

# Express Leisure

## Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

*DESPITE the recent cold weather, trees are now beginning to come into leaf and soon any familiar local trees that have been lost or severely reduced through 'maintenance' over the winter will become all too apparent.*

The correspondent in the Letters page of February 29 who feels that "nature needs regular removal of certain planted items" may regard this as a good thing but he may have misunderstood the article which prompted his letter.

Maintenance of trees in both woodlands and in built up areas is sometimes necessary and can be good for both trees and the wildlife that they support. Restoration of coppicing and pollarding in woodlands can increase the diversity of habitats and the wildlife which uses them. Sensitive pruning of mature trees can increase their life. A good example of this is the common native Crack willow (*Salix fragilis*). The name says it all really - this tree has a tendency to break apart when it grows to a large size and this can hasten the death of the tree. Pruning back the heavier boughs can prevent this and help to extend the life of the tree, sometimes by many years.

Willows, perhaps better than any others, demonstrate the ability shared by most deciduous trees to re-grow from pruning or even from cutting down to a stump. This has long been exploited by man to produce wood for uses such as basket weaving, cricket bats and, more recently, biomass for fuel. Willows often re-grow quickly but many species do this more slowly - a severely pruned tree may take many years to re-grow to a point where it bears any resemblance to the tree before it was pruned.

Concern about this severe pruning, resulting in what was described as, "streets lined with totem poles" was one of the motivators of the campaign against the London 'chainsaw massacre'.

This is not confined to the capital - one does not have to look far to find evidence of it in Beeston, both in individual trees and sometimes on whole streets. For those responsible for these trees, this type of management has its attractions. The risk of claims resulting from fallen boughs or branches is much reduced since they are all removed, and maintenance costs are reduced because it will be many years before the trees re-grow to any size. In the meantime, though, especially in the early years, the benefits to both humans and wildlife are lost.

The combination of what seems at times almost paranoid risk aversion and the desire to save money are powerful drivers of this process. It does not have to be this way and the case of the trees on Canal Side in Beeston Rylands illustrates this. Here the pruning has typically been limited to the parts that were perceived to be causing a problem and the bulk of the tree has been retained. This, and re-growth around where branches have been pruned, will mean that much of the visual appeal of the trees and their value to wildlife will be either retained or restored in the first few years.

If this approach were more widely adopted, we could perhaps continue to enjoy our local trees at something like their best instead of the emasculated poles that are all too common. If you have trees on your land that you are thinking of pruning you could consider keeping this to a minimum and accepting that further maintenance may be needed in 10, rather than 20 plus, years.

If you are concerned about the fate of any tree or trees, then the system of Tree Preservation Orders, with all its shortcomings, is still the best way to protect them. District councils, who have an obligation to consider all applications, administer these orders. If granted, the orders not only protect the tree from felling but also require that permission be given for maintenance work.

The alternative may be that many of our urban trees are either cut back to bare trunks, which are ugly to the eye and virtually useless for wildlife, or are felled and lost forever.

Jack Smith  
Local ecologist

### Thought for the Fortnight

*AN angry man is seldom reasonable; a reasonable man is seldom angry*

## Rugby

### Green & Whites hope to see off the Saints

NOTTINGHAM face their biggest challenge of the season when they travel to Northampton Saints this weekend.

Saints booked their return to the Premiership last week with a win over second placed Exeter Chiefs. That gave the Green and Whites the opportunity to move level on points with Chiefs with a win over Cornish All Blacks at Meadow Lane, which went some way towards making up for the disappointment of their cup defeat at Exeter a week earlier.

It was also a significant landmark as Nottingham took their season's

point tally over the hundred mark for the first time since the league structure was introduced.

But it proved to be a struggle against a side fighting to avoid the drop. Matt Smith's injury time try gave them the all important bonus point, but the 26-12 final score flattered them.

Nottingham will need to return to the form that so nearly saw them cause an upset in the cup semi final.

With standing water down one side of the Sandy Park pitch it was difficult for players to keep their

feet. But both sides coped well with the conditions and deserve full marks for putting on a compelling cup tie, although those conditions had a big part to play in what proved to be the winning score for Chiefs.

Nottingham go to Northampton knowing they can cause the champions elect problems. When the sides met last November, they achieved a notable double, becoming the first side to deny Saints a bonus point and the first to gain a bonus point against them.

## Ice Hockey

### Not all according to Panthers plan *by Michael Chambers*

IT'S all over bar the shouting. Nottingham have secured third spot in the league which is acceptable, but not what the owner perhaps wanted with all the pre-season hype.

This position, and the knowledge that Panthers will play Cardiff Devils in the two legged quarter final Play-Off game, was known before last Saturday's (22<sup>nd</sup>) final and home league game versus Manchester Phoenix. The team were hopeful in going to the Play-Offs with a resounding win. However, the Lancashire outfit did not read the script.

Nottingham were looking the part in the first period, yet went one down at 14.30 (Adam Walker) before regrouping for an equaliser by 17.24

Mark Richardson taking advantage of an unmarked net. Manchester, however, picked up on the goal tally through top ace scorer Tallari in the middle period with a strike that caused the crowd to become uneasy with Panthers. Although the game meant nothing but pride, it was further goals by Ennaffati and Passmore that made it 1-4 and Panthers looked to be finishing the season on a low.

Thankfully Swede Patrik Wallenberg hit the target eight minutes from time. Then, as the Panthers put pressure on around the goal crease venturing for the elusive third goal, the Phoenix rearguard deliberately dislodged it in the final two minutes, but even an awarded

penalty shot could not help as 'Wally' missed this for a remaining last 36-second attack on the Phoenix netminder.

Penalties in the sin bin and scored goals on power plays were equal on the night but Manchester took the points and look forward to taking on Sheffield in the Play-Off quarters.

Other pairings are Coventry (League and Knock-Out Cup Champions) v Edinburgh and Newcastle v Cardiff over a two-legged (home and away) aggregate set of games over the weekend of March 29/30.

Finals are the following week at the local National Ice Centre. For tickets, contact the NIC box office.

