildlife Group's Trustees have agreed to fund this, though it is hoped that volunteers will come along to help as the islands are being created. The desire was to complete this phase in October 2018 (after the birds had finished nesting, but before the autumn and winter rains raised the water level). However, the decision to undertake further surveys and planning (involving, for example, liaison with the team currently developing the Brighouse Flood Alleviation Scheme) mean that this phase is now scheduled for autumn 2019.

The plan is that later phases of the work will involve the installation of a sluice under the bridge in the eastern bund, and the raising of the water level using water abstracted from either the canal or the river.

The intention of the project is to contribute to the enhancement of the Reserve not only for wildlife, but also for visitors.

The project partnership will keep members informed about developments using notices posted at the reserve, via the blog, and by the Group's newsletter.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THIS PROJECT.

COMMUNITY LINKS

DAVID LANGLEY, LYNDAL ORCHARD

Once again this season, the team at Cromwell Bottom have been busy working hard. Our vice-chair David Langley continues to marshal his troops every Thursday in order to maintain and improve the facilities and the natural environment of the reserve.

The Scouts have been helping out again, planting trees where needed and clearing trees from the sphagnum bog where they are not wanted. We were given a lot of wood from the old lock gates and the scouts had to work out how to move it to the big shed where it was needed – a very practical bit of team building.

Between them, David Langley, Graham Haigh and Allan Wolfenden go to different organizations like the Round Table and Crow Nest Golf Club to give talks about the reserve. They outline what we are about, what wildlife we have as well as our plans for the future. Other groups come to visit, like the Nidderdale Walking group, and are taken on a guided walk. They can then have some refreshments in the cabin.

These three intrepid explorers can also give talks and slide shows about Mull and/or Shetland if organizations are interested.



The latest project in the pipe line is lead by David Langley and Simon Day. We will be linking up with Old Earth Primary School. The plans are for a half-termly visit from each class to come and explore the reserve to learn about wildlife and also to enhance their curriculum. The plans will be launched in a school assembly and initially the reserve will be used to enhance the students' experience of drama. They will be studying Hansel and Gretel and various parts of the reserve will be used as a backdrop for their performances. There will also be an opportunity for each year group to come down and do some pond dipping. Some students will be taking photographs to record events and others will write about their experiences, so there are plenty of opportunities for cross-curricular links. This is the first time that the reserve has attempted such a project. It is a very exciting scheme which will hopefully just be the first of many.

TREE PLANTING ON THE RESERVE



Are you equipped and ready for the big chill that winter may immerse you into? Did you struggle to keep warm when the Beast from the East sent temperatures plummeting in 2018? Then think what it must be like for creatures in the UK. In winter, wild animals face a struggle to survive. They need to have found or find enough food to eat that will see them safely through the very cold weather that winter can bring. That is far from easy if you are a hedgehog that depends on beetles, caterpillars and earthworms. Winter means such food items are scarce. Winter, therefore, presents a major challenge for many species of animals. All animals will adopt strategies to help them survive the winter and make it through to spring.

One of the strategies that some species have adopted is hibernation.

There are three types of British mammals that hibernate - hedgehogs, bats and dormice. Reptiles such as grass snakes, adders and slow worms use the strategy of hibernation in order to survive the winter, as do some insects like Bumble Bees, Butterflies, and Ladybirds. Amphibians, such as toads, frogs and newts will enter a state of torpor, something that is between sleep and full blown hibernation.

What is hibernation? It is more than just keeping warm and sleeping deeply. Hibernation is a truly remarkable process in which the creature's body shuts down. The result is, its heartbeat plummets, its body temperature drops and its breathing almost stops.

Hedgehogs are one of the UK mammals that have adopted this amazing survival strategy. During hibernation their body temperature will drop by a massive twenty-five degrees celcius, going from approximately thirty-five degrees to just ten degrees, their heart rate will be reduced from one hundred and ninety beats per minute to just twenty and their breathing will almost cease.

The purpose of this amazing strategy is Survival. Hibernation enables the hedgehogs to survive for long periods without food. Going into hibernation allows hedgehogs to survive because by using less energy.

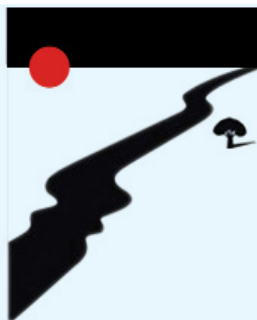
Therefore, hibernation is not just about the survival of the fittest, it is about the survival of the fattest. The weight of the creature going into hibernation is a critical factor in whether it will survive what can be a dangerous process.

As they prepare for hibernation, they must eat as much as they can in order to store enough fat reserves within their bodies to see them through the long winter months. It is these reserves that will provide the energy that will keep them alive.

Where then does hibernation take place? The answer is wherever it is safe to do so. Bats will choose caves, mines, old trees, bridges and houses. Hedgehogs will look for areas with lots of leaves and log piles, which can be dangerous on bonfire night. They may also use compost heaps and garden sheds. Butterflies like brimstones, peacocks, commas, small tortoiseshells and red admirals will hibernate in old buildings, out-houses and garden sheds.

Hibernation is truly an amazing strategy for survival and its happening around us.





CROMWELL BOTTOM LIVE POETS SOCIETY

Keep looking up!

Down the uneven steps we went,
trying not to stumble
Leaves were piled along the path
making a lovely rustle
We peered along the railway tracks,
looking out for trains
We crossed the rails with haste, the
darkness falling fast
Through the gate we burst, glad to
be out of harm

When your warm hand found mine,
you knew I'd raise a smile
We heard the soft whistling of
birds, above us in the dark
They were flying South again,
instincts in control.
You asked if we might see a
shooting star, I said I hoped we
would
Last time I saw scratches on the
Winter sky, it was thirty years ago.

Will, Bard of Salterhebble

ROOK IS BACK TO FETTL

The dawn is damp and grumpy grey
with fungal smell filling the air.
And ground is dark with death decay
beneath the beech that's now stripped bare.

Tree foliage starved of chlorophyll
so spectral span is lime to bronze.
No life-force flows and all stands still.
Our beech is now down to raw bones.

The crown a scary hairdo mass
and skin, brown scabs that split and spall.
All through the wood, spooky stillness.
But then there comes the 'caw-caw' call.

Rook is back to fettle his nest.
With twigs he works his wicker craft.
A tug, a tuck, an end to twist
to weave the perfect warp and weft.

To finish the job a final touch.
Nice grass rug and moss bedding.
A place for love where babies hatch
to brood of three by early spring.

Tony Hargreaves

PLEASE SEND YOUR
POETRY TO THE
NEWSLETTER TEAM
- ADDRESS ON BACK
PAGE



JULIA'S WILDLIFE QUIZ

1. What is the common name for *Alcedo atthis* - often seen on the river at Cromwell Bottom?
2. What is the name of the primary legislation that protects animals, plants and habitats in the UK?
3. You can hear Tawny Owls calling to each other at night - which one makes the "ke-wick" sound?
4. What is the most distinctive identifying difference between a Stoat and a Weasel if you don't see them together?
5. Can you name the non-native, invasive rhizome which can be found in woodland, roadside verges, rivers, gardens and is extremely difficult to get rid of?
6. What colours would you expect to see on a Great Spotted Woodpecker?

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

WHAT HAPPENS TO BIRDS AT CROMWELL BOTTOM IN WINTER

JANE UTTLEY

Our summer migrants have now flown south to warmer climes. However we may still find the occasional chiffchaff which is adapting to our warmer winters. Blackcaps are also seen. These are a separate race that have flown from their breeding grounds in Germany and have adapted to our winters. However here at Cromwell Bottom our resident birds need to find ways to protect against lack of food and the cold.

PUTTING ON WEIGHT

The main strategy is to put on layers of fat to provide food reserves and to give insulation from the cold. This is one of the times when garden feeding is most important.

FLOCKING TOGETHER

Many birds species eg waders, geese and some ducks flock together in the winter. This has a number of advantages; easier communication, more eyes to spot predators and to find food. Our woodland birds, eg finches, tits and blackbirds also form mixed flocks; even the robins are less territorial!

ROOSTING OVERNIGHT

Many of these large flocks roost together overnight. Geese, ducks and waders have individuals which take it in turn as watch-keepers for the rest of the flock. Other species roost together in trees, eg redwings, fieldfares, pied wagtails and pigeons roost together in trees. Starlings are one of the well known birds that do this, forming spectacular patterns (known as murmurations) in the sky before suddenly 'falling' into the trees. These roosts give protection from predators; the older birds take-up positions in the centre of the group whilst younger birds have to stay on the more exposed outside. The following morning the younger birds follow the adults to find food.

Smaller birds roost in sheltered places in holes in trees and walls; over 40 wrens are known to pack into a nest box; long tailed tits squash together along a branch. Some birds find roosts in towns and cities where the ambient temperature is higher, eg robins, thrushes and pied wagtails.

ALTERATIONS TO DIET

A number of species adapt their diet. Thrushes usually only eat worms/snails, but in autumn they supplement this diet with berries. Often a song or mistle thrush will protect a laden berry tree fighting off strangers until a flock of migrant redwings/fieldfares comes and strips the tree of all its berries. Bearded reedlings eat insects in the summer but come winter they change to eating the seeds of the rushes. These are difficult to digest; so the tits eat grit which stays in their gizzards and grinds down the seeds. The reserves that are lucky enough to have bearded tits, will put out grit trays for this purpose.

CACHING FOOD

Many other birds, of course, make use of our gardens and over the latest years this has been a lifesaver for them. Some birds eg, jays, nuthatches, woodpeckers and coaltits make caches of food during autumn. This is one way that acorns and hence oak trees are dispersed.

Enjoy the birds in your garden; make sure there is a constant supply of food; it must be difficult for birds if they have expended lots of energy to fly to your feeders only to find them empty. Do remember to wash the feeders often.

Bearded reedling credit Jane Uttley



Fiedfare credit Mike Henshaw



Redwing credit Barry Nield



Click on the arrow below to watch a YouTube clip called "Unbelievable Starlings" a starling murmuration by Matt, randomly chosen by the editorial team for being a brilliant example. (Skip the ad).



RODLEY NATURE RESERVE – A NEWSLETTER TEAM VISIT!

VIEW OF NR FROM THE ROAD



CHILDREN'S BIRD BOXES & SUMMER HOUSE



ENTRANCE TO CHILDREN'S AREA



NEWLY REFURBISHED BIRD HIDE



The three amigos set off to meet **Peter and Barbara Murphy** of Rodley NR on a grey and cool Wednesday morning, the 14 November. We had heard a lot about this jewel in urban Rodley, Leeds, owned by Yorkshire Water Authority and we wanted to know things like how they managed and communicated with their volunteers and public, how their café was managed and who and how was their newsletter produced, in addition to the management of their very splendid reserve. They, like us, were subject to flooding back in 2015 and Leeds City Council had them down as candidates for flood alleviation schemes, which would have meant disaster for the reserve. Fortunately this didn't happen!

Rodley NR opened in July 2000. They are a charity and have a Friends of Rodley NR which are responsible for any commercial trading that they do, say, in the café, for the selling of tee shirts and caps embossed with their logo. It costs £7 a year to be a Friend and they have 350 members. The perk that members get is a free copy of the Annual Report (not a perk, you may say) which otherwise they would have to tip up £6!!

They have an Education Team who are responsible for all school and other group visits. The reserve have lots of volunteers some of whom are young students and students from the three Universities in Leeds, who are studying for various ecology and environment degrees etc.

The Reserve hold three main fundraising events every year. There is an Easter Egg Hunt for the children who go and hunt for replica eggs hidden around the reserve. These are then exchanged for chocolate ones. Like us, they hold a summer fair where people pay to have a stall. It's a popular event which allows them not only to make money but also to encourage more people to join the group.

There's also the Leeds Bird Fair which is a joint venture with 'Start Birding'. The aim of this event is to 'celebrate the wildlife and green spaces of Leeds'. Again, it allows people to learn about the organizations who look after the green spaces as well as having a chance to talk to like-minded people.

At Cromwell Bottom we have the same aims and similar activities but the one thing we all admired was the group set up specifically for children – the Rodley Robins. They have their own special section of the reserve where they grow nectar rich flowers, make nest boxes and take part in many other wildlife related activities.

We had a great time. The people were welcoming and friendly and there is so much more to discover. We'll certainly be back.

LETTERS & QUESTIONS TO THE EDITOR

FOR ALL OF US WHO WOULD LIKE TO START HELPING WILDLIFE AWAY FROM THE RESERVE, WHAT CAN WE DO TO ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO OUR GARDENS? HAYLEY COTTRELL

Let's concentrate on birds in this instance. One of the most important things you can do for birds over the winter is to ensure that they have a supply of clean water. They need this both for drinking and bathing. I accidentally left out a large plant pot saucer last autumn and was amazed to see the number of birds, particularly house sparrows who came to use it when it had

filled up with rainwater. It's hard to make sure that the water doesn't freeze in the winter months. The RSPCA recommend putting a light ball into the bird bath. It should be enough to keep a small area unfrozen, but you really need to check it regularly if the weather is really cold. Don't put salt or any chemicals in as this could stop the feathers from being waterproof or poison the birds.

Please send in all letters and questions to the Editor who will endeavour to answer them. Email address below or call into the cabin with your written letter or question.



JULIA'S WILDLIFE QUIZ - ANSWERS

1. Kingfisher.
2. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
3. The female.
4. The Stoat has a black tip at the end of his long tail.
5. Japanese Knotweed - *Fallopia japonica*.
6. Black, white and red.

HOW YOU CAN HELP AT CROMWELL BOTTOM

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!

Work parties take place on the following days:
THURSDAY EVERY WEEK meet at the Cabin at 9.30am.
SECOND SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH meet at the Cabin at 9.30am.

Please bring a packed lunch to both. Refreshments provided. You will be made very welcome at either of these sessions. It is best to check our blogsite for up to the minute information - for instance if it is thick snow and we can't get in, then we will put info on the Blog. You can click on the link below which will take you directly to the page.

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 (click on one of the links below). We welcome your articles, photos, ideas, comments and would love to hear from you. We do, of course, retain editorial rights. Your newsletter team are Lynda (Editor), Val, Jane & Simon, with John proof reading and checking that everything is correct! We can be found on Sundays at the Cabin. We thank you for all your articles, poetry, letters and photos for this edition. **PLEASE KEEP THEM COMING!**



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