

Pictures: MATTHEW USHER



DES RES FOR FEATHERED FRIENDS: Thomas Spencer puts a nesting box in place at the nature reserve at Pensthorpe. He and other nature-lovers hope that families will follow suit.

NORFOLK

Box clever and you'll be doing the birdies a favour

Norfolk's bird-lovers have been urged to help their feathered friends find a home for springtime during National Nest Box Week.

The severe conditions of the past two months have left many of our native species weak as they have struggled for food among frozen fields and foliage.

And a longer-term loss of natural habitat has driven many birds towards domestic gardens in their search for somewhere to live.

Experts at Norfolk nature reserves say that putting up a nest box is the simplest thing that people can do to help their winged neighbours to flourish.

What's more, it could give families an interesting activity for the school half-term holidays.

National Nest Box Week, the annual campaign organised by the Bedford-

By CHRIS HILL

based British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), began yesterday and will run until Sunday.

Thomas Spencer, a warden and tour guide at Pensthorpe Nature Reserve, near Fakenham, said: "Increasingly, birds are finding it hard to find natural nesting sites, and the simplest thing you can do as a garden owner is to put up a nest box.

"If you added up all the private gardens in the country, you would have a massive area – essentially a giant nature reserve – which has become a very important area for all wildlife."

Mr Spencer said changes in house-building methods, loss of hedgerows, the decline of ponds and the clearing of rotten timber had all contributed to the loss of Britain's bird habitats.

He added that the half-term timing of National Nest Box Week provided an ideal opportunity to involve children in the conservation scheme.

"It is very important to get kids interested in wildlife while they are young and responsive: you cannot care about something you don't know about," said Mr Spencer.

Pensthorpe itself has more than 200 nest boxes, attracting everything from blue tits to barn owls.

It has introduced nest box trails and talks and is offering a free bird box to anyone spending more than £20 on wildlife items in the reserve shop. Meanwhile, at the nearby Sculthorpe Moor Nature Reserve, the St Valentine's Day launch of the campaign saw two pairs of courting tawny owls settling into purpose-built boxes.

Hopes are high that eggs could be

laid within the next few weeks, which could mean views of young chicks can be relayed through miniature cameras on the boxes to the reserve's education centre.

Leanne Thomas, education manager for the Hawk and Owl Trust, which manages the reserve, said: "This is a lovely opportunity for visitors to the reserve to see the private life of these beautiful birds."

REVIEW

No wonder his career has been going on for so long

Paul Carrack
Theatre Royal, Norwich.

How Long Has This Been Going On? So sang one of those greats of the past 40 years, a performer in the same league as Van Morrison, Phil Collins and Jools Holland, as a packed house rocked along.

From rock-jazz fusion in the early 70s to hit groups Ace and Roxy Music, through Squeeze in the 80s and with Pink Floyd's Roger Waters, to Mike Rutherford in Mike and the Mechanics, Carrack progressed to a solo career where his total eclectic background was given full rein.

Wearing trademark dark glasses and backed by a six-piece band and female singer who were impeccable, Carrack showed his versatility in singing and in playing guitars and keyboards in numbers ranging from Loving You Tonight to I Don't Want to Hear Any More, Love in the Nick of Time, Eyes of Blue and Who Am I?

And he gave us hits he had written for others, such as Love Will Keep Us Alive, and for himself: If I Didn't Love You, Just For Tonight, Silent Running, Another Cup of Coffee, Over My Shoulder, Everybody Gets a Second Chance.

Carrack sings of love. Highlight was the classic, lump-in-the-throat regret-lament of what a man wished he'd said to his father when he was alive: The Living Years.

When he returns, don't wish you'd seen him: go and enjoy.

David Porter

Did you miss it? All the latest what's on listings on www.edp24.co.uk/whatson and in the EDP Event supplement, which now appears every Thursday.

TAKE THESE TIPS...

- Nest boxes should be positioned between 1.5m and 5m from the ground.
- Robins use open-fronted nest boxes and prefer them to be low to the ground and concealed behind vegetation.
- Don't place nest boxes of the same type too close together as neighbouring birds can become aggressive.

- Try to ensure that the entrance to the box is sheltered from prevailing winds, rain and strong sunlight.
- Angle the front of your nest box vertically or slightly downwards to prevent rain getting in.
- Don't place your nest box near bird feeders or bird



- tables, as visiting birds can disturb nesting pairs.
- Do not clean nest boxes between August 1 and January 31.
- For more information and advice about how to make your own nest box, visit the website www.bto.org/nnbw

FAKENHAM

Developers' vision of new affordable homes

Developers have submitted plans to build 24 affordable houses on land next to a water tower at Fakenham.

Proposals put forward on behalf of Pigeon Investment Management include landscaping, parking, gardens and a road alongside the Anglian Water tower in Holt Road.

Most of the planned buildings on the 0.7-hectare site are two-storey terraces, which would continue the existing line of housing along one of

the main routes into the town centre. If the plans are approved, a smaller, redundant tower would be demolished to make room for semi-detached houses and bungalows designed with access for people with disabilities.

A statement from the developers says the designs were formulated after considerable discussion with North Norfolk District Council officers and county highways

officers. It says the plans are in line with district development policies that have earmarked Fakenham as one of the district's best opportunities for accommodating new homes.

The statement says the proposed scheme would have a distinctive character and would make a positive contribution to the townscape, with local people benefiting directly from the extra affordable homes built.

Eastern Daily Press Reader Travel

Half Board!

Seven Cities of Italy

Includes all escorted visits & evening meals!

Flying direct from Norwich Departs May, Jun, Sept & Oct 2010

The romantic city of Venice, Rome and Juliet's Verona, the Renaissance city of Florence and Italy's spectacular capital Rome, are just some of the wonderful places visited on this great value eight-day grand tour of seven of Italy's finest cities.

Includes • Return specially chartered flights to Italy direct from Norwich • 3 nights' half-board at the 3★ Bristol Hotel in Riva Del Garda • 4 nights' half-board at the 3★ Hotel Minerva in Chianciano Terme, Tuscany • Return airport to hotel transfers • Escorted visits, to Verona, Venice, Assisi, Rome, Florence, Siena and San Gimignano • Tour Manager services

8 days from £719.00

DISNEY



Bank Holiday Magic at Disneyland® Paris

Departs April, May & August 2010

Whether it's the thrilling rides and attractions, the chance to meet some of your favourite Disney Characters, or simply the magical atmosphere of it all, Disneyland® Paris will capture and amaze children of all ages!

Includes • Return coach travel and Channel crossings • Two nights' B&B at a three-star hotel within easy reach of Disneyland® Paris • One day pass to Disneyland® Park or Walt Disney Studios® Park • The services of a representative

3 days from £149.95 Adults £109.00 Kids



The Bulbfields and Florales

Departs 22 April 2010

The highlights are a visit to the famous Keukenhof Gardens & the Florales of Ghent exhibition, held only once every five years. A colourful springtime break!

Includes • Return coach travel from the local area • Return Channel crossings • Three nights' bed and continental breakfast accommodation in a three-star hotel • A visit to Keukenhof Gardens • A visit to 'Florales' horticultural show • A visit to Ghent • A visit to Bruges • The services of a Tour Manager

4 days from £239.00

You can now make your booking online at: www.newmarket.travel/nor

For brochures & bookings call quoting Advert Code NOR: 0844 391 2198

Mon-Fri 9am-7pm • Sat 9am-4pm Sun 10am-2pm (calls charged at local rate)

request a brochure online: www.newmarketbrochures.co.uk/nor

Organised by Newmarket Promotions A/T Holidays Ltd
ABTA V7674/V7612 • ATOL Protected 325