

Leisure

Rugby

Understrength Green & Whites “well beaten”

THERE is no sense of panic in the Nottingham Rugby camp, despite two straight defeats and another couple of tough games on the horizon.

After narrowly losing out on what would have been a confidence-boosting win at Bristol, they were well beaten by Bedford

Blues at Meadow Lane last weekend.

They now face a trip to Worcester Warriors this Friday, before entertaining Cornish Pirates a week on Sunday. And they will go into those games without the services of ace goal kicker James Arlidge, who is on representative duty

with Japan.

Also missing are influential Tongan No 8 Sione Kalamafoni, who received a five week ban for an incident in the game up at Rotherham, and Spanish international full back Cesar Sempere, who broke a bone in his hand in that defeat at Bristol. But

Director of Rugby Glenn Delaney remains upbeat.

“This league is firstly all about getting into the top eight and taking the team forward for the playoffs, and a shot at promotion.

“Last year we had a fantastic start to the season but faded away towards the end due to having

exhausted players after a fixture pile up. That was what really seemed to halt our ambitions last season.

“This year we’ve had a more balanced start, but there have been many positives to come from it, including trying to protect our players more from injury and fatigue.

“From here, the clear way forward is to keep picking up points from all of our games and doing all that we can to solidify our place in the competition, and get in the good position we deserve to be in for the playoffs.”

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

Beeston – bad for birds?

A letter, which appeared in a recent edition of the Express, from a reader who had recently moved to Beeston and was disappointed at the number of birds that she saw here, certainly elicited a swift response from one reader who offered advice and a helping hand help with attracting birds to her garden. I am sure that she was not only Beeston resident who felt a little bruised local pride – is Beeston really bad for birds?

For most of its inhabitants the answer would be ‘no’. Beeston is fringed with areas of good bird habitat and, although the number is steadily diminishing, it still has many mature trees in built up areas. This

should help to bring birds into gardens, but there are a number of other factors which may affect the diversity and numbers that can be attracted.

An initial point for this year is that the last, very cold, winter has meant that fewer birds survived until spring. Even so, it appears that this has been a good breeding year for many species so numbers should be recovering. Another point to remember is that, in summer, garden feeding is a secondary food source for many birds, the use of which may be governed by the number of suitable nest sites in the area. If you have mature trees, shrubs, hedgerows or ivy in your own or neighbouring gardens, it will increase the chance of food put out in summer being used by birds

nesting nearby. Installing nest boxes in suitable locations offers another chance to attract your own ‘resident’ birds.

Another useful feature of trees and shrubs is the cover they offer for birds that are feeding in gardens. This is becoming increasingly important as Beeston’s population of sparrowhawks expands. They are the most serious natural predation of garden birds and are more common around the town than some might imagine. They have learned that gardens in which birds are being fed present good feeding opportunities for themselves and that features such as the spaces between houses can assist their ‘ambush’ hunting methods. Gardens that lack any sort of cover will tend to be less attractive to birds even if a lavish variety of food is offered.

Feed the birds

There is now a huge range of bird food on the market and, for anyone who is keen enough (and has deep enough pockets), there is the chance to experiment with them to find which are most successful in bringing birds in to their

garden. Although a covered food table can help keep food dry and provide some protection from attack and hanging feeders with a variety of seeds and nuts are good for certain birds others, such as doves, thrushes and blackbirds, are just as happy taking food on the ground. Feeding them in this way may not, however, be the best option if your neighbourhood has a high population of the other major predator of garden birds – the domestic cat!

The availability of water, either in a pond or a birdbath, is something that

will help to attract birds but is also something that, if sited in an exposed position, can leave them vulnerable to aerial or moggie attack.

One reason our reader might be seeing fewer birds in Beeston than in her previous residence is its location in east Kent. That area would be on the migration route of some birds which may use Kent gardens as a ‘re-fuelling stop’. As well as familiar migrants, this could also include species which are regarded as resident garden birds – some of these do migrate to and from the

European mainland.

If this is the case, then it may be that Beeston would not be able to compete on either the variety or numbers of birds with those in the east Kent area.

Although there are many things that can be done to make gardens more attractive to birds none of them guarantee success. Let’s hope, though, that more or Beeston’s birds can find their way to the garden of our new arrivals – they will doubtless receive a warm welcome if they do!

Jack Smith
Local ecologist



Thought for the Fortnight

Be happy with what you have. If you spend your time looking for greener pastures, you might find you're too old to climb the fence.

