

## Troopers Hill – for Wildlife and People

Sadly our Saturday conservation work party for February had to be cancelled due to the ice and snow on the ground but the snow provided great enjoyment to many visitors on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> February.



Orange paint marks appeared later in February on the ground at entrances to the Hill from Troopers Hill Rd. These marked some of the positions for replacement gates and fencing, funded, like the invertebrates surveys and this year's events on Troopers Hill, by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Valentine's Day was particularly special on Troopers Hill this year. There were nearly perfect conditions for star gazing. The Bristol Astronomical Society volunteers brought their telescopes and helped 25 people who had booked places via Friends of Troopers Hill to find their way around the night sky. They saw many delights - The Great Orion nebula (M42), The Pleiades star cluster (M45), The Andromeda Galaxy (M31), the moon, double and triple star clusters, and Mars, to name just a few.

The sight of the cratered moon produced quite a few exclamations of 'ooh!', 'ah!' and 'wow!', especially (but not only) from the younger visitors.

Troopers Hill is one of the sites across Bristol that is benefiting from a project called "Future Proof Parks". This project is aimed at involving young people in parks and the Friends were delighted to guide two of Troopers Hill Young Rangers around the Hill in February. The Young Rangers are receiving a range of training with the support of Groundwork who received funding to run this project thanks to National Lottery players. They will then work on projects that they select and involve other young people.

Large queen bumblebees are starting to appear on Troopers Hill and in local gardens. They are looking for pollen and nectar for their own nourishment but also to help them prepare to lay their first sixteen eggs which will develop into worker bumblebees. After the workers are fully developed they will continue the work of food gathering while the queen continues to lay eggs that will develop into workers, males and queens. There are 25 species of bumblebee in the UK, 8 have been recorded on Troopers Hill.

During March you might spot a visitor with a large sweep net collecting different species around the Hill. This will be entomologist, David Gibbs, who will be carrying out four invertebrate survey visits to Troopers Hill through the year and compiling a report at the end of the year. The last of David's three previous surveys was in 2007 so this survey will give a snapshot of which invertebrates are here now. We are hoping that he will find *Nomad guttulata*, a very rare mining bee that behaves like a cuckoo, laying its eggs in another bee's nest. This was last recorded on Troopers Hill in 2000.

On Saturday 9th March Friends of Troopers Hill (FoTH) will have a stand at the St George Community Fair in St Aidan's Church Hall on Fir Tree Lane between 11am and 2pm on Saturday 9th March. There will be a display and members of the FoTH committee will be there ready to share information or answer any questions.

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