

“All Go” on Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve

A lot of nature conservation work has to be done in winter when there are no nesting birds to disturb. Annual plants will have set their seeds and died back, leaves will have dropped making scrub easier to clear.

During January, visitors and those people lucky enough to have a view over Troopers Hill, will have seen a team from Bristol City Council’s Parks department working their way around specific spots on Troopers Hill removing scrub (very young trees, bramble and invasive plants). This work is guided by the conservation management plan for the site. Similar tasks are carried out every winter to weaken and eradicate plants that are invading the important acid grassland and heathland on which many wildlife species depend.

Another team were also hard at work. Thanks to National Lottery players, money from a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant was used to pay for contractors from Green Mantle Ecosophy Ltd to address the highest priority conservation tasks identified in the conservation management plan. This involved cutting back an area of woodland that was spreading into the grass and heath areas, removing an area of broom and scrub where the broom was becoming too vigorous and removing about a third of an area of gorse that had spread significantly since just a few gorse plants were recorded in the 1990s. The contractors will be back in summer to cut back gorse that has regenerated, with the aim of weakening it further.

Meanwhile, the Friends of Troopers Hill carried out their usual two work parties of the month and were delighted to welcome new faces to their first conservation work party of the year. Their work focused mainly on cutting out individual small trees, broom and gorse plants where they had self-seeded in the grass and heathland areas. Particularly attention was paid to the bare patch on Troopers Hill’s south-facing slopes that is so important to a wide range of mining bees when they want to lay their eggs. ParkWork were also there on their monthly visit, working with the Friends.



Friends of Troopers Hill and ParkWork following up with manual work the earlier cutting done with machines by Bristol City Council.

The next HLF funded activity we will see starting on the Troopers Hill Rd boundary is the replacement of sections of the rotting wooden fence and gates. All this work forms part of the Troopers Hill Ways to Nature project which is described in more detail on the Friends website www.troopers-hill.org.uk/waystonature/

Meetings are an important way for the Friends to share news of what is planned and for local people to say what they want to happen on Troopers Hill. The next meeting, open to all, is on Thursday 7th February at 7.15pm in the back room of Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd, BS5 8LB. Those who cannot attend can sign up to the Friends free emailing list <http://tinyurl.com/fothmail> or come along to any of the twice monthly conservation work parties which always end with hot drinks and discussion.

There is a conservation work party on the 1st Saturday and 3rd Thursday of every month, starting promptly at 10am and finishing at noon. The volunteers meet by the red slide on Troopers Hill Field.