

Leisure

Cricket

Nets time for Beeston & Toton cricketers

THE shortest day has been and gone, the Christmas turkey has been eaten, leftovers et al. The New Year has been seen in – welcome, 2011. The Ashes are coming to an end Down Under; what is there to do? You may well ask...

Beeston and Toton Sycamore Cricket Club started pre-season nets practice on Thursday, January 6 at Trent Bridge. On January 9, Sunday nets commences at Bramcote at a new start time of 2.30 pm.

The club is looking to build on the success of their 1st XI in becoming champions of Division G in the South Notts

Cricket League in 2010. It is hoped that further successes can be achieved in 2011.

Can you think of any better way to burn off the extra calories put on over Christmas and the New Year? With the days beginning to get longer, the 2011 season is only a few months away!

AGM

The club would also like to remind all members that the AGM will be held on Monday, January 17 at the New Venture Social Club in Beeston Rylands, starting at 7.30pm. Please make every effort to attend, as this is your chance to influence the running of the club.

Rugby

Big night as Green & Whites play Munster Friday, January 14, KO 7.45pm at Meadow Lane, Nottingham

A HUGE night of rugby action is set to grip Meadow Lane on January 14 when two-time European champions Munster take on Nottingham's Green and Whites in the British and Irish Cup.

The marquee match-up is set to be one of the biggest sporting events of 2011 in the city, as the Green and Whites play host to a side ranked Number One team on the continent by the European Rugby Council.

Heralding from the South-Western province of Ireland, Munster, nicknamed the Red Army due to their striking kit, play their home matches at 'Fortress' Thomond Park,

which seats a huge 26,500 fans and saw the home side achieve a decade without losing in the Heineken Cup through the nineties.

Drawing fans from across the country, particularly its main regional centres Cork and Limerick, the Red Army play by the immortal words: "To the brave and faithful, nothing is impossible," but will know that a trip across the Irish Sea to Meadow Lane will be a real test in the East Midlands."

Nottingham Rugby Chief Executive Simon Beatham hailed the record-breaking corporate response to the club's marquee British and Irish Cup clash versus the former European Champions.

The Friday January 14 clash, which kicks off at 7.45pm at the team's Meadow Lane home, has

received an emphatic reaction from businesses attending the City 2 Hospitality Dinner before the game.

The event will see nearly 500 local and national corporate guests enjoy the championship club's dining experience before watching the Green and Whites take on the Magners League leaders.

Club CEO Beatham said: "The City has really got behind the club this year and the growth we've had on the hospitality side of things has been staggering.

"We've seen an incredible rise throughout the season in the numbers attending our special match day events and Munster has highlighted just how far we can go.

Now the club is aiming to replicate that success in the number of fans watching the game after seeing raised

attendances of around 1/3rd this season so far.

To help encourage that growth in the January match-up, ticket offers have been made available for spectators.

Season ticket holders and students will be able to gain entry at the price of two for £20, whilst the general public can enjoy the Friday night match at four for £45 in what is expected to be one of the biggest games of the season.

Simon added: "Many people don't realise that Nottingham has a fully professional rugby team that is in the top 15 clubs in the country. It has four current internationals who will all play in the world cup next year. Nottingham has everything it needs to be a premiership rugby team – a great stadium in the middle of the great city."

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

OBSERVATIONS on the current habitat creation works at Attenborough nature reserve, made in this column a couple of issues ago, provoked a twin-pronged attack from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust (NWT) in the last issue of the *Express*. The letter from Sandy Aitken was particularly vicious and personal, containing accusations of contradictory statements, exaggeration and ignorance while contending that the article in which these observations appeared was "full of vitriolic, trite and misinformed comment."

The nature of their response may be an indication that the management of Attenborough nature reserve feel that they are above criticism but this type of accusation could also be applied not only to NWT's responses to the article but also to some of the reserve's publicity material.

Space precludes outlining every instance of this but here are a few examples. One of NWT's responses describes species-rich grassland in the area known as 'Corbett's Meadow' near the Strand in Attenborough village. For many years, this area has been known to most as the fisherman's car park and a few years ago would have been better described as 'the works compound' (established with permission from NWT). Since then, some of the car park has developed an assemblage of species similar to that found on comparable alkaline substrates which arise from construction using waste fuel ash. Sites like this are not uncommon locally, particularly by railways, and are often much larger in size but less well protected. Although some grasses have become established

in the car park, to call it a meadow would, to most, be an exaggeration. To then distinguish it by naming after a prominent Wildlife Trust member might be seen to have more to do with influencing the decision on the floodwall route than with its intrinsic wildlife value or the local or national scarcity of this type of habitat.

To most, the term 'meadow' would be much more fitting to Wheatear field. We now learn from Mr Aitken that the return of wheatears to the field was not so significant after all and, being of "no particular botanical interest", it was ripe for the chop. If the establishment of a 'wildflower meadow' in Wheatear field – a project which was used to justify the exclusion of the public and one which seemed to sink without trace – had been successful it might, presumably, have been saved. The former accessibility of Wheatear field was one of its attractions. A visit to Glebe field or L meadow is suggested but are these areas actually accessible to the public?

Wheatear field, as we knew it, is now gone and we can only hope that the claimed wildlife benefits of its replacement actually

materialise. Some of these claims are, both in wording and substance, to put it politely, a little optimistic. An example is the claim that it will attract breeding common snipe.

This bird can be seen on the Erewash meadows, an area which shows just how good nature is at reclaiming land and developing wildlife habitats without any help from humans. Formerly a toxic waste dump sporting signs bearing the skull and crossbones, it has developed into a valuable wildlife habitat with extensive grassland including wet areas that the snipe favour. Anyone

who has tried to spot snipe will know that this is no easy task. They are nervous birds, which will take to flight when you are as far as 25 yards away from them but may also stay still, confident of their camouflage, until you are almost on top of them. Watching snipe feeding requires planning, field craft and patience and often the only sight you sight you will get is of the birds flying away!

Whether the timid snipe will be attracted to a relatively small area that is bounded by a road and a busy path must be of doubt, regardless of how 'good' the

habitat may be for them. The chances of them breeding there must be close to nil and, if there are any sightings at all, they are likely to be when the reserve is at its very quietest.

If all the Trust's confident predictions are realised then words will be eaten in this column – but will the Trust do the same if they are not? They may believe that most people will have forgotten these predictions by the time it becomes obvious that they were 'inaccurate'.

Most, perhaps – but not all.

*Jack Smith
Local ecologist*



Thought for the Fortnight

*A new broom sweeps clean,
but the old broom
knows all the corners.*