

# **CROMWELL BOTTOM WILDLIFE GROUP**

## **NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2020**



**Sparrowhawk outside wigwam in Bird Viewing area  
credit Chris Latham**

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF CBWG GRAHAM HAIGH

Welcome to the Autumn newsletter and hope you are all keeping well.

Here's a few words to let you know what is happening at the moment - because of COVID everything is on hold with the Group regarding volunteering and the Council have said anyone over 70 or under 70 with underlying health issues are not able to volunteer which just about is all of us, so we will have to bite the bullet and hope things change soon.

This doesn't mean everything is on hold :

- we have now managed to complete the river path along with contractors,  
which we had to leave in December due to bad weather.
- we have given the order again to contractors to fence an area opposite the cafe entrance so that families can go into an area free from dog faeces and enjoy the grasses and wildflowers, as well as maybe have a picnic. This should be completed by the end of September.

Walking around we have a lot of work to catch up on but I sure when we have our volunteers back we can get the reserve back looking something like. Hope to see you all soon.

yours, Graham.



Two questions for you....

1. Can you identify the bird in the adjacent picture (a bit pixilated when enlarged)
2. When was the species last seen at Cromwell Bottom?

Please send your answers to  
[newsletter.cbwg@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.cbwg@gmail.com)

**TIP - SEE MIKE HENSHAW!!**



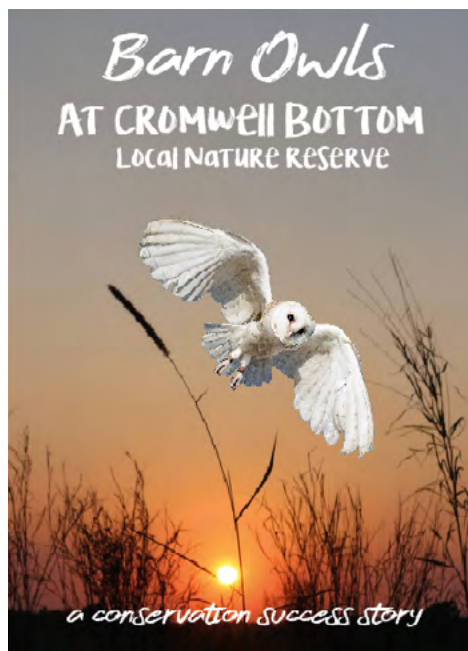
## BARN OWLS AT CROMWELL BOTTOM - A CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY

Barn Owls are a much loved bird. Many of us have been delighted to watch Barn Owls fly and hunt on the nature reserves we have visited. As a group, especially with the capping of North Loop and the subsequent meadows and margins that were created, it has been a bird that we had planned to attract. I am glad to be able to share with you and other concerned bodies that in late summer 2019 a pair took up residence and subsequently raised three juveniles. These three juveniles, all females, have been ringed and have now successfully fledged. It has been a delight to monitor them and watch their progress.

*Allan Wolfenden.*

*Images Allan Wolfenden, Graham Haigh & David Langley.*





Opposite - the front cover of a new glossy booklet available at the Cabin when we re-open - only £10.

It tells the story of barn owls in Calderdale right back from the 1970s to how they appeared at Cromwell Bottom in 2019.

It is compiled and written by Allan Wolfenden, with major contributions from Steve Downing, Robin Dalton, Hugh Firman and Simon Day.

Acknowledgements go to Graham Haigh, David Langley, the Thursday Volunteers, and Mike Henshaw.

Reviews:

*"This book is very well written and produced, it is a pleasure to read. How wonderful that Barn Owls came to Cromwell Bottom. A must-have book for anyone interested in nature"*

# CONFESSIONS OF A SATURDAY VOLUNTEER!

*by Andrew King, images Bruce Hoyle*

You may have read in the last edition of the newsletter about the hard work undertaken by those who give up their free time on a Thursday or Sunday to volunteer at the reserve. You may not know that in addition there is another group

of, hitherto unlauded, volunteers who meet on the first Saturday of every month to carry out work at the reserve.

This group is coordinated by Robin Dalton from Calderdale Council in close co-operation with David Langley, Vice Chair of Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group. It's a great opportunity to volunteer for those of us who can't make the Thursday sessions because we are at work or are unable to attend during the working week. Some people volunteer every month, others just as and when they can – there is no obligation to attend every session or to commit long term, although many of us choose to do so.

The group is very eclectic, welcoming and friendly – a mix of young, old, retirees, workers and students. In addition there is usually a group of strapping young men and women from the venture scouts who we look at wistfully thinking “was I ever that young?”

## THERE ARE NEW RULES NOW - due to Covid.

Robin arranges two or three different tasks for each session – this means there is always something for people of different abilities, interests and stamina reserves. Everyone gets to muck in as much as they desire and to get their hands dirty or, if they prefer, to keep their hands clean. Jobs that the Saturday working group have been involved in include; cutting down trees, planting trees, building the fencing at the bird station, installing the wooden benches, cutting down and burning the reeds in the lagoon, putting up the sign in the car park, clearing Himalayan Balsam and building the dry stone wall near the cabin (one painful stone at a time) to name but a few. Many of these jobs include us dressing up in hi-viz which is always a boon! It's a great chance to get out in the fresh

air and to give something back to the reserve and the wider countryside. Many of the volunteers have interests and knowledge they are happy to share about bird and wildlife and are involved with activities like the Bat walks. It's a great opportunity and I would urge anyone to give it a go!







**Yorkshire**  
Wildlife Trust

Calderdale  
Council



## CROMWELL, COWS, KICKERS AND CALDER GREENING!

Robin Dalton, Area Countryside Officer, Calderdale MBC

The delivery of the Calder Greening Project continues on North Loop at Cromwell Bottom. Within the compound, a superb dry stone wall has been built to provide an entrance way into an informal educational area for schools and groups. Volunteers from the CBWG and Countryside Service have also made a meet and greet area, where schools can be briefed before heading off for activities (den building anyone?) in the local woodland. Whilst this has taken a long time to come to fruition, it will soon be supplemented by log seating, and hopefully schools will be at some point in the near future be able to take advantage of a safe outdoor learning area, providing that valuable connection for children with nature and the outdoors.

Adjacent and above this area, on the large dome of the closed land fill site, the meadows await management, and it is hoped some friendly Beef Shorthorn will soon be grazing off the meadow. And moving onto the next stage of the project, where we look forward with the ambition of enhancing access opportunities to green spaces, a new pathway will tour around the meadow

grasslands, hopefully to be completed by December.

Calder Greening is a programme of projects along the River Calder catchment that have been funded by the European Regional Development Fund, looking to improve green spaces across the Borough. Partners in the project also include the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and they have been busy installing 'tree kickers' along the Brookfoot stretch of the River Calder at Cromwell. This section of River is very straight, and the 'tree kickers' have been installed into the River every 100metres or so along the banking in the River. The tree kickers in this instance are larger branches that have been carefully felled and fixed to the side of the river channel, with permission of the Environment Agency. They act as flow deflectors, giving this straightened section of the Calder a bit of an internal meander, with the aim of increasing the diversity of the flow. As well as creating a more natural flow in channel, the canopy of the tree also provides refuge points for species and helps to form scour pools, further increasing the quality of the watercourse.

**None of this would have been possible without the major contribution of the European Regional Development Fund.**



click the logo to  
follow the Calder  
Greening Project.

# PEOPLE AND NATURE

- a new series on how and why the Trustees of  
Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group  
got into Nature!

Mike Henshaw

## HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU FIRST GOT INVOLVED WITH NATURE?

I was brought up in the Lincolnshire countryside and as soon as I could walk I loved nature. The village where we lived had no gas, electricity or water and a tanker used to come round every day for people to fill their buckets with water. Rationing was in force and food was scarce - my brother and me had to go foraging for food.

My childhood was spent out in fields as my mother worked on a farm and we had to go and help. We ate nuts from the trees such as hazel and walnuts and collected berries to make into jams. The farmer used to kill a pig and share some of it out amongst the villagers.

As I grew older I developed an interest in steam railway engines - the LNER line was 1.5 miles from the village. My brother was a fireman on steam engines in Newark, on the London, Midland, Scottish line. This meant that we knew where all the bats in the barns were, we knew where the swallows were nesting but the most spectacular sight to see was a male Golden Oriole (right).



In 1955 we moved to Calderdale and there, along with my biker friends, gatecrashed a party in West Vale Civic Hall, which is where I met Sally, who, in June 1964 was to become my wife (just in time for the Isle of Man TT races!!).

After this I came upon Cromwell Bottom. We used to bring our children after it was converted to a tip, and then the Nature reserve that we know today.

## BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY

Fast forward to 2007 and I was asked to record for the BTO Atlas and was allocated 2 tetrads, one of which encompassed Cromwell Bottom. I've been involved in the Atlas ever since. Contributing to the BTO Bird Atlas has been a very important part of my life with nature. Contributing to Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group has enriched my love of the natural world greatly.

# A HISTORY OF SPIDERS IN THE UK

Bruce Hoyle

Trustee and locally well-known Spider Expert

## Along came a spider...

Do you know the history of spiders in the UK? It involves a recipe, a nursery rhyme and a clandestine tour of hotels!

**Dr Thomas Muffet (1553–1604)** was an entomologist who wrote *Theatre of Insects*, the first scientific catalogue of British native species. At this time, spiders were recommended as cures for fevers. Doctors recommended spiders for a range of ailments. Dr Watson's (1760) recipe was to "swallow a spider gently bruised and wrapped up in a raisin or spread upon bread and butter". Just how you would gently bruise a spider is a mystery!



*Araneus diadematus*

Possibly this spider caused Patience to run away!

**Patience Muffet was the daughter of Dr Muffet**, who penned the well-known nursery rhyme, although there are many theories as to who the little girl really was in the poem. Even Mary, Queen of Scots, is thought to have been a candidate; however, the verse was not printed until 1805.

### **Dr Robert Hooke (1635–1703)**

Hooke produced probably the first drawings through a microscope (Galileo had invented the microscope many years earlier) of cells, insects and spiders. On 29 April 1663, the Royal Society minuted and referred to a drawing of a six-eyed spider by Hooke. It seems feasible, however, that Christopher Wren made earlier drawings, and Hooke admits to "coming after Wren".





### **Dr Martin Lister (1639-1712)**

Lister is regarded as the first serious arachnologist. He made discoveries that are still important today. His work on spiders was published in 1678 as part of *Historiae Animalium Angliae*, translated into English in 1991. In it, he described with illustrations 34 different but unnamed species, and said (according to Bristowe), "I do not want anyone to think that I have described absolutely all the species but I make bold to say that no one can find casually in this country any new species not described by me" (Bristowe, 1958, p. 12).

Lister was the first to realise that some spiders disperse by ballooning, using silk to catch the wind. It has been recently proved that static electricity may also play a part; this was first suggested in the 1800s.

[See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRrUxi6d7so>](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRrUxi6d7so)

Lister also proposed the first geological map of England, which was completed by William Smith in 1815.

### **John Blackwall (1790-1881)**

Published *A History of the Spiders of Great Britain and Ireland*. The number of species described by Blackwall was around 300. By 1874, the list had increased to 457, in 1881 to 518, and 532 by the early 1900s. Today, there are around 670 described species.

Blackwall corresponded on several occasions with Charles Darwin. (I remember visiting Blackwall's old house up a wooded hill in Wales many years ago with the late John Parker: of course, it was festooned with spiders!)

### **William Falconer (1862-1943)**

Was a north of England entomologist. Falconer collected examples from many locations in England. His most notable local find was *Eboria caliginosa*, in Marsden in 1910. This was a new species, and more examples were found later.

### **W. S. Bristowe (1901-1979)**

Wrote *World of Spiders* in 1958, which is probably the best publication for general reading. Most of the information above has been taken from this. He had a fascination for *Pholcus*. I quote from that book here:

"The daddy longlegs spider, *Pholcus phalangioides*, must be well known to people who live in the south of England, Wales and Eire. She sits unobtrusively in corners of rooms, between ceilings and walls, hanging motionless from a scaffolding of fine, invisible threads. Her presence is not resented, because she seldom moves and is regarded as an innocuous creature, which may be useful at catching mosquitoes or clothes moths.

Pholcus did not live in my childhood home at Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey, although she thrived elsewhere only about 10 miles further south. So the quest of an explanation inspired me to trace her distribution. This had to await the acquisition of a motor bicycle, and then, with the impudence of youth, I zigzagged across England, ostensibly seeking rooms in hotels or lodgings, whose ceilings I viewed with nonchalant interest. My apologies are no doubt due to a host of hoteliers for gaining entry under false pretences, but in the result, their unwitting cooperation enabled me to draw a map which showed that Pholcus inhabited houses coinciding with a narrow southern strip where the average temperature throughout the year exceeds 50 degrees Fahrenheit. North of this strip, she is normally confined to cellars, where temperature varies little with the seasons, and is usually about 50 to 52 degrees. Probably it is the absence of certain extremes of cold over a period which determines whether Pholcus can survive" (Bristowe, 1958, p. 109).



*Pholcus phalangioides* with young

Now, 60+ years later, I am sure they must be in almost everyone's house here up north, sat motionless in ceiling corners. Probably global warming is the main reason, along with more central heating.

Pierre Bonnet (1897–1990)

Wrote Bibliographia Araneorum, a volume of almost 6,500 pages listing publications on spiders. It was the result of around 40 years of work.

Passages from World of Spiders have been used to compile some of these notes: only a few arachnologists have been named. There are dozens more I don't have room to mention.

References:

Bristowe, W. S. World of Spiders (New Naturalist, 1958).

# A VIRTUAL BIRDWATCH

## ...walk of the Reserve

Vic K - bird recorder and Trustee | Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group

image Allan Wolfenden



*Juvenile Dipper at the weir*

image Mike Henshaw



*Goldeneye*

image Allan Wolfenden



*Bullfinch (m)*

image Graham Haigh



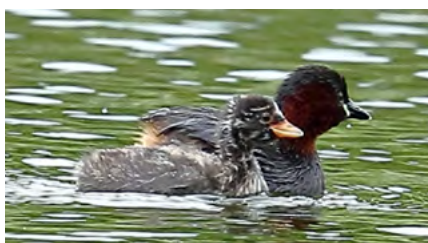
*Grey Heron*

Let's start our walk at the weir which is about 1km upstream from the cabin. In summer we should find house and sand martins, swallows and swifts catching insects over the river. There is usually a grey heron on the wall across the weir. The sand martins should hopefully be using the artificial nest box that was erected on the other side of the river. There are mallards and grey wagtails on the islands downstream from the weir, if we are really lucky there might be a dipper. Upstream there should be cormorants and goosanders diving for fish plus coots and moorhens on the river's edge. In winter the beautiful goldeneye is a common visitor. The name is a bit of a misnomer because the obvious thing when you see this duck is the striking white cheek patch. We might also hear the yaffle of green woodpeckers that frequent the meadows.

Don't forget to look to the skies as there are often sightings of common buzzard and herons commuting between their nest site and feeding areas. Hard to believe these prehistoric looking ungainly birds make nests high in trees.

Onward to the bird viewing area. This is a really good place to get close views of all the woodland favourites. Blue, great, coal and long tailed tits squabble with chaffinches, dunnocks and feisty wrens for food from the feeders. The majestic looking bullfinches look on in disdain. In winter, the alders and beech trees are good places to spot the visiting siskin and redpoll mixed in with the native goldfinch. The noise levels rise when a hunting sparrowhawk flies through looking for a straggler but things quickly return to normal.



**Blackcap****Little Grebe with chick**

The next stop is the new lagoon viewing platform via the river path. This river path is a good place to see kingfisher and hear the songs of the summer migrants. The beautiful song of the 'northern nightingale' a.k.a. blackcap plus plenty of chiffchaff and willow warblers. Also listen out for the scratchy song of the whitethroat.

Most of the lagoon's visitors prefer to stay hidden, skulking about in the reeds but we know they are there from their calls.

The little grebe's sharp call can easily be heard. In summer, the harsh song of sedge warblers is common and the squealing of water rail is a give away that this difficult to see visitor is over-wintering with us.



## WILLS WILDLIFE QUIZ

compiled by Will Griffin

1. Which berry should be picked before October 10th, because the Devil will have spat on every bush by then!?
2. Which fast bird is one of the first to head South to Africa?
3. Gossamer is produced by which insect?
4. Which creature might attack you, if you walk through the flowering Himalayan Balsam?
5. Which small mammal is lactose intolerant?
6. How do you make a conker harder, so your nut might win the match?
7. When is Apple Day?
8. Which small native tree suddenly gets noticed as their leaves turn bright yellow?
9. What is a mast year?
10. What should a Wood Mouse be collecting in the Autumn?



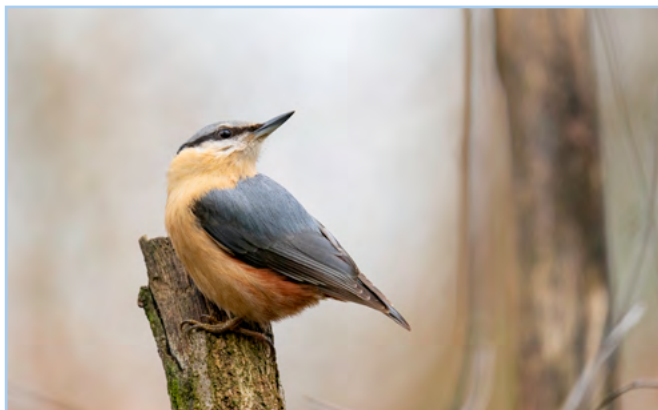
## NEW SERIES:

## PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS FOR BEGINNERS & IMPROVERS

Ever wondered how the professionals do it?  
Then read on ..... and send us your best picture!

*Chris Latham, photographer gives us his expert tips:*

Nuthatch on the look-out!



**Camera Sony A9**

**Sony 200-600mm G lens  
set at 600mm**

**1/400s - f/6.3**

**ISO 3200**

*I made this shot in the  
bird viewing area of the  
reserve at 3:28pm on  
the 16th February 2020.*

The timing of the shot is important because the light was failing fast and everyone else had gone home. The best thing I can tell you is that you have to be there to get the shot! I often spend 8-10 hours in one location and I'm happy if I come away with a couple of keepers.

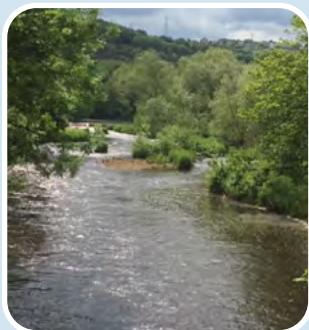
This was an overcast day with fairly even lighting from a low setting sun (yes it did make the odd appearance). The nuthatch is front-lit meaning shadows were not going to be a distraction.

I watched this bird coming and going for a few minutes and realised I was sitting in the wrong place. I moved position to make sure I had a good background to work with. The lack of leaves on the trees at this time of year means that I was able to position myself to create space around the bird. Moving just a few feet or even kneeling down can make a huge difference to your images. I always try to make sure I'm at eye level with my subject as the results are more intimate that way.

My final tip is to think about composition. In this image the nuthatch is looking over its shoulder into the scene. Compositionally it works because the viewer imagines what the bird is looking at. Using the "Rule of Thirds" should improve the impact of your images. Think about where your subject is in relation to its surroundings and visualise your shot with this in mind.

# YOUR FAVOURITE SIGHTINGS FROM SUMMER AND AUTUMN AT CROMWELL BOTTOM LNR

The newsletter team have been busy asking around for your favourite sightings and wildlife goings-on down at the reserve during summer and autumn. Here are your responses and a huge thank you to all of you.



AMANDA KELK

**Amanda Kelk writes:**

Here is a picture of the river I took in the summer - my favourite view is from the bridge.

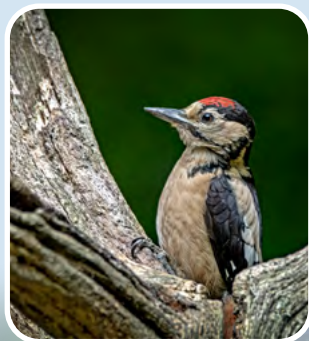


SUE TINDALL

**Sue Tindall writes:**

We visit Cromwell Bottom regularly and it is a favourite of the boys, whether spending time watching trains pass by, or playing sticks over the bridges. We have loved watching the ducklings and the cignet grow as well as the journey of the tadpole through to the frog. We love the flowers and watching the birds.

We also appreciate the developments from the Wildlife Group. We have brought family from other areas to visit, and whether you like to sit by water or take some peace and quiet, it's a lovely place to visit.



VICKY OUTEN

**Vicky Outen writes:**

When we were coming out of lockdown in July & went to visit my friends in Halifax who decided to take me to Cromwell Bottom Nature Reserve. Having never visited the reserve before it nice to walk along the river, see the weir & go into the reserve itself. My friends took me to the Bird Viewing area as they know I love wildlife photography, which is where the enclosed photography were taken. I enjoyed it that much I've been back twice on my own & can't wait to go again. On both occasions I've been back everyone I came across was so friendly & helpful.

**Background image - Male Banded Demoiselle**  
credit Graham Haigh



Andrew King



**Andrew King writes:**

I took this picture very early one morning in May, near the fallen tree in the river. It was when lockdown was in full swing, and spending my one hour a day at the reserve really helped me. I did pay the price in midge bites though!

**John Philip Stroud writes:**

The roe deer was seen on the 9th of June 2020. It was on the far side of the river from the reserve. I particularly like it as the deer is looking straight down the lens of the camera, fully aware that I was there!

John Philip Stroud



**Lynda (newsletter editor) writes:**

My favourite sighting of the summer was a deer and her fawn. I was walking along the path next to the compound and they were coming down from North Loop towards the river. It lasted only a few seconds but it made my summer. It just goes to show how much depends on luck. A few seconds later and it would have gone.

**Val (newsletter producer) writes:**

Sometime mid-June I was sitting on the large rock next to bird viewing area, taking an urgent phone call, when I looked up and saw a large bird flying straight down the centre of the Bailey Bridge, about head height - flying towards my pink cap (or so I thought!!). It suddenly swerved to the fence around the viewing area where there WAS a robin ..... Oh dear, I was frightened to death about what turned out to be a Sparrowhawk .....! I since found out that they are colour blind, so I can keep my pink hat on!!!

**Brian writes:**

My favourite thing about the summer has been following the progress of the goosander chicks. I've watched them growing and learning throughout the weeks; practising swimming and diving skills near the big iron bridge and have admired the determination of the mother to teach them to get up the weir. It took at least 2 weeks of training before they made it!

# LIVE POETS SOCIETY

## THE FALL Tony Hargreaves

The sun and soil have served us well  
Our larders stacked with grain sacks full,  
Preserves, pickles, ripened fruit  
And every kind of earthy root.

With summer's bounty we'll be fed.  
Through those lean times that we all dread.  
Now it's time for nature to sleep  
As wicked winter forward creep.

There comes the fading of the light  
As daytime forfeit to the night.  
Deciduous no longer grow.  
Their greens turning shades of yellow.

There's gold, bronze and brightest crimson  
Before dulling to darkest brown.  
Their labour done they join the soil,  
The black, the mulch and random spoil.

The trees stripped down to bare bone.  
Now stark they stand as if life's gone  
The fields are still, they gave their best.  
Their earth left fallow, time to rest.



# CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

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 new newsletter team are Lyn (Editor), Val and Jane. We can be found on Thursday mornings at the Cabin (Covid restrictions dependent) or can be contacted at the email address below. We thank you for all your articles and photos for this edition.

(Click on a link below for direct access).



[newsletter.cbwg@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.cbwg@gmail.com)



<http://cromwellbottom.blogspot.co.uk>



[Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group](#)



<https://cromwellbottomlnr.co.uk>

(check out our website with all issues of newsletters, species lists, photography tips etc)

## WILL'S WILDLIFE QUIZ - ANSWERS

1. Blackberries
2. The swift
3. Spiders
4. A wasp
5. The hedgehog - don't give it milk, maybe make a gap in your garden fence so it can travel more easily to eat natural food.
6. Soak it in vinegar, slowly bake it or pack tarmac inside it!  
You mean you never cheated?
7. 1 October.
8. Field maple.
9. When trees produce excess seeds, so some will germinate.
10. Bedding and a stash of nuts for Winter.

