

Leisure

Cycling

Erewash Valley Cycling Club

THE Erewash Valley Cycling Club is holding a series of free midweek cycle rides suitable for all ages and abilities. All rides will start from the Bridge Street car park, Sandiacre, at 10am on the dates listed below.

Each ride will be paced at the speed of the slowest rider with refreshment stops along the way. All rides will be led by a qualified first aider who has been CRB checked.

Further details from

Malcolm Griffin, tel: (0115) 939 7060.

Cycles must be in a roadworthy condition, with spare inner tube and pump carried. It is recommended that helmets are worn.

Children are welcome but must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Wednesday, July 27
Ride to Elvaston Castle Country Park (13 miles in total)

Wednesday, August 3
Ride along the Erewash Valley Trail, calling at Trent Lock and Attenborough Nature Reserve (16 miles)

Wednesday, August 10
Ride to Shipley Country Park along the Nutbrook Trail (14 miles)

Wednesday, August 17
Ride along the Erewash Valley Trail, calling at Trowell Garden Centre (16 miles)

Bowls

Beeston Broadgate Bowls

MEMBERS of Beeston Broadgate Bowl Club invited the Mayor of Broxtowe, Cllr Jacky Williams, and her escort to join them for tea last week.

The Mayor presented the club with a Grant Aid cheque for £100 from

Broxtowe Borough Council whilst she was there, which will help towards the club's costs. Receiving the cheque, Club Captain and President Sandra Tacey said: "I have been the club's captain for about 14 years and this is my fifth year as President.

We're a lively club with about 30 members currently, and it's an honour to represent them all."

The Mayor took some brief instruction in the game of bowls before joining the club members for tea in the pavilion.

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

Twitchers and Batphones

FOLLOWING the recent piece in these pages about the use of smartphones in 'tape luring' Cetti's warbler at Attenborough, visitors may feel that, as in concerts, meetings etc, they need to turn their phone off when visiting the reserve. It would be a shame if the use of smartphone applications (apps) were to be discouraged due to the activities of a few dastardly twitchers of the sort whose main aim in life, apart from ticking boxes, seems to be giving birdwatching a bad name.

Apart from its misuse to lure birds into a visible position the 'app' in question is a great help to anyone wishing to identify

birds by their song. Whilst it needs to be used with care, accidental luring could be less of a problem to more common birds for whom attempted territory invasions are a more regular occurrence.

Smartphones and their cousins, the still portable but much more powerful tablets, offer the potential for a huge leap forward in the knowledge of our wildlife. They do indeed present the chance for enthusiasts who wish to identify what they see to break free from the need to carry around a bag full of field guides, which can be both bulky and difficult to use in bad weather or with species that are fast moving or hard to observe. This technology can mean instant access to

the depth of information normally only available in printed works whose portability is restricted to a transfer from a bookshelf to a table.

They are also often equipped with high-resolution cameras taking both video and still images, and internet connectivity allows records of wildlife spotted to be instantly reported to the relevant recording organisations. The more people that use these devices to do this whilst out watching wildlife, the greater our knowledge of what is out there will be.

As well as helping us identify the wildlife that we can see, smartphones could also assist with some that we very often cannot – bats. It is hard to think of

an animal that has been so re-habilitated in the eyes of the public. It has gone from regular appearances as an extra in horror films to being recognised as a valuable (and well protected) part of our native fauna. It is possible to see bats around dusk – if you know where to go – and this is a good time of year to do so, but identifying them by sight is very difficult. You could make an educated guess that the smallest bats that you see are one of the pipistrelles and some bats, such as Daubenton's, do have distinctive feeding behavior but, when darkness really falls, it is 'game over' for seeing them.

Those surveying bats have a reliable and accurate method of identifying them

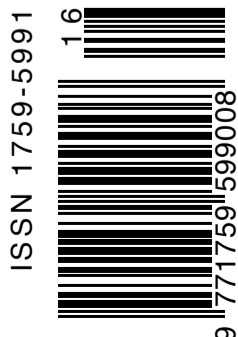
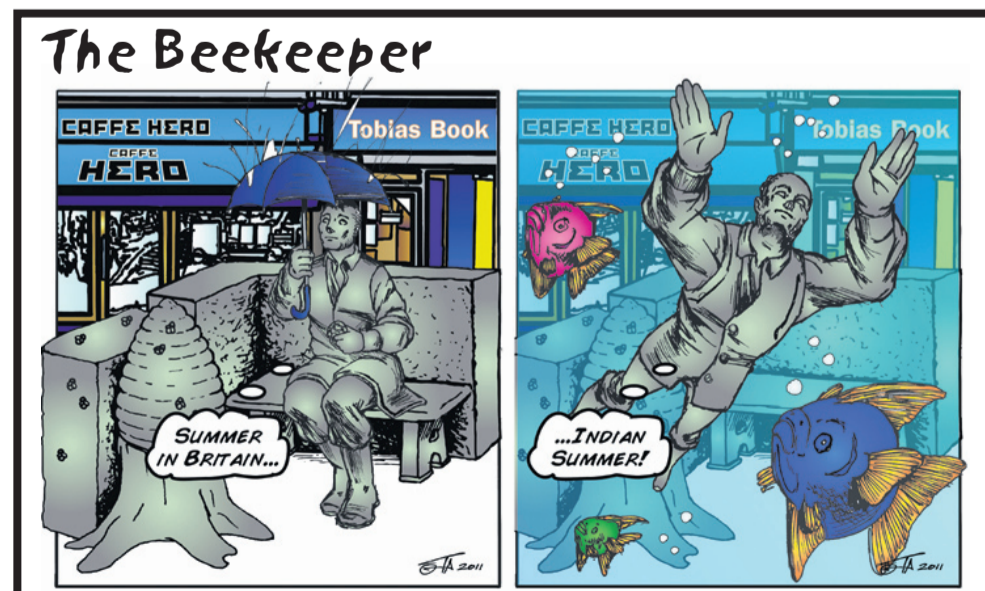
using a device commonly known as a 'bat box'. This takes the bat's echolocation signals, which are at a frequency inaudible to the human ear, and transposes them down to a level that is. Each species of bat has a distinctive pattern to these signals and can be identified from it with the more advanced types of this device analysing these signals and displaying which species is making them.

A 'bat box in your pocket' app could work very well on a smartphone. It would certainly help with identification for anyone who sees bats and has no idea what species they are, but the technology could go even further. Running the app in a passive but 'always

on' mode in the hours when bats are flying would alert users that bats are in the area even if they cannot see them as well as identifying which species are present. A link to recording websites and the use of global positioning information could result in literally thousands of bat surveys being conducted every night by phone users.

This kind of application may already exist but if it does not it ought to. Smartphone applications have great potential to widen understanding of wildlife and, if used widely, could help solve the most basic problem of its conservation – you can't protect wildlife unless you know where it is!

*Jack Smith
Local ecologist*



Thought for the Fortnight

Uncharted territory
WHEN we're lost in thought, could the reason be that we're on totally unfamiliar terrain?