

Fairytale Fungi on Troopers Hill

Troopers Hill, St George's only Local Nature Reserve, is home to a fascinating range of fungi. One fairly common species found there is the red and white toadstool, fly agaric, which features in many children's fairy tales. Friends of Troopers Hill always try to make sure they have found one ready to show any visiting school parties. The most bored child starts to pay attention when confronted with this scarlet fungus.



If your child has been one of our visitors I am sure they will tell you this fungus is poisonous. Whether they will remember the French name "tue-mouches" (kills flies) is another matter. This was, in fact, one of its uses; crushed in milk it was used to attract and kill flies.

Fungi can be an indicator of the quality of a site. Sites are given a CHEG rating based on a point scored for each species found. Troopers Hill, for an urban site, is of good quality.

As October passes more and more colourful fungi can be seen, but only by those who look carefully. There will a range of waxcaps appearing in bright red and yellow, the snowy waxcap appears in a very pure white. Yellow "tentacles" will be visible amongst the short grass.

Brown roll rims grow near some of the birch trees on Troopers Hill. These are probably the biggest fungus you will see on Troopers Hill, sometimes as much as 8 inches (20cm) across. These are very

poisonous, containing toxins that will build up in the system and may not kill you the first time you eat them.

While there are some fungi on Troopers Hill that are not poisonous we would point out that the area is heavily used by dogs which may have “flavoured” them. Photos are not enough to identify a fungus. To be safe you really need an expert to advise you. From 2005-2013 the amazing, Bristol-based mycologist, Justin Smith led Fungi Forays for us, writing reports of his finds. Sadly Justin died in 2014 but the Justin Smith Foundation has been set up under the wing of the Avon Wildlife Trust. The Foundation’s aim is to inspire, inform and educate about fungi, lichens and lower plants.

Friends of Troopers Hill will be holding a Fungi Foray on Troopers Hill on Sunday 5th November led by John and Doreen Bailey from the North Somerset and Bristol Fungus Group. Places are free at this event but MUST be booked. Numbers are limited so everyone attending will be able to see the specimens found and learn about them. The meeting point will be given when a place is booked. Any donations made on the Fungi Foray will go to the Justin Smith Foundation. To book your place contact Susan on 0117 947 5037 or email events2017@troopers-hill.org.uk.

www.troopers-hill.org.uk



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