

# Leisure

## Attenborough Weather Notes

### A visitor to Attenborough

#### Migration, Migration, Migration

IT doesn't seem so long ago that I was last talking about the subject of migration.

Then, the summer warblers, swifts and swallows were leaving us for their African over-wintering grounds and winter ducks and thrushes from Scandinavia and beyond were starting to arrive on the reserve (followed by one of the coldest winters on record). The more recent arrivals however, over the last week, bring with them the prospect of warmer weather on the horizon and signal the start of the spring migration.

#### Spring on the wing

The first spring arrivals are usually sand martins. They are the smallest of the European hirundines (martins and swallows) and come to the UK to breed following a 2000 mile journey from the Sahel, a region to the south of the Sahara desert, where most of them have been over-wintering. Look out on Coneries Pond over the next few weeks and you're sure to see them as they cruise above the water catching insects on the wing. They nest in tunnels that they excavate 45-90cm deep in the soft mud along the banks of the River Trent and on some of the islands within the nature reserve.

A single bird was spotted on the reserve on Friday, March 11 – almost a week earlier than last year, and followed by two more birds on Saturday.

As you walk around the reserve at the moment you might also hear the easily recognisable call of the chiffchaff (a kind of 'it does exactly what it says on the tin' song). This small olive-brown warbler is another of the early spring arrivals to the UK, and some birds that breed further north will have even over-wintered in the country in small numbers. It is not uncommon for the male chiffchaff to return to its breeding site two or three weeks before the female. On arrival, the males immediately start singing to establish ownership of the territory and to attract a female.

#### Waxwings drop by

For me, though, the biggest excitement over the last week had to be a flock of birds that were travelling northwards from the reserve (back to Scandinavia) with the arrival of about 150 waxwings in Attenborough village.

This rare winter visitor comes to the UK in small numbers each year, where their traditional winter habitat often includes supermarket car parks due to the frequent use of rowan trees (a favourite food

source for waxwings) in amenity planting schemes.

Very occasionally, waxwings come to the UK in larger numbers called irruptions – when a failure of berry crops in the bird's native Scandinavia forces them to seek food elsewhere. This winter has been regarded as one of those 'good' years (for birdwatchers) as thousands of waxwings have been reported across the length and breadth of the country.

#### Elsewhere on the reserve

There have been many other signs around the reserve that spring is on its way. The warm, sunny weather over the last week has encouraged insects such as the peacock and small tortoiseshell butterflies to take to the wing, along with a number of different bumblebee sightings around the reserve. Thirty heron nests were counted as part of the heronry census, and coots and long-tailed tits have since been observed nesting.

As many of the ground nesting birds at Attenborough Nature Reserve start to arrive over the next few weeks, we are now asking that all dogs are kept on leads at all times to avoid disturbance.

Tim Sexton  
Attenborough  
Nature Centre

## Rugby

### Nottingham ready to take on Bristol again at Meadow Lane

NOTTINGHAM Rugby will be hoping to get their promotion aspirations back on track this Sunday when they take on Bristol at Meadow Lane.

The Green and Whites suffered a heavy defeat at London Welsh last weekend, but a late fightback meant they at least came away with a bonus point.

Welsh put the game beyond them with a stunning spell just after the break, in which they scored 28 points without reply. However, the bonus point put Nottingham above Bristol – who got

nothing from their defeat at Worcester – in the Pool A table.

A win on Sunday could take them up to second place, but coach Glenn Delaney knows how big a challenge that will be.

"We've played Bristol three times this season, and each time they have posed a real threat," he said.

"They won't be pleased with where they finished and, as a big club with a big fan base, they will have a lot of pride in where this season takes them. We can't let that

motivation come to effect at Meadow Lane.

"Our form in Nottingham has been one of our strongest features and we know how important it is to take advantage of that. We know that on the road we can take something from every game, but at home we need more than that, starting this weekend."

Following Sunday's game, the Green and Whites will continue their promotion campaign against Worcester on Friday, March 25, also at Meadow Lane.

## Wildlife Watching

THE more observant amongst our readers will have spotted that there is no 'Wildlife Watching' column this week.

Sadly, Jack Smith's computer gave up the ghost and the column he was writing for this issue of *The Beeston Express* went the way of his computer, never to be seen or accessed again and all too late for him to start again.

Jack hopes that, by the time the next instalment is due, he will have rejoined the 21st century and have a replacement computer on which he can continue to keep us up-to-date with local Wildlife issues.



## 2nd Bramcote Scout Group

To raise funds to send a BRAMCOTE scout to the World Jamboree in Sweden, we're holding a

## SQUARE DANCE

March 26, 2011

St. Michaels Church Centre

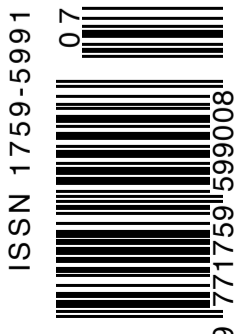
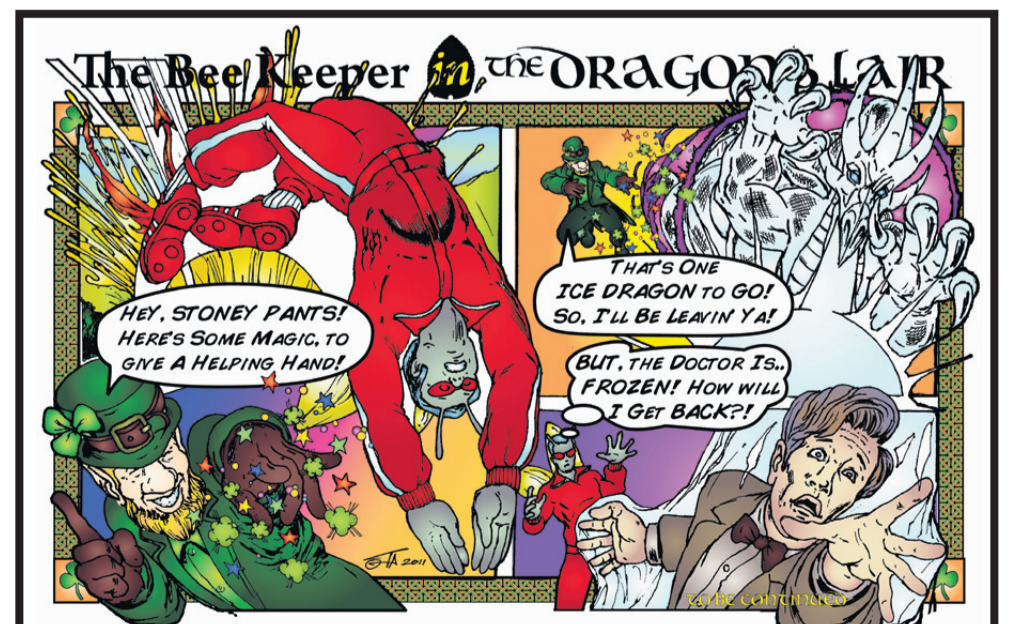
7.30 – 10.45

£4 child, £8 adult or £20 family ticket

Call 922 6782 or 925 9630 for tickets

Pie & peas included in ticket price

Squaredance caller: **David Huxley**



### Thought for the Fortnight

The government solution to any problem is usually at least as bad as the problem.

Milton Friedman