

Bristol Naturalists' Society - Field meeting report

Troopers Hill, Sunday 22 August – led by Maico Weites

On a sunny Sunday six of us from the Bristol Naturalists' Society and the Friends of Troopers Hill got together to scour Troopers Hill in St George for invertebrates and learn more about them.

Troopers Hill is a rather unusual place within the wider Bristol Area as it is one of the few places that due to its geology and historic industrial use, supports acid grassland and heath. The presence of this calcifuge flora comprising species such as Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) and Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) means we could also find invertebrates here that are rare in our neck of the woods.

We started off combing through the acid grassland in the northeast corner of the reserve. Here we found species such as Long-winged Conehead (*Conocephalus fuscus*), Roesel's Bush-cricket (*Roeseliana roeselii*). However, their distinctive high-pitched songs weren't audible to all of us anymore. Some other species in the grassland included Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug (*Aelia acuminata*) and Lucerne Bug (*Adelphocoris lineolatus*).

When we got to the heath and broom scrub we quickly got more interesting species in our hands and nets. We quickly found our first Broom Treehopper (*Gargara genistae*) by beating Broom. This insect may be abundant on Troopers Hill but there are only a few records of the species west of London. Other Broom specialists included the weevils *Andrion regensteinense* and *Exapion fuscirostre*. The heather was a source of the specialist heteropteran bugs *Kleidocerys ericae* and *Orthotylus ericetorum*. The flowering heather was also very popular with the bees although these seemed to be mainly Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) and the occasional bumblebee, including a big fresh Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris audax*) queen.

Bristletails were also present amongst the heath. The species present here appeared to be *Dilta hibernica*. These scaly "primitive" insects are very understudied and we still have much to learn about their life history and distribution.

We spent a good few hours in the sun and we recorded at least 84 species.

Some other notable mentions include the blind springtail *Cyphoderus albinus* that lives in ant nests (common but not often recorded), the ant *Formica cunicularia* (in the UK mainly coastal, prefers open vegetation), the Sieve-winged Snailkiller Fly (*Coremacera marginata*), and the empid fly *Rhamphomyia variabilis*.



Naturalists in their natural habitat