

Leisure

Rugby

Green & Whites regain form

AFTER that run of four straight defeats, Nottingham Rugby regained their form with a win against Birmingham and Solihull at Meadow Lane, and followed it up with a hard earned win at Plymouth last weekend.

They will be looking to build on those victories when they return to Meadow Lane this Sunday to entertain Rotherham Titans in a game that could see the return to action of Sione Kalamafoni. The Tongan No 8 completed a five-week ban recently following an incident at Rotherham, and was unavailable for the

Plymouth trip as he was on international duty. He could be joined in the squad by another international, centre Junior Sifa.

The American born Samoan joined the Green and Whites this week from Irish side Midleton and was impressed by the set-up at Nottingham.

“It’s great to be here,” he said. “The Meadow Lane stadium looks brilliant and the training facilities look great. I’m very much looking forward to getting involved here with a fantastic club.”

Sifa has represented the USA Eagles seven times and looks a strong candidate for their World Cup squad next year, along with Nottingham scrum half Tim Usasz.

With the British and Irish cup due to start soon, games are coming thick and fast and so Director of Rugby Glenn Delaney is pleased to increase his squad’s strength in depth.

“Injuries have struck us fairly hard this year,” he said. “Having the greatest depth possible will really help us push on over the second half of the season.”

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

THE still shortening days and uncertain weather at the moment mean that many may be choosing to do their wildlife watching without having to make an expedition to do so and, locally, Attenborough nature reserve is a popular choice.

Any visitor entering the reserve via Meadow Lane or Barton Lane would be able to observe (and hear) the impact that the floodwall scheme is having on its boundary. As well as access restrictions there has been wholesale destruction of wildlife habitats, which will result in long-term changes to parts of the reserve and permanent changes to the landscape. Now that they can see the impact of the scheme, even some of those who could benefit the most may question whether the destruction and cost involved in making a defence against something that might never happen is worthwhile.

As part of the floodwall scheme, a number of ‘mitigation’ wildlife habitat

creation projects have been started around the reserve. Although they will not be direct replacements for the habitats lost some, such as the creation of new reedbeds and reed swamps, could have huge benefits for wildlife, especially in areas like Coneries lagoon, where poor water quality has long made it one of the least valuable parts of the reserve for wildlife.

However, the potential benefits of some of the other mitigation schemes are less clear. There appears to be a plan to establish a ‘grazing area’ in the woodlands around the Delta area of the reserve. This is one of the longest-established parts of the reserve and has always been closed to the public. As a result, it is rich in wildlife and has been a site for bird recording and ringing. It is also the area where bittern and the reserve’s most recent star attraction – an otter – have been seen. Whoever came up with this idea may well see benefits to this ‘grazing’ plan, but they should be weighed

very carefully against the existing wildlife interest. Some would contend that the best way to preserve this would be to continue with the long-term strategy of minimal intervention.

Wheatear field

Having a long term objective is an essential part of any wildlife habitat management plan but does not seem to have had a part in the management of another area of the reserve which is hosting a ‘mitigation’ scheme – Wheatear field. If there were a national award for the most ‘tinkered with’ wildlife habitat, Wheatear field would have to be a strong contender!

Not that long ago, it was possible to access this area, which was then, as it had been for many years, grazed pasture. Grassy mounds that had been formed from the topsoil of surrounding gravel workings provided good vantage points to watch wildlife, and there were areas of mature hedgerow and scrub around the field, particularly by the waterside. Much of this, along with the grassy mounds and part of the field itself, was lost when an area of shallow water and mud banks – intended to attract waders – was constructed whilst more of the field was lost to a dipping pool. Some of the field remained and it was announced that this was to be a ‘wild flower meadow’. It was later reported that

Cricket

Annual presentation evening for Beeston and Toton Sycamore

BEESTON and Toton Sycamore Cricket Club recently held their annual end-of-season presentation dinner at Belle & Jerome in Beeston.

Following a fine three course meal, the following awards were made:

1st XI

Batsman of the Season

Rob Darby

Bowler of the Season

Dave Fawcett

Fielder of the Season

Steve James*

*Steve James was also received an award as leading wicket-keeper in Division G

2nd XI

Batsman of the Season

Ian Day

Bowler of the Season

Martin Huffer

Fielder of the Season

Mike Relf

3rd XI

Batsman of the Season

Dennis Wright

Bowler of the Season

Peter Manning

Sunday Newark Alliance

Player of the Season

Andy Burrell

Sunday Friendly

Player of the Season

Steve Goldson

Awards were also made to Jim Hamilton, Bob Daykin and, long overdue, to Pam Wright for their devotion to the club.

All members of the victorious T20 Tournament

received individual trophies and awards were also made to Dennis Burrell for Most Improved Player of the Season and to Lashuane Weir for Player of the Season. Andy Burrell received the Outstanding Achievement award.

The club would like to thank Rob Darby and the staff at Belle & Jerome for their kind sponsorship of this very well attended event. Thanks also go to Tony Beck for organising the event and to club captain Dave Hoon for hosting the event.

The club will begin their preparations for next season when winter nets start at Trent Bridge in January. Anyone who is interested in playing or helping off the pitch, please contact the club via the club website at www.sycamorecc.co.uk.

wheatears had returned to the field that had been named after them.

What the wheatears then did to offend the reserve’s management team isn’t clear, but it seems it was enough to induce them to remove their eponymous field in order to create a wet meadow habitat suitable, according to the publicity, for lapwing and common snipe.

As a result of this work, the last vestige of the sort of land that existed in the area before gravel extraction and which had survived whilst extraction surrounded it, has been lost. I cannot be alone amongst those whose love of the area dates back to before extraction

began in being saddened to see this small piece of local history ripped away by heavy machinery.

Anyone who has a long interest in the wildlife of Attenborough’s gravel pits will know the wildlife habitats which led to its original designation as a SSSI occurred through processes of natural succession with virtually no active habitat management. The current works at what was Wheatear field are the latest in a trend towards creating new habitats, convenient to the nature centre, which might attract exciting wildlife which will, in turn, attract more visitors. This is almost a ‘habitat zoo’

approach – as the ecologist on the Starship Enterprise might observe: “it’s conservation management, Jim, but not as we know it.”

There may come a time when all management works at Attenborough cease for long enough to see if the wildlife it is intended to attract actually materialises.

In the meantime, whilst the name ‘Attenborough’ may be a blessing to those marketing the reserve, to those who miss its wildness, freedom and peace in the years before the nature centre and its works, it looks more like a curse.

Jack Smith
Local ecologist



Thought for the Fortnight

Sometimes happiness makes you smile, but sometimes a smile makes you happy.

