

# CBWG: Spring/Summer 2021

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page....***

Welcome from the Chair  
CBWG, Graham Haigh

The Lagoon update  
Shelagh Brooke

Will's Wildlife Quiz answers on  
back page!!!

Sights and Sounds of Spring  
- Vik K

Rough Guide to Walking  
Round the Reserve

Live Poets Society

Back page quiz answers (no  
don't go there yet!!!)

Membership of CBWG  
Hayley Cotterill, Trustee

Barn Owls Return to Breed  
Allan Wolfenden

People and Nature  
Simon Day

Your Favourite Sightings  
with fabulous photography!



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CHANNEL click on arrow!***

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(contact the Trustees)



*Jay, credit Graham Haigh*



*This  
newsletter is  
dedicated to the loving  
memory of  
**Max Uttley**,  
beloved husband of Jane,  
who sadly passed away on  
8 March 2021.*

## Welcome from the Chair of CBWG, Graham Haigh

First, I have the sad news that Jane Uttley's husband Max has passed away. Max was the man behind the lady always in the shadows. He did a lot for us but you would not know of it. Our condolences go to Jane at this sad time.

Spring is Sprung as they say. Most of the birds are now nesting or on eggs. The Herons have been building for the last month and Dippers are back on the river and a rare Firecrest on site with some stunning pictures from photographers - see the image from Dave Brotherton later in this newsletter.

I think we have all had just about enough of this lock down and the news is (to be confirmed ) we can get back to volunteering as of 1st week of April. I'm afraid the cafe will be a little later as we have to conform with COVID regulations and that will take a while to sort .

Sadly a lot of people think Cromwell is a country park and not a nature reserve - I understand they want to get out but not all respect the area for what it is and weekends have been especially busy and trying.

After 14 months off there is a lot of catching up with work to do. However we have managed to get some work done with contractors, ie paths on North loop and the area by the cabin fenced off and path work by the bird feeding area (more to do there . We are all chomping at the bit to get back .

Hayley Cottrell, Trustee, has set up a Just Giving fundraising - its on our Facebook site , Blog & Website. It is for a new Social & Education Hub, replacing the worn out Cabin and providing local schools and community groups a place to learn about nature. It would be great if you could make a donation. **Be part of it - our target of £10,000 to help Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group bounce back after lockdown!**

We look forward to seeing you all again soon. Please keep safe and think about others not so lucky.

*Yours, Graham.*



# *Membership of Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group*

## *Hayley Cottrell, your membership Trustee writes...*

I would like to tell you how your annual membership subscriptions helps the group out by keeping our accounts topped up for spends such as:

- Bird feed for feeding areas and supplementary feed for Barn owls on North Loop. Our best attraction is our bird feeding area which is great for photographers new and experienced.
- Recently we have had cattle on north loop and towards the end of their time with us needed Livestock Lick.
- Materials for mending and maintaining fences, pathways and our visitors areas, pond , lagoon, bird feeding and the general up keep so moving around the reserve is enjoyable for all.
- Materials for building bird boxes, chairs and tables, cattle fencing, all great for volunteer days and corporate team building days.
- Educational booklets for use at pond dipping, kids days, open day and school visits
- Tools for use by volunteer parties.
- Equipment for events such as Pond Dipping, Moth Nights, Bat Nights
- Licenses for putting on our Open Day. We can attend other events to help us fundraise plus our

refreshment cabin which is our main fundraiser opportunity.

- We are a self funded group which relies on volunteering and donations.
- Membership gives us the security to go ahead with small projects, rather than depending on grants, which take time to come through and not guaranteed.

With membership comes your invitation to the AGM and of course, your entitlement to vote (June each year).

You will also get this fabulous newsletter straight to an email of your choice.

Membership for the year is £10.00 single or £15.00 joint. You can pay by bank transfer, cheque or when the cabin is open, cash (with receipt).

Please email

**[membershipcbwg@gmail.com](mailto:membershipcbwg@gmail.com)**

(click on link) for more details, if you are interested in becoming a member or would like clarification about anything I have reported above.

Thank you to all our members and I look forward to hearing from newbies too!

**Your Membership officer,  
Hayley**



## *Lagoon and Reedbed - update*

### *Shelagh Brooke*

Reedbeds are one of the rarest habitats in the UK, and are of great ecological importance. The reedbed located at Cromwell Bottom, though relatively small in area, is probably the largest within Calderdale. Reedbeds, if left undisturbed, are impermanent, and will undergo a natural succession from open water, through progressively drier reedbed, to scrub. Ultimately this succession will lead to drying out, and coverage of the area by woodland. It is evident that the site at Cromwell Bottom is progressing through this succession: indeed the whole area now frequently dries out completely in the summer.

Over recent years, attempts have been made to slow the successional changes by cutting and clearing the reed on a rotational basis, and coppicing many of the scrubland trees. However, some years ago (as described in an earlier newsletter), representatives of Calderdale Council and of the Cromwell Bottom Wildlife Group expressed enthusiasm for working collaboratively towards the longer-term conservation and enhancement of the lagoon and its associated reedbed (and of the wet woodlands that lie immediately to the east and west of the lagoon basin, and which also constitute uncommon and very valuable habitats).



The Lagoon, image taken from the new viewing platform by vb

Initially, planning the project seemed relatively straight-forward: the principal techniques for the rehabilitation of a reedbed are removal of all or part of the scrub, lowering the ground surface within the reedbed, and/or raising the water levels. However, as more publications were referred to, more consultations and site visits were carried out (involving a whole range of individuals and organisations with relevant expertise or statutory powers), and more surveys were undertaken, it became evident that the history and geography of the site, and the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the basin and surrounding locations, added layers of complexity to the already complicated task of managing a reedbed for the benefit of wildlife. In addition, there was the need to think about undertaking any major work in phases, each requiring the acquisition of the necessary package of funding.

In 2019, the path on the bund/bank along the eastern boundary of the basin was dramatically improved, the work being funded, as part of a larger-scale path restoration scheme, by a grant from Rastrick Big Local. Also, a wonderful viewing platform, designed to be accessible to everyone, including people who use wheelchairs, was installed next to the northern path overlooking the lagoon. This was funded by grants from Brighouse Ladies' Circle and Tesco. (Very many thanks to all who contributed to these parts of the project!)

In the summer of 2020, Calderdale Council secured funding from the European Regional Development Fund for the reedbed conservation work, as part of the Brighouse Catchment Improvement Project, working alongside the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, and Environment Agency. The plans for the interventions have yet to be completely finalised, but the current thinking is that a significant part of the scrub should be excavated and that small islands should be constructed within the pools created. Also, that a sluice should be installed under the bridge in the eastern bund to help manage water levels. Finally, a facility should be installed that will allow the abstraction of water, most probably involving the siphoning of water from the adjacent canal (the Calder and Hebble Navigation) at appropriate intervals, so that adequate water levels can be maintained within the reedbed throughout the year. The plans will now be completed, with further consultation and necessary permissions sought, and the work carried out as soon as is feasible.

## *Barn Owls return to breed on North Loop - Allan Wolfenden*

2020 was mostly notable for all the wrong reasons. Covid 19 closed down much of the country for long periods of time. We experienced a new type of normality which was both frustrating and isolating. As we adopted new ways of coping in this much changed landscape, nature continued as normal.

It was on one of those daily walks around North Loop that I made a discovery that set my pulse racing. There were signs of owl activity in front of the barn owl box. When I say signs, I mean there was poo to be seen. Poo can tell you a great deal about animals. This poo told me that an owl, probably a barn owl, had been spending quite a lot of time in front of the nest box. It was looking very promising.

Within a short time Steve Downing had been contacted, the inside of the box checked and the presence of a pair of breeding barn owls confirmed.

They were back! However, this was a different pair than had successfully fledged three young barn owls in 2019. Inside the box there were five owlets of various sizes, which at a later stage in their growth were ringed by Steve.

Over the next three months I watched from a distance as the adults flew to and from the nest box. Sometimes I was fortunate enough

to see them flying in with a vole clasped in their claws, an important meal for our young barn owls.

As I watched, I made many mental comparisons with the previous year's breeding pair. I asked myself, when would the female leave the box to take up a roost elsewhere? When would the owlets begin to show an appearance on the ledge of the box? How many owlets would successfully fledge?



*2019 Juvenile in flight -  
credit Allan Wolfenden.*

Early in October, as evening came I began to get some answers. Two juvenile barn owls could be seen on the outside ledge, the largest dominating the space available. Moments later it was making flights around the box before re-landing on the roof. This was a time of much wing flapping and precarious flight.

Everything looked hopeful. But, in the natural world, things can change very quickly and this proved to be the case with these juvenile barn owls. In late October all activity at the box seemed to cease. Exploring around the nest box area in the day time I discovered the remains of one of the juvenile barn owls.

Had it been killed by a tawny owl, (I had seen one nearby quite often) or had it died of hunger?

Had something happened to the adults on which the juveniles were so dependent for their food?

Later, when the nest box was cleaned out, the remains of another juvenile barn owl were discovered.

In conclusion, there was much to celebrate once again in 2020, breeding barn owls had returned to

North Loop.

From the five owlets that were ringed it looks like only one successfully fledged. Will they return in 2021? We wait to see what developments will occur.



**2019 Juveniles at night - infrared camera - Credit Allan Wolfenden**

**OWL BOOK  
AVAILABLE  
[click for info](#)**



answers on  
back page but  
no peeking!

## ***Will/s Wildlife Quiz - compiled by Will Griffin, the Bard of Salterhebble***

1. How many legs does a caterpillar have?
2. Who wrote "Coaches, cars, caravans, motorbikes and tents throng the valley. One cannot complain about people who want to see the scenery, but some of the characters infesting the place at weekends have eyes only for mischief."
3. Which valley was being described?  
(a) Calder Valley (b) Great Langdale (c) Airedale
4. What is a male badger called?
5. What is a female badger called?
6. Which bird is the odd one out? Cuckoo, chiff-chaff or dipper?
7. Which moth-like butterflies emerge at the end of spring?
8. Walking from Brighouse Station to Halifax Station via Cromwell Bottom and the Hebble Valley is a fine way to spend a Spring day (subject to health restrictions). If you made the return journey by train, how many minutes would the journey take?
9. On average how many petals does a daisy have? *Bellis Perennis* of course!
10. How many different metal bridges could you cross on a tour of Cromwell Bottom?



## *People and Nature - Simon Day, Trustee & Education Lead*

I guess I have my parents to thank initially, for supporting me and providing so many opportunities for me to explore and develop an interest in nature. I don't recall a particular moment, but looking back, I remember just having a natural inclination and inquisitiveness about learning about the natural world. My parents, as I said, played an important part in my primary school years in that we were fortunate enough to go on caravan holidays, both at home and abroad, to some very scenic and diverse places, usually in rural areas or the coast. This gave me the opportunity to take myself off on birdwatching walks, recording what I'd seen and then sharing my joy and findings with my parents. Ultimately, I joined the YOC (Young Ornithologists Club) which was like the RSPB for young people and would look forward to the regular edition of the 'Birdlife' magazine. I remember sending in some drawings of birds I had seen, but, sadly, they were never published! I am now a member of the RSPB.

Moving on to Grammar school, I remember being taught French by Mr Walford, who was also a very keen birdwatcher. He set up a weekly bird club where we would share what species we had seen that week for him to record.

## *Continuing the series on how our Trustees became involved with Nature and Wildlife.*

He also organised several local birdwatching walks which I attended. This kept my interest up and it was good to share my passion and enthusiasm with other likeminded pupils.

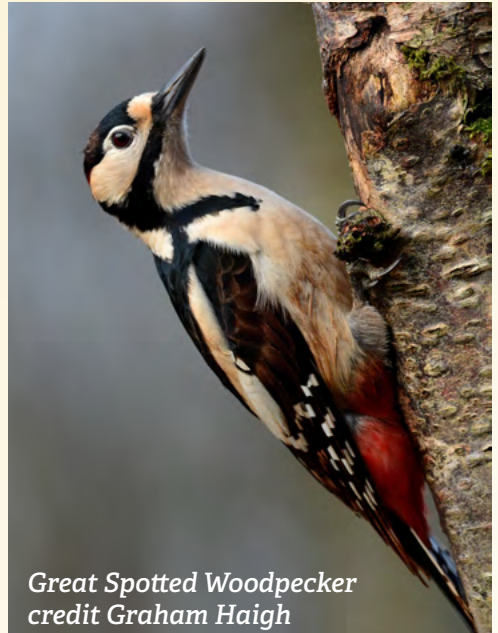


Over a teaching career spanning 40 years in primary schools, I have had so many opportunities to share my passion for nature, such as, running wildlife clubs, creating wildlife habitats in the school grounds, birdwatching surveys, incorporating wildlife into lessons such as Science and Art, inviting wildlife visitors and as part of so many educational visits. This has continued in my retirement through the strong links the Wildlife group has with Old Earth Primary School in Elland where, once again, I can share my passion for wildlife with the next generation!

# *Sights and Sounds of Spring & Summer at Cromwell Bottom -*

*Vik K, Trustee, Bird Recorder for Wildlife Group*

Spring and early summer is when Cromwell Bottom NR starts to come alive after the apparent drabness of winter. With the warmer conditions greenery returns to the bushes and trees and the cycle of life restarts. In early spring one of the first sounds that can be heard is the drumming of the great spotted woodpecker. This is actually the mating “song” of the male. Woodpeckers can be very vocal but to attract the female, the male finds a hollow tree and uses his sharp beak to hammer out a rhythmic beat. The louder this beat, the more attracted the female. I’ve heard some woodpeckers use metal electricity pylons for this. Cheating?



*Great Spotted Woodpecker  
credit Graham Haigh*

A disadvantage of the leaves returning to the trees is that the birds are more difficult to see. This means that we need to make more use of our ears. The male birds are singing their hearts out in the hope to attract a mate. Some of these songs are easier to identify than others. To simplify things some of the birds have been named after their songs. 2 good examples are cuckoo and chiffchaff.

Cuckoos are uncommon sightings at CB but their ‘cuk-oo’ song can occasionally be heard. This is the male telling the female that he has found a meadow pipit or dunnoek nest for her to deposit her eggs in. More common is the ubiquitous chiffchaff. This is the typical ‘little brown job’ but makes itself known all through the spring/summer by its monotonous ‘chiff-chaff’ song.

One of the best ways to see the birds is to make use of the artificial nest sites that have been erected. We have over 100 nest boxes all around the reserve, such as the one below:



image taken on new river path - vb

Many of these are close to footpaths. Usually about 50% of the boxes are in use so if you stand a reasonable distance away there is a good chance that you can watch the adults fetching moss to line the nest or caterpillars for the young. If you are really lucky you may see the baby birds take their first clumsy flight into the outside world. There is also a sand martin box by the weir. The aim is to attract this insect feeder that usually feeds by hunting over rivers and lakes. Unfortunately sand martins are not as common as they used to be. For some reason they seem to be struggling to make the long journey from their winter feeding grounds in Africa.

One of the easier sights to see in the summer are the flying dragon and damselflies. The best place to see these are in the pond dipping area. When the sun comes out they zip around at high speed but are easy to spot as a lot of the species are bright blues or reds. They often rest on the reeds which gives you an opportunity to have a look at their beautiful colours. Some of the names showcase their exoticness – emperor dragonfly, emerald damselfly, red-eyed damselfly. Family names showcase their hunting methods – darter, hawk, skimmer and chaser.



Red Darter credit Allan Wolfenden

A close-up photograph of a tall, slender Early Purple orchid. The plant features a dense spike of numerous small, light purple flowers with darker purple spots on the petals. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural meadow setting.

**Early Purple  
orchid  
credit Jane  
Uttley  
(2017)**

If struggling to spot the birds hiding in the undergrowth or the dragonflies zipping about is not your thing then why not search out some wild flowers? In early summer the exotic looking orchids can be found in the meadows on the reserve. At the last count we found over 100 orchid plants on the reserve so with a bit of patience...

Vik K

## **Your Favourite Sightings**



**Donna Garside sends us this picture from  
the snow on the reserve this winter!**

A wide-angle photograph of a calm river, likely the Calder, winding through a winter landscape. The banks are covered in a thick layer of snow, and the trees lining the river are heavily laden with snow, their branches creating a delicate, white silhouette against the overcast sky. The water is dark and still, reflecting the snowy surroundings.

*Brrr!*

Donna says: “I have lived in Elland for over 25 years and never tire of this walk. Each day brings new joy and beauty. The river Calder always looks extremely beautiful in this particular location and is as stunning as most top attractions in it’s own right. We are so lucky to have this right on our doorstep and to have an amazing group of volunteers maintaining the reserve for our enjoyment”.



“One of the best things about nature reserves is the chance of spotting something that no-one else has done that day”.... just look at what Mick and Kath - members and photographers - saw and photographed ... stunning don't ya think!



“We were walking down by the bund one day in April (last year) and heard a noise in the reeds. Within seconds out popped a **Greylag** which was the first of the year for us down at Cromwell and a great surprise, as it hadn't made itself known to any one else. A really nice surprise. Proof that you should never take things for granted and always expect the unexpected!”

Image credit Dave Brotherton, photographer and sent in by Graham Haigh - **Rare Firecrest** on the reserve in early March 2021. Absolutely stunning, and we think you will agree!



# *A Rough Guide to walking around the Reserve*

*- Chris Harrison, daily walker*

Thoughts on walking the Cromwell Bottom Local Nature Reserve - written in February this year so hopefully no mud now!

My preferred point of entry to the Reserve is at Cromwell Lock.

The first thing to notice is the sensible innovation during the pandemic of placing a bolt in the latch of the gate preventing it from shutting. This enables you to open the gate without touching the metal. Just use your body or feet.

After around 50m there is a fork in the path. Go left and this will take you around the lagoon and along the river. Go right and after around 400m you will come to the river bridge. The other path also joins here.

Over the bridge and on the right is the bird watching/feeding area. Continue on this path and you will reach the exit gate, cross the river and you are at the now closed cabin. When I cross the first bridge I prefer to turn left onto the Tag Loop. In the end this will get you back to the cabin area but add about 1/2 mile to your walk.

At this time, beginning of February the path round the Tag loop is pretty mucky. Good shoes or wellies required. To be frank, during the winter everything is pretty bleak. Not a lot to see. The first pond on your right used to have newts but the pond dried out last summer and they have probably moved on. A couple of 100m on you come to two more ponds, one has a dipping platform popular with children. The first has a family of moorhens, but they are very secretive and rarely seen. The last pond on the left is a bit stagnant and stinky. 200m on and you will reach the exit gate.

Turn right along the river. When the river is low you might be lucky to see a Heron or Cormorant on the weir. Follow the path and cross the river. This will bring you to the café area. Let's hope that the recently completed picnic area can be put to good use this summer. You can now rejoin the canal. Left for Elland and right for Brighouse. About 1.5 miles to each. Chris has his barge moored here, open for tea, coffee and snacks especially at weekends. Enjoy your walk!

[LINK TO CBWG MAP AND GUIDE](#)  
[- click here](#)





## ***Live Poets Society***

### **GOOD RIDDANCE**

Good riddance to the winter greys.  
Return of green brings brighter days.  
Now comes 'caw-caw' cry from the blue,  
As breeding pair their nest renew.  
Each crow working to weave the twigs.  
Winter's damage they quickly fix,  
For soon there'll be a batch to lay  
And then keep warm day after day.

With love and care each one will hatch  
To hungry squawking little clutch,  
That must be fed with living prey,  
So parents back and forth all day,  
Between the nest and furrowed field  
Getting fat grubs and in good yield.  
Good riddance to the winter greys.  
Return of green brings brighter days.

***Tony Hargreaves, Bard of Lindley***



Poem sent by  
Trustee, Hayley  
Cottrell -  
who says

“Not specifically  
about Cromwell  
Bottom but it is  
about enjoying  
nature and being  
in our beautiful  
countryside.  
I hope you like it”.

## WON'T YOU WALK WITH ME

Come with me now  
For a walk if you will.  
Down in the valley  
And then over the hill.  
We'll walk through the wood  
And cross over the stream  
Where if you are lucky  
Kingfishers are seen.

Then up past the hedge  
Where I once saw a Mole  
And on to the field  
With the Shire mare and foal.

We can walk through the meadow  
Where the buttercups grow  
The one that in Summer  
The farmer will mow. He's always so busy  
When he's making his hay  
But he'll give us a wave  
As we pass on our way.

And if you feel weary when we've walked for a while  
We can sit down and rest  
By the old ladder stile.

You never quite know  
As we go on our walk  
We might have a laugh  
Or perhaps we'll just talk.  
But there's one thing however  
That I will guarantee  
You'll enjoy all the sights  
If you'll come walk with me.

*Yvonne Svejnoha.*



## Will's Wildlife Quiz - answers

- 1 Six
- 2 a. Wainwright
- 3 b
- 4 Boar
- 5 Sow
- 6 Dipper - it is named after what it does. The others are named after their call.
- 7 Skipper
- 8 Nine minutes
- 9 Forty-two
- 10 Four.

*How many did you get correct?*

As usual, please send in your articles, observations, photos, poems or ideas for future editions, to:

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

*The wildlife group would like to thank all contributors to this edition of the newsletter and to John Murray, who patiently proof reads before despatch!*