

VOL. 1 ISSUE 1 • MAR 2023

# SUPER TROOPER

Newsletter of Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve



## Bringing the community together

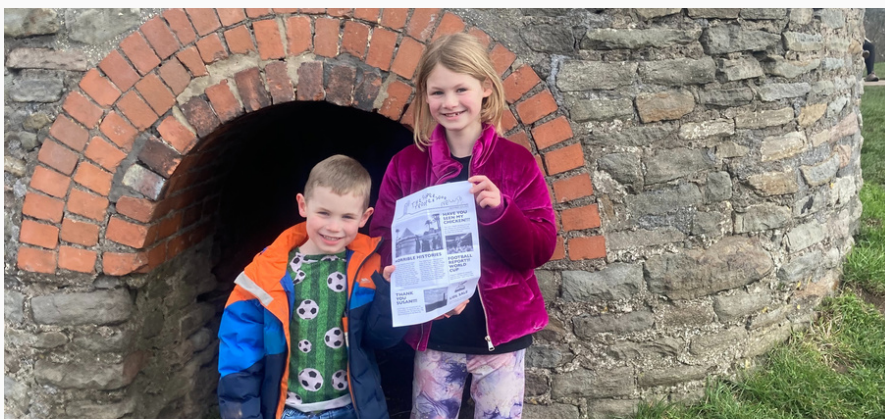
BY SUSAN ACTON-CAMPBELL

In December 2022, Nina (age 9) and Arley (age 6) created their own newsletter, "The Super Trooper" to celebrate the Hill. This inspired me to ask Ruth to volunteer as Editor of a new printed newsletter.

Nina and Arley were more than happy to let us use "Super Trooper" to christen our new newsletter. "Abba was the inspiration, and it felt right as the Hill is such a brilliant place for everyone", Nina explains.

The previous quarterly newsletter finished at the end of 2015 when the volunteer editor of "The Hill", Kit Elliott, moved away. We hope this new newsletter will help further strengthen connections, as well as inspire you to get involved with many of the activities on the Hill.

We'd love to know what you think so please get in touch with the Editor with your comments.



## Editorial

BY RUTH SEMPLE



My friend Lauren recently said that the Hill should be called 'Troopers Heal' due to its healing powers. It's been a major part of my healing journey having been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia.

In the early days of the diagnosis, it was challenging to get out onto the Hill, but I always did. It soothed and calmed me so it was a no-brainer to volunteer as Editor!

It felt fitting that wellbeing should be the theme of this edition. I hope you enjoy it! Please get in touch with any comments or ideas for future editions.

0117 336 4015



## The healing power of birds

BY RUTH SEMPLE AND DUNCAN EVERED

### It all started with a Pipit

During a camping holiday in Scotland when I was a wee kid, a Meadow Pipit flew out from its nest. This was my so-called 'spark bird'. The beauty of this encounter and the richness of finding its nest tucked away in the heather really inspired me. The awe and excitement of natural discovery has never left me. I owe my parents so much for taking us camping so often, and allowing me to connect with nature in my own way.

### The not-so-illusive Dartford Warbler

When we had our first Friends' bird walk recently, I told people there's this amazingly rare bird wintering on the hill. But it's a tiny little warbler that sits deep in the gorse so we're not going to see it. We were in the gully talking about volunteer projects and lo and behold, it suddenly flew directly over us. I completely lost it! I often wonder when we experience these special encounters, if there are other things at play. It felt like this warbler sought us out! Appreciative of the recent habitat management, perhaps?



### Birdsong and Mindfulness

It's a wonderful thing to allow bird sounds to wash over you. The song of the Robin is fascinating because of the big intervals it jumps over, and the complex and variable phrases within it. Spectrographs are beautiful visualisations of bird sounds, and I love looking at what the Robin sings. Some species develop their song repertoires by thieving tunes from other species -just like composers borrow from others. I love the idea of birds fooling birders by mimicking other species!

**"The more you listen, the more you are able to clear your mind and immerse yourself in natural soundscapes."**

Duncan grew up near Troopers Hill, and as a child he loved looking for birds in the rubble area, lightly covered with scrub that is now Crews Hole Woodland. Duncan now lives in Corvallis, Oregon, having spent 21 years directing the Malheur Biological Field Station on the Malheur NWR in SE Oregon.



Listening to birdsong and thinking about the context of their songs can be a mindful experience. Most birders just identify birds by song and move on, but to me it's more interesting to pause and ponder; 'Why do birds sing?' Is it singing against another Robin? Is there another Robin faintly audible? Very often there is, so they may literally be duelling. The more you listen, the more you are able to clear your mind and immerse yourself in natural soundscapes which can be incredibly relaxing and rewarding. Immersion in nature should be part of the routine human experience.

### The Magic of the Hill

Troopers Hill remains very special to me. I have lived in, and visited, some amazing wild places around the world, such as the high Canadian Arctic - places where access is only by helicopter - but I still find the Hill absolutely alluring. As a teen, I attended Speedwell School just up the road. I'd often skip the registration period, running to Troopers Hill just to spend 15 mins there, then frantically running to school to make the first lesson! This inspiring place still persists and is enhanced because local people care about it. And the Hill continues to work its magic on people - even if they don't realise it.

#### Tips for listening to birdsong

Find a safe, comfortable place as far away from human noise as you can. Little Elizabeth's bench on the hill is a good spot.

Don't generate noise yourself, be physically still.

Close your eyes. Robbing our brains of visual input opens up our other senses, such as hearing.

Give it time. Don't worry about who's making the sounds, think about where they are coming from. It doesn't matter if you don't know what the bird is, that can come later. Focus on building the soundscape in your mind.

Enjoy it. The birds are actively creating a soundscape for themselves to do their social business - tuning into their world helps connect us with our natural world.

## Events

Drop in Gazebo  
Troopers Hill Field

**2.30-5PM, 2 APRIL**

Crews Hole History Walk

**10.30AM, 7 MAY**

Drop in Gazebo  
Troopers Hill Field

**2.30-5PM, 7 JULY**

### CONSERVATION WORK PARTIES

Would you like to offer your time to help maintain the mosaic of habitats needed by the wildlife of the Hill's heathland?

We offer a friendly welcome, tools, gloves and guidance during a two hour nature conservation work party. It's a great way to meet people and connect with nature.

Most of our work involves cutting back scrub that is threatening this area of acid grassland and heathland.

**Call Susan on  
0117 9475037  
for more information**





## Welcome to the Neighbourhood!

INTERVIEW BY RUTH SEMPLE

*"It took two years to photograph this gosling! We befriended this goose family when they were young. To gain their trust, we fed them for the whole year, and did so again the following year. When they had their babies, we started feeding them too. The geese began to see us as part of the family so when someone would pass by when we were sitting with them, the parents would start attacking them to protect us!"*

Karol and Krystian are 'Boys in Bristol Photography'. Two friends passionate about capturing magical places where the city meets nature.

Having previously worked as carers in nursing homes, they noticed how many of their immobile patients had photos of city parks on their walls. Through their Bristol Parks Project, they hope to give people who are housebound the opportunity to experience parks they were once able to visit, supporting their wellbeing.

Photography has also helped Karol and Krystian maintain their mental health. Karol explains how the process supports him 'to take a breath, and be present; to step back and appreciate the beauty around us'. Krystian also finds that being behind the camera helps him to 'slow down and be mindful'.

They feel very grateful to have the Hill on their doorstep as it's been critical for their wellbeing. After Karol would finish a 12 hour night shift at the care home, he would walk to Troopers Hill; watch the sunrise, rest and rejuvenate.

When Krystian first moved here from Poland, he'd been a taxi driver, working long nights, six days a week. 'Troopers Hill heals me. When I first came here, I couldn't walk far. I'd manage 120m but then I would need to stop to breathe. Karol and I started walking over the Hill every day. The steps from bottom to the top used to be my nemesis, but eventually I managed it and I can now run up the Hill if I want to!'

Karol and Krystian are both inspired by the passion of the people looking after the Hill and want to be a part of this effort. Watch this space for more photos of the Hill as part of their Parks project!

[WWW.BOYSINBRISTOL.CO.UK/BLOG/BRISTOL-PARKS-PROJECT/](http://WWW.BOYSINBRISTOL.CO.UK/BLOG/BRISTOL-PARKS-PROJECT/)

