

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

DOWNS COMMITTEE

21st November 2011

Report of: Richard Ennion, Bristol Parks, Neighbourhoods

Title: Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project – Report and funding for the seasonal education officer

Ward: Citywide

**Officers Presenting Report: Richard Ennion, Bristol Parks, Neighbourhoods
Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Officer**

Contact Telephone Number: (0117) 92 22001

RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted.

That the Downs Committee approve funding for the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer post.

Summary

The report explains the successes of the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer post in 2011 and requests that Downs Committee consider funding the 6-month post for 5 years.

The significant issues in the report are:

The Summer Education Officer post was exceedingly successful in 2011. We would ask Downs Committee to build on that success by committing to fund the post in coming years.

Policy

1. Both the Downs and Avon Gorge management plans recognise the importance of the education work and seek to support and develop the education programme. The following action points are included:

A Management Plan for the Clifton and Durdham Downs (2007 – 2011)
Action 7.1.4 'Develop and extend the existing education project to provide an integrated interpretation and education programme'.

A Management Plan for the Bristol Side of the Avon Gorge (2010 – 2015)

Action 6.32 'Extend and further develop the existing Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project wildlife education programme'.

Action 6.34 'Engage with new groups and audiences to ensure the involvement of people from different backgrounds'.

The new Downs management plan (2012 – 2016) has just been drafted and includes the same action points as the Avon Gorge management plan above.

Consultation

2. Internal
Tony Whitlock

3. External
Not applicable

Context

4. The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Education Programme is highly popular and successful. Its role is to raise awareness of the importance of the Avon Gorge and Downs and to create opportunities to enable people of all ages and backgrounds to discover, learn more about and enjoy the wildlife and landscape of the site.

4.1 Over 55,000 people have taken part in walks, talks, courses, children's and family events, school visits, play scheme sessions and major community involvement projects since the programme was launched in 2001. A wide range of interpretative materials have also been produced including nature trails, information panels, a website and rare plant displays. The achievements of the project have been recognised through a number of awards, the most recent being the National RHS Britain in Bloom Conservation and Wildlife Award.

4.2 Since 2008, a Summer Education Officer has been employed to help meet demand for events and education sessions during the peak months and to increase the range and diversity of people visiting the site. 2011 has been an exceedingly successful year.

During the eight months the Summer Education Officer was in post

3,644 children took part in our activities. This breaks down as follows:

- 1,023 school children were taught compared with 556 children in 2010.
- 212 play scheme children were taught compared with 209 in 2010. However, six more sessions were run than in the previous year.
- Six children's holiday events were run involving a total of 138 children.
- 90 Year 3 children from Henleaze Junior School worked with us to create tree friezes and displays in the lead up to the Bristol Festival of Nature.
- 180 children were taught at the Bristol Festival of Nature schools day.
- During the festival weekend 1,178 people took part in our tree-related craft activities.
- 350 top hats and bonnets and 100 wildlife masks were decorated in our children's tent at the Downs 150th Anniversary picnic.
- 250 wildlife masks were created at the Zoo's 175th birthday Village Fete day.

As part of the aim to increase the range and diversity of groups visiting:

- An autumn programme has been developed to enable school groups to visit the Downs during September and October.
- Three new schools, one new play scheme, a Youth Group and two Pupil Referral Units all came to us for the first time this year.

One of the roles of the summer education officer is to recruit, train and support a team of volunteers to help us deliver our activities during this busy period. 16 volunteers gave 771 hours to the project this summer, which is the equivalent of having another member of staff working 25 hours a week.

A full report of the summer education officer's work in 2011 is appended.

4.3 Both the Downs and Avon Gorge management plans recognise the importance of the education work and seek to support and develop the education programme.

4.4 In the past, the Summer Education officer has been funded as follows:

- In 2008 it was jointly funded by Downs Committee and Bristol Zoo Gardens.
 - In 2009 it was funded by Bristol Zoo and the Big Give (a National Lottery funding scheme sourced by Bristol Zoo).
 - In 2010 Downs Committee funded a third of the post, while two thirds came from the education programme reserves.
- 4.5 In 2011 Downs Committee provided £9,874 for the post. Downs Committee is requested to fund the post for 5 years, for the life of the new management plan. The breakdown of costs are as follows:

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Salary (with 2% inflationary rise per annum)	£8,912	£9,090	£9,272	£9, 457	£9, 646
National Insurance and employer's tax (12% of salary)	£1,069	£1,091	£1,113	£1,135	£1,158
Total	£9,981	£10,180	£10, 385	£10,692	£10,804

Proposal

5. That Downs Committee agree to fund this post for the next five years. This can be funded from the following sources of additional income as yet to be included in the Downs budget. Principally there is an annual sum of £7,000 from the rent of an overflow car park to Bristol Zoo. This is on an informal licence agreement with no fixed termination date. In this current financial year there will also be further backdated rent of £14,000, which could be reserved for this post. A further annual sum of £3,500 is also available as a result of the renegotiated site licence for the circus. This agreement is in place for the next three years, so alternative sources of funding might be required after this date.

Other Options Considered

6. Other funding sources have been fully considered, but external funding of the project is difficult to obtain for these posts.

Risk Assessment

7. Without funding the education programme will not be fully implemented.

Without the seasonal post, it will not be possible to meet demand for education activities during the peak months and we will not be able to fulfil the actions in the management plans.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 8a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.
- 8b) The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project strives to be inclusive in all its activities. We aim to work with children and adults from under-represented groups. One of the key purposes of the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer post is to ‘*increase the number and diversity of people participating in education events and activities on the Downs*’.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

The Clifton and Durdham Downs (Bristol) Act 1861, section XI, enables the committee to appoint staff for the purposes of helping with the management of the Downs.

Financial

(a) Revenue

The annual sum required for this post could be funded for at least three years from additional income, not yet included in the Downs budget.

(b) Capital

N/A

(Financial advice provided by *Tony Whitlock, Principal Accountant*)

Land

Not applicable

Personnel

Both the Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Officer and Summer Education Officer will be based at Bristol Zoo Gardens. They will be managed by the Head of Learning at the Zoo but report to the AGDWP steering group, the Avon Gorge management plan steering group and Downs Committee.

Appendices:

Report of the activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer 2011

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

Report of the activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer 2011



The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project is a partnership of Bristol City Council, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Natural England, University of Bristol, The Society of Merchant Venturers, The Downs Committee and Bristol Conservation & Science Foundation. We also work with the National Trust who look after Leigh Woods and the North Somerset side of the gorge.



Bristol Conservation & Science Foundation

Report of the activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer 2011

by Jackie Roby

Summary of Achievements for 2011

During the eight months the Summer Education Officer was in post 3,644 children have taken part in our activities:

- 1,023 school children were taught compared with 556 children in 2010.
- 212 play scheme children were taught compared with 209 in 2010. The number of booked sessions increased from 13 to 19.
- Six children's holiday events were run involving a total of 138 children.
- 90 Year 3 children from Henleaze Junior School worked with us to create tree friezes and displays in the lead up to the Bristol Festival of Nature.
- 180 children were taught at the Bristol Festival of Nature schools' day.
- During the festival weekend 1,178 people took part in our tree-related craft activities.
- As part of the Downs 150th Anniversary we ran a children's craft tent at the family picnic, where 350 top hats and bonnets and 100 wildlife masks were decorated.
- 250 wildlife masks were created at the Zoo's 175th birthday Village Fete day.
- Various activities, games and sessions have been introduced, reviewed and updated, all with positive results.

Increasing the range and diversity of groups visiting:

- An autumn programme was developed to enable us to bring school groups up to the Downs during September and October.
- We had six visits from three new groups of older children, St Werburgh's City Farm Youth Group, Bristol Hospital Education Service and St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Unit.
- Three new schools, one new play scheme, a Youth Group and two Pupil Referral Units all came to us for the first time.

Introduction

I was employed as the Avon Gorge and Downs Summer Education Officer from the middle of March until the end of October 2011.

This post was set up to assist the Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Officer in *'developing and delivering a programme of education, interpretation and promotional work to encourage greater public involvement, understanding and enjoyment of the wildlife interest of the Avon Gorge and Downs and their management'* and to *'meet anticipated demand over the peak spring and summer period and to increase the number and diversity of people participating in education events and activities.'*

The post was funded by Downs Committee. Initially it was a part-time post (22.5 hours per week), funded for six months. However, additional funding was found from Downs Committee and my hours changed to an average of four days per week. The plan was to be flexible in my working hours so as to be able to meet demand for education and play scheme sessions as and when they were required. This flexibility allowed us to extend the time that I was in the post until the end of the October half term. The post started on the 14th March and ended on the 31st October.

In March and April my focus was on promoting the sessions to schools and play schemes and teaching school sessions. May was taken up by the Downs 150th Anniversary celebration, teaching school groups and preparing for the Bristol Festival of Nature. In June we continued our teaching and also took part in the Bristol Festival of

Nature. July involved more teaching of school groups and a day making masks and promoting the project at Bristol Zoo's Biggest Village Fete. The end of July and August were spent teaching play schemes, children's holiday events and developing a programme of sessions to offer schools in the autumn. September and October were spent teaching school groups, developing web resources and we ran play schemes and a children's event in the October half-term holiday. Work also began on rewriting the education section of the website.

School Education sessions

Aims

- To teach a range of schools visiting the Downs about the biodiversity of the Avon Gorge and Downs, with sessions linked to National Curriculum.
- To encourage a wide range of schools to book sessions by promoting the education sessions directly to schools.

Methods



I used the information about schools from the BS1, BS3, BS6, BS8 and BS9 areas of Bristol from a list that the previous Summer Education Officer had compiled as well as looking at the information we had for schools that had booked with us previously. I also used contacts that I had in other schools, particularly in the BS16 and BS2 areas of Bristol. I used the Bristol City Council website to find more schools in these areas as I was keen to encourage schools from a wider area to visit the project. Flyers were sent to 35 schools.

Having volunteered last year, I was able to get into the teaching very quickly. My first session was in May with Henleaze Junior School who came to us for a 'Tree Day', learning to identify trees on a tree trail, exploring tree stories and folklore and looking at how trees work and their uses and importance. This also formed the

basis of our work for the Bristol Festival of Nature, discussed later in this report.

Results

School	Date	Year Group	Session Name	Number of sessions	Number of Children
Henleaze Juniors	12 th May	Year 3	Tree-mendous Trees	3	90
Henleaze enrichment week	25 th – 26 th May	Year 3	Tree-mendous Trees	3	90
Red Maids	18 th May	Year 3/4	Tree-mendous Trees, Discover the Downs and Dinosaur Detectives	3	42
SS Peter and Paul	9 th June	Year 2	Butterfly Lifecycles	1	30
St Werburgh's Primary	10 th June	Year 1	Discover the Downs	1	28
Westbury Park	13 th & 14 th June	Year 2	Comparing Habitats	2	55
Bristol Festival of Nature Schools Day	17 th June	10 groups various ages	Food Chains	10	180
SS Peter and Paul	23 rd June	Year 1	Discover the Downs	1	29
Elmlea Junior School	29 th & 30 th June	Year 3	Wildflower Treasure Hunt	2	55
Torwood House	30 th June	KS2	Peregrine Falcons and Food chains	1	21
Torwood House	1 st July	KS1	Discover the Downs	1	21
Elmlea Junior School	1 st , 6 th , 7 th , 8 th July	Year 3/4	Wildflower Treasure Hunt	4	119
St John's Primary	7 th & 8 th July	Reception	Comparing Habitats	2	41
Christ Church Primary	12 th , 13 th , 14 th July	Year 1/2	Mammal Detectives	3	90
St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Unit	14 th September	Year 8	Mammal Detectives	1	2
Bristol Hospital Education Service	20 th September	Year 8	Mammal Detectives	1	13
St Matthias and Dr Bells Juniors	4 th October	Year 4	Mammal Detectives	1	29
St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Unit	5 th October	Year 8	Tree Trail	1	2
St Matthias and Dr Bells Juniors	11 th October	Year 4	Mammal Detectives	1	29
St Michael's on the Mount Primary	12 th October	Year 6	Tree Trail Tribes	1	19
St Matthias and Dr Bells Juniors	14 th October	Year 3	Discover the Downs	1	6
St Matthias and Dr Bells Juniors	18 th October	Year 5	Mammal Detectives	1	6
Bristol Hospital Education Service	20 th October	Year 8	Autumn Art	1	26
TOTAL				46	Total – 1,023



Discussion

The mail-out was successful in attracting three new schools with whom we had not worked before; St Werburgh's Primary School, Torwood House School and St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Unit. Through contacts I have from previous teaching, a new school, St Matthias and Dr Bells Primary, and the Bristol Hospital Education Service (pupil referral unit) came to us for the first time and for a number of visits.

This year has been successful in attracting schools from areas of Bristol that do not usually visit the Project and also for engaging with secondary-age children. Two Pupil Referral Units (11-16 years) and a primary school from the Fishponds area of Bristol all visited us for the first time.

St Matthias Park Pupil Referral Unit brought two pupils to the Downs, on two separate occasions, to do our Tree Trail and Mammal Detectives Trail. Although this was only a small number of children, they require intense support as they have Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). The pupils had not been to the Downs before and their teachers commented on how much more engaged in their learning the pupils were than when they were in the classroom. They have requested more sessions in the future.

Bristol Hospital Education Service (Fairfield PRU) brought thirteen pupils to the Downs to do the Mammal Detectives Trail. Following this, they brought their entire cohort, twenty-six pupils, to do the Autumn Art session. These pupils also require intense support but were all engaged in their outdoor learning experience.

I think the school that benefitted the most was St Matthias and Dr Bells Primary School, from Fishponds. They brought two Year 4 classes (58 children) to do the Mammal Detectives trail as part of their class work on mammals and food chains. The children enjoyed completing the trail and the teachers commented on how well behaved and engaged the children were. Only two of the pupils had been to the Downs before and most of the children did not know that the Downs existed.

The same school visited us twice more with two groups of six pupils who need extra support at school (Year 3 and Year 5). Both groups arrived using public transport and none of the pupils had been to the Downs before. The two groups had a fantastic time and said they would like to come again with their families, they could even remember which number buses to take and which bus stops to use. One girl said that she didn't know you could see so many trees all at the same time.

Many of the schools who regularly have sessions with us did not visit us this year as they have a rolling two-year curriculum which meant that the some topics were not being covered this year. A lot of schools stated that the number of bank holidays this spring made it difficult to fit in school trips. This, along with my flexibility in working hours, lead to us developing an autumn education programme which saw us teach an extra nine sessions in the autumn term.

In 2011 we taught a total of 1,023 children; 467 more children than in 2010.

Evaluation

Out of 36 sessions where it was possible to give evaluation forms, 15 were returned. This is a slightly disappointing result as it represents less than half of the schools who visited us. Judging by the forms received back from schools, feedback has been very positive. Feedback forms have indicated that most schools are 'very likely' to book again. When asked to give a mark out of 10 for different aspects of the session, the average scores were: presentation 9.6, session content 9.4, length 9.6 and level 9.5. Equally, according to the teachers, the children's feedback has been promising with the 93% of the children saying they had a fantastic time, just 5% of children saying they had an ok time and only 2% of children saying they didn't enjoy it.

When responding to the question '*What was the best part of the session?*' Teachers from Christ Church Primary and St John's Primary wrote:

*"Everything! It was really well organised and the children loved it.
The trail through the trees was excellent!"*

*"All of it was fantastic – the different activities
kept the children on-task and engaged."*

Possible development

As was seen with the Summer Education Officer in 2009, starting earlier in the spring is critical as it enables us to highlight our services when schools are planning their spring and summer activities. Perhaps if the role had been full time for this period it may have allowed more time to be spent on contacting schools and promoting the project. Extra funding allowed us to develop an autumn programme for schools.



The participation of schools from further afield shows that schools are willing to pay for transport to come up to the Downs, and some are able to use public transport. This could be useful for future Summer Education officers to bear in mind when sending out flyers. Traditionally flyers have been sent to schools within walking distance of the Downs. Perhaps in the future it would be worthwhile sending flyers to schools further away, particularly those in the less affluent areas of Bristol.

Summer Holiday Play Schemes

Aims

- To widen the range of groups visiting the Downs during the summer holidays by contacting specific groups
- To develop and deliver sessions for play schemes

Methods

In previous years, the Summer Education Officer has used details of play schemes from the Childcare Link website but unfortunately, due to the education reforms of the new government, this site no longer exists. This meant that I had to use the list of contacts from 2010 and also use Google to research play schemes in Bristol. I sent flyers advertising our summer sessions to 14 play schemes. Within days, nine summer sessions and two October half-term sessions had been booked. Despite an initial rush of bookings in response to the mail out, we still had a large number of un-booked days. I called all of the play schemes who hadn't yet booked to find six schemes no longer operating and the majority of the others were not answering their phones.

Results

Play Scheme	Date	Session	Number of Children
St Mary Redcliffe and Temple	26 th July	Bugs, Bees and Butterflies	19
Southville Centre Play Scheme	27 th July	Mammal Detectives	12
Southville Centre Play Scheme	3 rd August	Feathered Friends	12
Girafters	5 th August	Discover the Downs	15
Southville Centre Play Scheme	10 th August	Wildflower Treasure Hunt	15
Girafters	15 th August	Forest School Session	10
Air Balloon Holiday Club	16 th August	Discover the Downs	13
Southville Centre Play Scheme	17 th August	Bugs, Bees and Butterflies	12
Air Balloon Holiday Club	23 rd August	Mammal Detectives	15
Southville Centre Play Scheme	24 th August	Discover the Downs	12
Girafters	25 th August	Kite Making	10
Southville Centre Play Scheme	31 st August	Mammal Detectives	12
St Werburgh's City Farm Youth Group	8 th September	Mammal Detectives	3
St Werburgh's City Farm Youth Group	15 th September	Bag Printing	3
St Werburgh's City Farm Youth Group	13 th October	Autumn Antics	6
St Werburgh's City Farm Youth Group	20 th October	Lantern Making	5
Bishop Road After School Club	25 th October	Autumn Antics	15
Our Place	26 th October	Autumn Antics	13
Air Balloon Holiday Club	28 th October	Autumn Antics	10
TOTAL – 19 sessions			TOTAL – 212

Discussion

Although in comparison to 2010 we taught less play schemes (7 compared to 8) we worked with a similar amount of children (212 compared to 209) but we taught more sessions (19 compared to 13). Three of these bookings were for the October half-term.

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple, Southville Centre, Girafters and Bishop Road all returned from previous years. Southville Centre, Girafters and Air Balloon all booked more than one session, with Southville booking six sessions and requiring us to come up with a new session! A play scheme that had not visited us before, Air Balloon, booked two sessions. After their first visit they were so keen to come again that they jumped at the chance to book for the October half-term. This play scheme is from the St George's area of Bristol (BS5). We have not previously had any visits from play schemes in this area.



It is hard to say which children benefited most from the activities. The nineteen 11-year olds from St Mary Redcliffe and Temple Play Scheme took part in a *Bugs, bees and butterflies* session and greatly enjoyed themselves, showing enthusiasm, a willingness to participate and great interactions. These children are part of a scheme that helps pupils who are struggling academically or socially as they move from primary to secondary school.

Another group that benefitted greatly were Southville Centre Play Scheme. They visited the Downs every week during the school holidays and, as a result, the children who attended regularly were able to refer back to the things that they had learnt. One of the most telling moments was towards the end of the summer when Southville were visiting for their fifth time, we repeated a birdsong listening game that some of the children had played before. When asked why they thought that birds sang one of the boys, who was only five years old, gave a word perfect answer. When asked how he knew this he said that it was because he had learnt it from me in a previous session.

Another moment was with Girafters, on their second visit, a nine year old girl stopped what she was doing and listened intently. She said that she could hear a long-tailed tit, a skill that she had learnt in the previous session a few weeks before, and she was right! These two instances, along with others, suggest that the children who attend our sessions through the play schemes are both engaging in these sessions and retaining the information that they are learning.

Children also built up an excellent rapport with both me and the volunteers who work with us. One five-year-old boy from Southville play scheme was particularly challenging in his behaviour, including running off, but he formed quite an attachment to me and would spend most of the sessions by my side, totally engaged in the activities we were doing.

Evaluation

Feedback forms were given to the leaders of every play scheme and most of them were returned to us after each session. A total of 13 forms were received, with 100% indicating that they were 'very likely' to book again. All of the feedback was excellent with comments such as:

"We had such a fantastic time and can't wait for our next visit. Thank you so much for the opportunity to do this."

"We had great fun and love coming to all of the sessions you offer us. Please keep them going. Thank you!"

Brownies and Beavers

This summer we were approached by the 179th Bristol Brownie group to deliver an evening session for their club. This was a great success and the children were extremely enthusiastic and eager to learn more. Our session helped the children achieve their environmental badges.

The leader of the Westbury-on-Trym beaver colony also emailed to say she wanted to do a nature trail with her 30, 6 – 8 year olds on the Downs. We created a little i-spy style booklet for the group to help them explore the White Tree Roundabout meadow. Following the event she wrote:

"Just to say your leaflets were a great success although they did get a little wet on Friday night! We still went and they loved looking for all the things. Sadly we didn't spot a magpie or crows or the blue butterfly although we saw plenty of brown ones and a fair amount of swallows. They might have been put off by the weather. The size and extra information was just right for little hands. Thank you again so much'.

Given the positive responses we received, this is definitely an area that could have a lot of development. In previous years we have had more Brownie groups; however, given the time constraints of the project and the amount of evening work that would be required, it is something that would need to be carefully considered.

Group	Date	Session	Number of Children
Beavers	17 th June	i-spy Booklets	30
179 th Bristol Brownies	4 th July	Peregrines and Meadows	32
Total			62

Children's and community events

Aims

- To represent the organisation by planning and delivering activities at community events such as the Downs 150th celebrations and the Bristol Festival of Nature
- To increase the number and diversity of people participating in events and activities

We took part in a number of community events this year and a summary of achievements follows.

150th Anniversary Victorian picnic – 22nd May



This year we contributed to the celebrations that marked the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Downs Act which set out to preserve the Downs forever.

On the Monday before the big celebration we enjoyed being part of a commemorative photo. Working in partnership with the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge, we walked up to the Downs with the 300 children from St John's Primary School, resplendent in wonderful Victorian hats. The school has been working with the Project for a number of years and the hats were decorated with scenes and wildlife from the Downs, including Bristol onions, Bristol whitebeams and peregrine falcons. We assembled in the shape of '150' for the photo and ITV and BBC Points West both sent cameramen and showed footage. A lovely photo appeared in the Evening Post.

We ran the children's marquee at the 150th Victorian Family Picnic, where children made top hats or bonnets decorated with wildlife that lives on the Downs (Bristol onions, butterflies etc.). One of my first jobs as Summer Education Officer was to figure out how to make child-sized top hats and bonnets, as simply as possible, and decorate them accordingly! Martin Maudsley was also present in our tent, telling some of the stories he's developed about the Downs as part of our school projects.



Despite disappointing weather conditions on the day of the Victorian picnic, our children's marquee was packed for the duration of the event. The wildlife top hat and bonnet making proved to be exceedingly popular, due in part to the horrendous weather outside! Around 350 hats and 100 masks were decorated.

We took along our display and a range of leaflets. This event was great for helping us reach new people. It resulted in a lot of bookings for our June half-term family events, many of the bookings from people who'd not been on one of our events before.

Bristol Festival of Nature: Tree-mendous Trees Project

Pre- Festival School Work

In March, Mandy met with three Year 3 teachers from Henleaze Junior School. One of the teachers had picked up the Downs tree trail and had contacted Mandy to see if we ran education sessions about trees.

In May, 90 Year 3 children from the school spent an exciting day on the Downs learning to identify trees on a tree trail, exploring tree stories and folklore and looking at how trees work and their uses and importance. Back at school, during their enrichment week and supported by us, the children were transported into the magical world of tree tales with storyteller Martin Maudsley. They also worked with artists Ruth Worsley and Peter Margerum from Unearthed to create three beautiful 'poet-tree' friezes. The lines of poetry written on the branches of the trees were all inspired by what the children had learnt about trees on the Downs. The school agreed that we could take the 'poet-trees' to the Bristol Festival of Nature thereby sharing what the children had learnt with visitors to our tent.



We also worked with each class to research and design a tree trail for their school grounds, which is based on the tree trail activity they had taken part in on the Downs. The week culminated in the children planting a Bristol Whitebeam in their school grounds, with Nick Wray from the University of Bristol Botanic Gardens. The tree forms part of the tree trail and leaves a lasting legacy from the project.

Bristol Festival of Nature (BFoN) – 17th – 19th June

Bristol Festival of Nature is the UK's biggest celebration of the natural world attracting more than 25,000 visitors and promoting the work of all the major wildlife organizations. We joined forces with Bristol City Council's Parks and Estates, Tree Bristol and the Forest of Avon Trust to create the Wild About Trees tent. Our aim was to promote the importance of trees in this fun and active tent.



Through the Wild About Trees tent we focused on three themes:

- the importance of trees to people
- the sensory experience of being in woods
- trees as a wildlife habitat

Wild about trees tent content

The walls of the tent were decorated with the 'poet-trees' and tree posters created by the Henleaze Junior school children as part of our Tree-mendous trees project. From the ceiling, we hung leaf sculptures also created by the children.

We also took along the Project display and particularly promoted the Downs Tree trail leaflet. The Forest of Avon Trust ran a woodland sensory trail area and the Tree Bristol

and Parks and Estates team encouraged children and adults to record the benefits of trees on a large 2D tree display.

Tree of life sculpture

The festival co-ordinator, Sara Chapel, had secured a bid from the Arts Council to explain, through art, the ecology of a tree. A 'tree of life' sculpture was commissioned to stand outside our tent. Over the festival weekend, the public decorated templates of tree-dwelling animals (badger, owl, butterfly, beetle, squirrel or a wood mouse) to place in the tree. Two artists, Sally and Charlotte, worked with us in the build up to the festival to design the animal templates and they also worked in our tent during the event to facilitate this.



The tree of life

In this area the public learnt about the diversity of wildlife that can be found living in an oak tree. To support the school sessions and visitors' learning during the festival, I planned and created a 2 metre high, interactive oak tree display, with all sorts of wildlife hidden behind wooden flaps. This illustrated some of the wildlife associated with tree habitats.



Whitebeam masks

In this area the public could find out about these rare trees and make their own Bristol whitebeam mask. We had a display of different potted whitebeam species (borrowed from the Zoo's horticultural team) for people to look at and botanist and whitebeam expert Libby Houston was also there to talk to visitors.

Schools' Day

On Friday 17th June, Mandy and I had a very hectic day teaching 180 children as part of the festival's school day. Our sessions focused on oak tree food chains.

Public days on Saturday and Sunday

Unlike the previous two festival years, the entrance to our tent did not have a specific entrance and exit. The front of the tent was open and people wandered in and out through the same entrance. This meant that it was impossible to count the number of people entering the tent and we therefore do not have figures for comparison with previous years. However, over the weekend:

- 750 tree-dwelling animal templates were beautifully decorated by members of the public and hung on the tree of life sculpture
- 428 whitebeam masks were made.



After the Festival

Over the festival weekend all three Year 3 teachers and many of the children from Henleaze bought their families to show them their work on display. Following the festival, the 'poet-trees', tree trail and other artwork created by the children were put on show for a parents' evening. One of the Year 3 teachers e-mailed us to say,

"The parents were impressed with the quality and quantity of work and the tree trail worked really well too. Thank you again for everything and hopefully we'll be able to work together again soon!"

Holiday events

We ran six children's events this summer. New events included Dinosaur Detectives and Busy Buzzy Bees. The poor weather this summer meant that the bookings for children's holiday events were lower than in previous years.



We ran two 'Dinosaur detectives' family days in which we teamed up with Ed Drewitt from the Bristol Dinosaur Project to explore some of the Downs' *pre-historic* wildlife, including the *Thecodontosaurus* (or Bristol dinosaur), which roamed the Downs about 220 million years ago. The families went on a walk to meet the quarryman who first discovered this dog-sized dinosaur in 1834 (played brilliantly by Robin Haward from the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge). They made

their own crafty version of the dinosaur. They also dug up dinosaur bones, completed a dinosaur jigsaw and handled real fossils. A photographer came out from the local newspaper and a picture appeared in the Evening Post.

For the Busy Buzzy Bees event we teamed up with Rhian Rowson from the City Museum when we spent a soggy morning discovering fantastic facts about bees. In the afternoon the children made beautiful bee homes to take home for their gardens.

Part of my role has been to work with Mandy to develop the activities for these events based upon the previous experience of both of us. For Busy Buzzy Bees, I created a bee version of our Build a Bug game that I made as a volunteer last year. We had many children who attended several of the events, and indeed did so last year as well, and it was great to develop on-going relationships with these children and their parents. Overall, the children attending these events thoroughly enjoyed themselves and each of the events was a great success.

Bristol Zoo's Biggest Village Fete – 16th July

In the middle of July, a team of volunteers and I ran an Avon Gorge and Downs wildlife mask-making stall at the Zoo's Biggest Village Fete, along with Maddy Rees from the South West Crayfish Project. The event was held to celebrate the Zoo's 175th birthday and was a great opportunity to promote the Project to a wider audience. A couple of volunteers and I spent an hour or so dressed in our



peregrine falcon, butterfly and crayfish costumes handing out copies of our events flyers on the main lawn and directing people towards our wildlife mask making activity area. We attracted a lot of attention, including from the local news cameraman, but failed to make the final cut! Despite a poor turn-out in the morning, due to heavy rain, over 250 masks were made. I was also interviewed on local radio station Ujima.

Event	Date	Number of Children
Downs' 150 th photo	16 th May	300
Victorian Picnic	22 nd May	450
Dinosaur Detectives	2 nd June	46
Bristol Festival of Nature	18 th – 19 th June	1,178
Tall tales for little people	13 th July	31
Bristol Zoo Village Fete	16 th July	250
Mammal Detectives	28 th July	17
Dinosaur Detectives	4 th August	34
Tree Tribes	11 th August	12
Busy Buzzy Bees	18 th August	10
Autumn Antics	27 th October	19
TOTAL No – 11 children's / community events		2,347

Other Duties

Administration

I have assisted the Biodiversity Education Officer with day to day administration of the project, including sending out events programmes, producing posters, advertising children's and adults' events, recording bookings for events and sending confirmations of bookings. I have dealt directly with schools and play schemes and have developed excellent, on-going working relationships with both.

Volunteers

I have worked very hard to build a strong team of reliable volunteers and I have continued to build upon their strengths and successes. We now have a team of very competent volunteers, with people from a wide range of backgrounds and with numerous different skills. The project would not be able to run without the tremendous efforts of our volunteers. 16 volunteers gave 771 hours to the project this year, which is the equivalent of having another member of staff working 25 hours a week.

Website

During October I began to rewrite the education section of the website, organised links and photos and began to develop ideas for web-based family activities.

Summary

2011 has been a record breaking year for the number of people the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project have engaged with, both formally and informally. The diversity of people visiting the Downs has increased with us welcoming many groups that have not visited before. This summer has given rise to new long-term relationships and opportunities for development in the future as well as continuing the Project's reputation for high quality outdoor learning.