

Leisure

Rugby

Free coaching for budding rugby players

CASUALS Rugby Football Club has become Broxtowe Borough Council's third 'Sporting Satellite Club' for kids.

The Nottingham Casuals continue to represent and support the local community of Beeston by becoming the third of the council's 'satellite' clubs, which means that the club can now offer free coaching to local schoolchildren in the hope they can be introduced to the great sport of rugby.

On Thursday nights from November 7 until December 5, the club will run coaching sessions for children aged between school Years 4 and 9 (ages 8 to 14) from 6pm until 7pm at the Casuals rugby ground, just off Canalside, Beeston Rylands.

Casuals spokesman Bryn Lewis said: "Children of any shape and size can play and previous experience of rugby is not required. All are welcome and there is no cost. And there will be

hot dogs in the clubhouse afterwards as well!"

He added: "All you need to bring is warm clothes (which WILL get muddy!), boots and something to drink. The coaching sessions are open to existing players as well."

Training Nights

The full diary of training nights, 6pm to 7pm, is:

- Thursday, November 7, 14, 21, 28,
- Thursday, December 5

Nottingham Rugby Club announces operational changes

AS the search for new investment continues at Nottingham Rugby Club, Chairman Alistair Bow recently announced some personnel changes to strengthen the commercial team.

Chris Simon has been appointed as Operations Director. He will be responsible for managing the day-to-day off field operations and continuing the work he started last season to enhance the match day experience and driving commercial sales. Chris will be assisted with marketing activity by Nik Emmonds, who will provide the main

interface between the club and the local and national media. Nottingham Rugby announced two further changes – the promotion of Mel Lawson to Commercial Executive and the appointment of Rob Pearce as Community Manager.

Mel Lawson, 22, has been with the club for four years and already has a wealth of experience.

Rob Pearce, 22, started volunteering for the club last season, taking on pitch-side activities on match day. Commenting on the change, Chairman Bow said: "We recognised that we needed

to make some changes but without incurring any additional cost. The club is still in need of investment and we wanted to free up some of Chief Executive Simon Beatham's time to help us do this, but without disrupting the operational side. Chris has been involved with Nottingham Rugby for the past three years and has a sound understanding of how the business side is run. He knows our sponsors, has been instrumental in our growth off the field and I have every confidence that he'll be able to combine his existing marketing duties with a more operational role."

Wildlife Watching

Local news and views of the natural world

THE recent series of 'Autumnwatch' – part of the series of seasonal wildlife programmes that are now a regular and welcome part of the BBC's schedules, once again gave wildlife enthusiasts a wealth of information on what to look out for at this time of year.

In addition to this, with hi-tech night vision technology, we were able to see some stunning images of things we could never see naturally.

The team of presenters has settled down with Michaela Strachan – using presentation skills honed over umpteen other programmes – holding things together through Chris Packham's (still too infrequent) professorial contributions and the puppy-dog enthusiasm of his understudy, Martin Hughes-Games.

It fell to the latter to address an issue that has been a stripy-faced elephant in the corner throughout the 'watch' series of programmes. In many of these, badgers have featured prominently or even been the 'stars of the show' to the delight of viewers, but the thing that might concern badger lovers the most – culling – has barely had a mention.

In the latest series, Mr Hughes-Games gave us an account of the historical relationship between humans and badgers including baiting and their subsequent legal protection.

Although being careful not to even refer to the cull, by just associating badgers with bovine tb, this report helped to do the work of the pro-culling lobby whose

best chance of convincing the public of a link between badgers and bovine tb is to ensure that these words are said together as often as possible.

Studio shots of Chris Packham in a discussion after this was aired saw him stony faced and silent. This, and the selection of his sidekick to do the badger piece, is perhaps not surprising given views he expressed on twitter at the start of the current badger culling operation:

"It is both sad and shameful that when night falls and the setts of southern England stir, their gentle folk will be needlessly slaughtered. That in spite of science and public will, the wrath of ignorance will further bloody and bleed our countryside of its riches of

life. That brutalist thugs, liars and frauds will destroy our wildlife and dishonour our nation's reputation as conservationists and animal lovers."

He added that last night (the first night of the cull) was the "darkest for British wildlife that we have witnessed in our lives" and that he felt "sick, sad, disempowered, betrayed, angry and crushed by the corruption of all that I know as right."

These strong words from one of our most respected naturalists will have a resonance for many. He also made a statement to the effect that, as the badger cull has nothing to do with wildlife conservation, very little to do with science and everything to do with political policy, he would not be covering it any way in the 'watch' programmes – a position endorsed by the show's producers.

The issue of culling does, however, receive extensive exposure on the Autumnwatch website which contains numerous links containing information that could persuade even the most enthusiastic supporters of badger culling of its futility.

As culling is carried out in the current operations in Gloucestershire and Somerset, any scientific justification for it has left the scene faster than a badger fleeing the hunter's guns.

Gone to ground

The design of the cull stipulated that these hunters had to shoot 70 percent of the badger population but, even after extensions of its duration, they have been unable to reach this figure. This has led to claims of overestimates of badger numbers as well as suspicions there may have been some 'unofficial' culling before the operation proper and that this may also be happening in other parts of the country.

The bizarre reaction of the Environment minister, Owen Paterson, to this was to claim that the badgers themselves had "moved the goalposts". In a much more sinister development, he has also suggested that in future badgers may be gassed in their setts. This is something that has occurred in the past using a cyanide-based gas. Because of the prospect of a lingering death for its victims and

its wider environmental toxicity, this substance was banned many years ago and there is currently nothing that is licensed for this use – something one might expect the Environment minister to know.

The badger cull has become a grisly fiasco unable to fulfill its dubious scientific or even its practical objectives – such as saving money by shooting 'free running' badgers.

With the cost of killing badgers in this way during the cull estimated at more than £1000 each, it would have been cheaper to vaccinate them. Using vaccination to eliminate bovine tb in badgers, then studying its incidence in cattle over areas where it is currently rife, may be the best way to learn what, if any, role badgers really have in the spread of the disease – as well as being so much more humane than the bullet or the gas chamber!

Jack Smith
Local ecologist

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Thought for the Fortnight

WE all make mistakes and we all have our own ways of covering them up. Builders cover theirs with ivy and chefs cover theirs with mayonnaise.

Cover your mistake with a smile, and no-one will know you ever made it.