

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

Downs Committee

28th January 2013

Report of: Andrew Gordon, Estates Management Team Leader

**Title: Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Annual Review
2012 and the Report of the Activities of the Avon Gorge and
Downs Seasonal Education Officer**

Ward: Citywide

**Officers Presenting Report: Andrew Gordon, Park Estates
Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs
Biodiversity Education Officer**

Contact Telephone Number: (0117) 9538035

RECOMMENDATION

That the reports be noted.

Summary

To report, for information, on the thirteenth annual review of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project and to present the Report of the activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer during 2012.

The significant issues in the reports are:

A summary of the Project's main achievements with regards to conservation management, wildlife surveying and monitoring and the educational programme.

1. Policy

1.1 Not applicable

2. Consultation

2.1 Internal

Richard Ennion, Neighbourhoods and City Development

Robert Westlake, Downs Ranger

2.2 External

Chris Westcott, Natural England

Maddy Ivey, Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation

3. Context

- 3.1 The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project was launched on 23rd October 1999. It is a partnership of Bristol City Council, the Downs Committee, the Society for Merchant Venturers, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Natural England, the University of Bristol, and the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation. We also work with the National Trust in Leigh Woods and the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge.
- 3.2 The aim of the project is 'to secure the future of the outstanding wildlife interest of the Avon Gorge and Clifton and Durdham Downs and to raise awareness and understanding of this unique location and its importance to people and wildlife'.

Annual Review

- 3.3 This report provides a review of progress and key achievements of the project between January and December 2012.

Conservation Grazing in the Gully

- 3.4 The goats have been happily browsing in the Gully for over a year now and there is clear evidence that they are exploring the whole area. Overall there is an obvious reduction in the amount of scrub and signs that they are browsing the invasive woody species like bramble, ash seedlings as well as holm oak. The tree guards are effectively protecting the rare whitebeams from browsing and the exclusion zone (a fenced area created to protect new whitebeam seedlings) has also worked successfully. The Gully's southern slopes are clearly looking more open and grassy and the northern slopes are also starting to respond well. It's still early days but things are looking very promising.
- 3.5 Despite the poor weather this year the goats seem to be enjoying their new surroundings and are themselves looking healthy and on the whole much larger. They are still being carefully looked after by the Down Ranger's team with regular help from the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge.
- 3.6 The goats have continued to be very popular with the public and the three 'Meet the goat keeper' walks were over-subscribed this year. A

new information panel explaining the goat project has been installed on the Gully outcrop and another one will be installed at the Seawalls end of the Gully. These panels were funded by Natural England under the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS).

Managing the Gorge

- 3.7 Important conservation works along the rest of the Gorge have continued. Winter works again focused on protecting and enhancing key areas of limestone grassland by removing scrub and controlling invasive, non-native species like holm oak. Summer works focused on controlling invasive plants such as cotoneaster and everlasting pea in areas around Black Rocks, the Great Quarry, St Vincent Rocks and Fairy Land.

Silky Wave Moth Monitoring

- 3.8 Staff from the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation (BCSF) carried out surveys over an eight week period, covering six priority sites and eight additional satellite sites along the Gorge.
- 3.9 We had our highest ever survey counts this year at the three priority sites on the Bristol side of the Gorge; a total of 127 moths were noted at one site alone. The two other sites, where good numbers of this rare moth were counted, were in the Gully (the goat browsing project area).
- 3.10 Counts were lower than 2011 at the three priority sites on the Somerset side of the Gorge. However, continued habitat management works are on-going and should have a positive effect on amounts of suitable silky wave habitat. It will be interesting to see if there is a positive response here in the years to come.

The Education Programme

- 3.11 Overall, 8,199 people took part in one of our events, activities or educational visits this year.

Events Programme

- 3.12 The poor weather affected our bookings but we continued to offer a full events programme, with something for all ages and interests. As we were still celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Downs Act we held two talks and a walk looking at the changing wildlife, landscape and uses of the Downs. New events included a talk about ravens, a sketching birds course and a singing workshop in the meadows. We also ran three new children's events called: 'Gorgeous goats', 'Animal athletes' and 'Awesome owls'.

School Groups and Playschemes

- 3.13 For the fifth year running, we employed an Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer. Downs Committee funded this part time post (30 hours a week from 2nd April – 1st November).
- 3.14 Despite being the wettest summer on record (which caused some groups to cancel or postpone their sessions), we had a very successful year. Overall we taught 1,229 children, welcoming eight new schools and five new play schemes. In fact, we doubled the number of playscheme children coming to the Downs compared to 2011.

Hairy Conservationists

- 3.15 We developed and launched a new session called 'Hairy Conservationists' in which children learn how our goats are helping to save rare plants. Children emulate what the Downs Rangers' team do by being trainee goat checkers and have fun pretending to selectively eat woody species, and not Bristol onions, in our gobbling goats game.
- 3.16 379 school and playscheme children have learnt about the goats during one of these sessions. They were free to schools and funded by Natural England's Educational Access payment under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

The Olympic Torch and Meet the Species

- 3.17 After watching the Olympic torch cross the suspension bridge on the 23rd May, we teamed up with 'Meet the Species' (A joint Bristol Natural History Consortium and Cultural Olympiad project), to run two special habitat sessions for 59 Year 5 and 6 children from Hotwells school. Supported by local naturalists and staff from BCSF, we recorded 79 different species.

Diamond Jubilee Downs Day

- 3.18 On Monday 4th June we took part in the 'Diamond Jubilee Downs Day', run by a partnership of organisations, to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. We had a very lucky break in the bad weather, and thousands of people flocked to the Downs for a wide range of entertainment.
- 3.19 Supported by 10 fantastic volunteers, we ran a very busy children's craft marquee. In the afternoon, 400 children decorated crowns with paper Bristol onions, peregrines, butterflies and goats. In the evening, 250 wildlife lanterns were decorated and carried by children in the fancy dress parade, which culminated in the lighting of the Jubilee beacon.

Gorgeous Goats and Wild Bristol

- 3.20 For this year's Bristol Festival of Nature we teamed up with Bristol City Council's Wild City Team, the BCSF Crayfish in Crisis Project, Wild About, Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge and other friends of groups to run the 'Wild Bristol' tent.
- 3.21 In the month running up to the festival, 147 children from St Mathias Park and Dr Bells and St John's primary school enjoyed Hairy Conservationists sessions. Back at school, we taught the children to create felt pictures to illustrate what they'd learnt. Later in the month these beautiful works of art were displayed in the Wild Bristol tent.
- 3.22 On the first day of the festival, 90 children from a variety of schools took part in mini Hairy Conservationists sessions. Over the rest of the weekend we ran a craft area where children made gorgeous goat and Bristol onion masks. We also had a display about the goats for adults. A total of 4,462 people came through the tent during the festival weekend.

Interpretation Panels and Travelling Display

- 3.23 Nine interpretation panels on the Downs and the project travelling display were updated and refreshed – the first time since 2003. This work was carried out with funding from Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

The Downs Lichen Trail

- 3.24 The Downs Lichen Trail, the fourth nature trail leaflet in our series, has proven to be more popular than expected. So much so, that we had to print 2,000 more copies of the leaflet in the spring. The trail was a collaboration between the Project, local lichen expert Sheila Quin, the British Lichen Society and the Bristol Naturalists' Society.

Community Groups

- 3.25 The education officer gave a talk or guided walk to 396 people from 14 community groups. Groups ranged from the Youth Education Service to Women's Institute local groups, ramblers and gardening clubs.

Volunteer Support

- 3.26 Many of our events couldn't take place without the support of volunteers and work experience students. We're grateful to the 24 people who gave 1,362 hours of their time over the year.

Awards

3.27 Together with Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge, we made presentations to both the South West in Bloom and the Entente Florale judges during their tours of the city. Bristol won gold medals in both competitions.

Green Flag Award

3.28 The Downs were awarded a prestigious Green Flag for the sixth year running. This award is given to the best parks and green spaces in England and Wales.

Proposal:

Other Options Considered

1. No other options considered

Risk Assessment

2. No risk assessment has been carried out.

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) *Not Applicable.*

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

Not applicable

Financial

(a) Revenue

None

(b) Capital

None

Land

The land is under the control of the Downs Committee.

Personnel

Not applicable

Appendices:

Report of the activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer 2012

Printed copies of the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project Annual Review 2012 will be handed out at the meeting.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None



Report of the activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer 2012

By Susie Glover

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 the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation.



Bristol Conservation
& Science Foundation

We are also working in partnership with the National Trust who manage part of Leigh Woods on the North Somerset side of the Gorge and the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge.

Summary of Achievements for 2012

During the seven months the Seasonal Education Officer was in post:

- 1,229 school children were taught compared with 1,023 children in 2011.
- 453 playscheme children were taught compared with 212 in 2011. The number of booked sessions have increased from 19 to 27.
- A new session, 'Hairy Conservationists' was developed for schools and playschemes.
- Five children's holiday events were run, involving a total of 77 children.
- 55 wildlife masks were created at the Zoo's Wildlife weekend.
- We took part in the Diamond Jubilee Downs day, and ran a children's craft tent. During the day 400 children made wildlife crowns and 250 made lanterns for a fancy dress parade before the lighting of the Jubilee beacon.
- 56 Year 4 children from St. Matthias and Dr Bells Primary School, and 88 Year 5 and 6 children from St. Johns Primary School worked with us to create felt pictures and displays in the lead up to the Bristol Festival of Nature.
- For the Bristol Festival of Nature we teamed up with other projects and organisations to to run the 'Wild Bristol' tent.
- 90 children were taught at the Bristol Festival of Nature schools' day.
- During the festival weekend 4,462 people came through the Wild Bristol tent.
- Various activities, games and sessions have been introduced, reviewed and updated.

Introduction

I was employed as the Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer from 2nd April 2012 to 1st November 2012. This was a part time post (30 hours per week) that was funded by the Downs Committee.

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.'*

During April I helped out with the Easter playscheme and schools sessions, in preparation for leading sessions myself, and developed resources for use in a new schools session. May, June and July were taken up with teaching schools sessions, and preparation for community events, including the Jubilee Downs Day and the Bristol Festival of Nature. Over the summer holiday period, late July – August, we ran three children's holiday events, all of which required varying degrees of preparation, and I ran the summer playscheme sessions on the Downs. During September and October we ran Autumn school sessions, sorted and developed resources, and prepared for our final children's holiday event. My time as Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer culminated with 'Awesome Owls' children's holiday event on 1st November.

School Education sessions

Aims:

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

Methods

During March, just before I began this position, the previous year's Summer Education Officer, Jackie Roby, returned for eight days. She updated the schools' database, created a new schools' programme leaflet, and sent this out, by post and email, to local schools. Our first school's sessions were during April. After helping out with and observing several of these, I ran some sessions independently from May.

This year we offered a new session to schools called "Hairy Conservationists". This looks at how the six billy goats, introduced to an area known as the Gully in June 2011, are helping to conserve rare plants in the Avon Gorge. Our first 'Hairy Conservationists' sessions were in mid-May, so I spent much of my first month researching goat adaptations, enabling us to teach the sessions. I also developed worksheets, 'trainee goat checkers' and 'goat adaptations', for use in these sessions, and created the resources for the 'gobbling goats' game. Over the past seven months, I have continued to develop this session, so that it is suitable for KS1 children and well as KS2.



I designed and produced a new autumn education programme flier, to encourage schools to visit during September and October. Then, using the schools database, I posted it to 129 teachers and e-mailed it to 124 teachers. I sent out this flier in July, as it was approaching the end of term, when teachers are starting to think about their teaching for the next term. I then re-emailed the flier to teachers towards the end of August, when they are preparing for the coming term.

Results

School	Date	Age	Session	No. of sessions	No. of children
Red Maids School	18 th April	Year 3/4	Early birds and bacon butties	1	19
Filton Avenue Infant School	30 th April	Year 1	Discover the Downs	1	27
	1 st May	Year 1	Discover the Downs	1	28
	2 nd May	Year 1	Discover the Downs	1	30
Claremont Special School	10 th May	KS1	Discover the Downs	Postponed due to inclement weather	
Millpond Primary School	11 th May	Year 5/6	Comparing Habitats & Mammal Detectives (all day sessions)	2	51
St Matthias and Dr Bells CE VA Primary School	15 th May	Year 4	Hairy Conservationists	1	26
	16 th May	Year 4	Hairy Conservationists	1	30
	17 th May	Year 4	Felt Making for BFON	2	59

Hotwells Primary School	23 rd May	Year 5/6	Habitats/Meet the species Olympic special	2	59
St John's CE VC Primary School	24 th May	Year 5/6	Hairy Conservationists	1	28
Claremont Special School	28 th May	KS2	Discover the Downs	1	10
St John's CE VC Primary School	29 th May	Year 5/6	Hairy Conservationists & Felt Making for BFON	2	56
	30 th May	Year 5/6	Hairy Conservationists & Felt Making for BFON	2	58
	31 st May	Year 5/6	Felt Making for BFON	2	30
Westbury Park Primary School	11 th June	Year 2	Habitats	Postponed due to inclement weather	
	12 th June	Year 2	Habitats	1	31
Bristol Festival of Nature Schools day	15 th June	KS2	Special BFON Hairy conservationists session	9	90
St Bonaventure's Catholic Primary School	21 st June	Year 1	Butterfly Lifecycles	1	30
	21 st June	Year 1	Discover the Downs	1	29
SS Peter and Paul RC Primary School	22 nd June	Year 2	Butterfly Lifecycles	1	30
	26 th June	Year 4	Hairy Conservationists	1	30
Compass Point South Street School and Children's Centre	27 th June	Year 5/6	Habitats	1	29
Cabot Primary School	28 th June	Year 3	Tree trail & Tree tribes (all day session)	1	27
SS Peter and Paul RC Primary School	3 rd July	Year 1	Discover the Downs	Cancelled due to inclement weather	
Cabot Primary School	4 th July	Year 1	Butterfly Lifecycles	1	33
St John's CE VC Primary School	5 th July	Reception	Habitats	1	23
	6 th July	Reception	Habitats	1	22
St Francis' Catholic Primary School	10 th July	Year 2	Habitats & Tree trail (all day session)	1	26
Westbury Park Primary School	11 th July (rearranged from 11 th June)	Year 2	Habitats	1	30
Claremont Special School	12 th July (rearranged from 10 th May)	KS1	Discover the Downs	1	9
Parsons Street Primary School	13 th July	Year 5	Tree trail, tree tribes & Mini hairy conservationist session	2	44
Elmlea Infants	17 th July	Year 2	Tree trail, Wild flower treasure hunt & Discover the Downs (All day sessions)	3	90
Westbury Park Primary School	26 th Sept	Year 1	Autumn Art	1	30
	27 th Sept	Year 1	Autumn Art	1	30
Torwood House School	1 st Oct	Year 1	Hairy Conservationists	1	14
Parsons Street Primary School	2 nd Oct	Year 1	Mapsticks and migration & Mammal detectives	2	58
Torwood House School	22 nd Oct	Years 2-4	Mammal detectives	1	13
TOTAL				53	1,229

	This school has not visited us before
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Discussion

In 2012 we taught 1,229 school children in 53 sessions, compared with 1,023 children in 2011.

This year the Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer position began in April, as opposed to the previous year when the position began during March. In March it was the Summer Education Officer for 2011, Jackie Roby, who came in and dealt with the mail-outs to schools, as opposed to myself. However, this mail-out seems to have been very successful. Not only were Mandy and I very busy with school groups right up until the end of the school year, but we had eight schools who have not worked with us before visit the Downs.

Amongst these schools is Claremont Special School, who brought two groups of children with severe physical and cognitive disabilities. All the children used wheelchairs and had 1:1 carers. It was important for us to run a very different session than usual, by tailoring the 'Discover the Downs' session to meet their needs and requirements. The focus was less about what the children learnt, and more about them having positive experiences in a new environment. We had some great feedback from the class teacher regarding this:

"Just a big thank you. It was very well tailored to our kids"



The second mail-out, regarding the autumn education programme, which I sent out in July and August, does not seem to have been as successful as the first. We only had five school bookings during September and October, compared to nine in 2011. One contributing factor could be the inclement weather we have been experiencing throughout the season. We have had to postpone two and cancel one schools session since April 2012. This bad weather could have put some teachers off taking their classes on outdoor trips.

The 'Hairy conservationists' session seems to have gone down very well with the school groups. We have run eight 'Hairy conservationists' schools sessions on the Downs, and a further nine mini sessions at the Bristol Festival of Nature Schools day.

Evaluation

We gave an education session feedback form (see *appendix I*) to the leader of each school group that visited us. We received back 27 forms, which is over a 50% return rate, higher than previous years.

From these forms we have had some very positive feedback. They were asked to give a mark out of 10 for session content, presentation, length and level. The average results for these fields are:

Session Content	9.4
Presentation	9.6
Length	9.5
Level	9.4

They were also asked how likely they are to book a session with us again (Very Likely, Fairly Likely, Fairly Unlikely and Very Unlikely). 93% said Very Likely and 7% said Fairly Likely.

At the bottom of the form they were asked 'Do you have any other comments about your visit?' many teachers used this as an opportunity for praise:

"Susie was a wonderful leader. Insisted on excellent behaviour. Great enthusiasm and tuned activities perfectly". St. Bonaventures RC Primary School

"A very purposeful session. We had a number of children with complex needs, with whom you were very patient". Compass Point

"An absolutely fantastic science learning session for the children. The teaching style ensured the children would remember what they learnt for a long time." Millpond Primary School

Some teachers who I spoke to during the booking process needed guidance about which sessions would be suitable for their children. It can be useful to talk to them through all of the sessions that would be suitable. I would suggest that adding some clear guidance in our fliers, under the description of each session, as to which age groups these are suitable for would be helpful, and make it much easier for teachers to plan.

It was great that Jackie Roby was able to deal with the mail out in March, as this is the time that teachers are often planning what to do with their classes during the spring and summer. It is important that the Seasonal Education Officer begins at this time to ensure that there is time to update the database and flier, and get it sent out to schools.

Holiday Play Schemes

Aims:

- To develop and deliver sessions for playschemes in holiday time.
- To deliver these sessions to a wide range of groups visiting the Downs during the summer holidays.

Methods

My first sessions as Seasonal Education Officer were three 'Discover the Downs' playscheme sessions in the first two weeks of April. I observed and helped out Mandy with these sessions. We didn't have another playscheme session until the summer holidays. In May I sent out 40 fliers to local playscheme groups, using the contact list compiled by previous Summer Education Officers. This mail-out detailed the six playscheme sessions that were on offer over the summer holiday period. This included a new 'Hairy conservationists' playscheme session which, like the schools session, looks at how the six billy goats are helping to conserve rare plants in the Avon Gorge.

Results

Playscheme	Date	Session	No. of children
Our Place	4 th April	Discover the Downs	5
UHB Holiday Playscheme	11 th April	Discover the Downs	26
Air Balloon	12 th April	Discover the Downs	17
Southville Centre Holiday Playscheme	23 rd July	Wildflower Treasure Hunt	6
Air Balloon	24 th July	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies	23
Totterdown Children's Community Workshop	25 th July	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies	20
St Mary Redcliffe and Temple	27 th July	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies	18
Ashley Down After School Club & Holiday Playscheme	31 st July	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies	25
Bishop Road Holiday Playscheme	1 st August	Hairy Conservationists	16
Southville Centre Holiday Playscheme	3 rd August	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies	11
Oldbury Court After School Club	6 th August	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies	20
Southville Centre Holiday Playscheme	7 th August	Feathered Friends	20
Henbury Area Project for Play and Youth (H.A.P.P.Y)	10 th August	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies	20
Bishop Road Holiday Playscheme	14 th August	Mammal Detectives	18
Schools Out: Henleaze Holiday Club	15 th August	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies Cancelled due to inclement weather	
Air Balloon	15 th August	Hairy Conservationists	21
Southville Centre Holiday Playscheme	17 th August	Mammal detectives Cancelled due to inclement weather	
Southville Centre Holiday Playscheme	20 th August	Animal Athletes	18
Torwood House Holiday Club	21 st August	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies	31
Oldbury Court After School and Holiday Club	22 nd August	Discover the Downs	32
Oldbury Court After School and Holiday Club	24 th August	Mammal Detectives	25
Ashley Down After School Club & Holiday Playscheme	28 th August	Hairy Conservationists	19
Southville Centre Holiday Playscheme	29 th August	Hairy Conservationists	13
Playcation	29 th August	Bugs, Bees & Butterflies Cancelled due to inclement weather	
Oldbury Court After School and Holiday Club	30 th August	Hairy Conservationists	24
Torwood House Holiday Club	31 st August	Feathered Friends	25
Totterdown Children's Community Workshop	29 th October	Autumn Art Cancelled by group	
TOTAL		23 sessions	453

	This group has not visited us before
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Discussion

The mail-out to local playschemes in May was very successful, with every available slot for the summer holiday fully booked by the beginning of June. We taught 453 children, in 23 sessions from 11 different playscheme groups. We had taken bookings for 27 sessions from 13 different groups, unfortunately School's Out and Playcation had to cancel their only sessions due to adverse weather conditions. Of the 13 groups that booked sessions with us, 6 had not visited us on the Downs before. This compares favourably to 2011 where 212 children were taught in 19 sessions from 7 different playscheme groups.

Five of the 11 groups booked more than one session with us over the summer. This is great because it provides the opportunity for the children to get to know the Downs well and for us to get to know the staff and children. I found that when I knew the group, it made it easier to cater for their specific needs. For example Torwood House Holiday club, although a young group, were quite advanced and enthusiastic, so for their second session, 'Feathered friends', I was able to select activities that would challenge them, but still be within their ability to enjoy and learn.



Southville Centre Holiday Playscheme booked six sessions over the summer. They have been to us many times over the past few years. When talking to their leader Lyn during their first session of the summer, it became clear that some of the children had done some of the sessions a number of times before. As a result we offered to run a new session for them that wasn't on the flier. We had developed a series of games and activities for a children's holiday event called Animal athletes. I adapted this into a playscheme session for them. Having got to know some of their children, it was clear that this session would be well received.

This year we offered a new session to all groups. We adapted the 'Hairy conservationists' schools session to deliver to playscheme groups. We developed two new games, the 'goat adaptations game' and the 'plant needs game', both of which enabled us to get across and reinforce conservation management in a fun way. The original session was aimed mainly at KS2 level, and many of the playscheme groups who come to us often include younger children. We therefore decided to incorporate a story, called "The Gully Goats" developed by Jackie Roby, into the session by making it interactive. This story in particular has gone down really well, and I have even used it to deliver the session to a KS1 school group.

This summer we were plagued by wet weather. Three playscheme sessions had to be cancelled, and in a few sessions the leaders decided to leave a little early due to the weather. However, a number of groups did brave bad weather.

Evaluation

At the end of each session we gave the group leader a feedback form (see appendix II) to fill in and send back. We received a total of 13 forms back, out of 23 given out. They were asked to give a mark out of 10 for session content, presentation, length and level. The average results for these fields are:

Session Content	9.1
Presentation	9.4
Length	8.7
Level	8.7

They were also asked how likely they are to book a session with us again (Very Likely, Fairly Likely, Fairly Unlikely and Very Unlikely). 85% said Very likely and 15% said Fairly likely. From this feedback we can clearly see that the groups value the sessions we deliver.

We asked what we could do to improve the sessions. More than once comments reflected that it would be great if the sessions were even longer. The sessions were on average two hours long. It was made clear to the group leaders upon booking that our standard sessions are this length. Some sessions were cut short due to adverse weather conditions. On these occasions it was the decision of the playscheme leader to leave early.

When asked if they had any other comments about their visit the group leaders put some lovely comments:

"The children really enjoyed the session and would love to join in again". Totterdown Children's Community Workshop

"All the staff were very nice, Susie has got amazing skills to communicate with children". Ashley Down After School Club

"It was informative & kept the children's interest completely, well organised and the staff were very good with the children". Bishop Road Playscheme

Children's and community events

Aims:

- To represent the organisation by planning and delivering activities at local community events.
- To increase the number and diversity of people participating in events and activities.

Meet the Species

On 23rd May we gathered, dressed in wildlife costumes, with our team of volunteers, to watch the Olympic torch cross the suspension bridge. We then teamed up with 'Meet the Species', a cultural olympiad and Bristol Natural History Consortium project that was set up to encourage people to get actively



involved in the identification and surveying of UK wildlife. Together we worked with Hotwell school to record as many different animal species as possible. We ran two habitat sessions, that included a minibeast hunt, for the 59 Year 5 and 6 children from Hotwells School. We recorded a total of 79 different species.

Wildlife Weekend

Bristol Zoo Gardens' 'Wildlife weekend', an event to raise awareness of the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation and its conservation work in the UK, took place on 19th May. With the help of volunteers we set up a craft tent and offered goat and Bristol onion mask making to children visiting the Zoo. We also had our project display and leaflets on offer for adults to read. This was a great opportunity to try out our new goat mask template, before taking it to the Bristol Festival of Nature a month later. A total of 55 masks were decorated.

Diamond Jubilee Downs Day

On Monday 4th June we took part in the 'Jubilee Downs Day', a community family event, run by a partnership of organisations, to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. We had a very lucky break in the bad weather, and thousands of people flocked to an area of the Downs up by Seawalls for a day of wide ranging entertainment.

The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project hosted the children's craft tent, with the help of a team of our volunteers. In the afternoon 400 children decorated wildlife crowns with Bristol onions, peregrines, blue butterflies and goats. As evening approached the crown making was replaced with lantern making. We also had our project display and leaflets on offer for adults to read. 250 wildlife lanterns were decorated and carried by the children in the fancy dress parade, which culminated in the lighting of one of many beacons being lit across the country to celebrate our monarch.



In the run up to the event we had lots to do. I had the mammoth task of collecting, cleaning and wiring over 300 glass jars ready to be decorated as wildlife lanterns. Also, with the help of volunteers, I prepared all of the other materials for the lanterns and crowns, and produced examples to help inspire the children.

Bristol Festival of Nature (BFON)

The Bristol Festival of Nature is the UK's largest celebration of the natural world, with over 150 organisations offering free activities over the course of the weekend. This year it ran from Friday 15th June to Sunday 17th June. We teamed up with Bristol City Council's Wild City Team, the Crayfish in Crisis project (Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation (BCSF)), Wild About, Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge, and a range of other 'friends of' groups to run the 'Wild Bristol' tent.

Pre- Festival School Work

During the month running up to the festival we worked with 56 Year 4 children (two classes) from St. Matthias and Dr Bells Primary School, and 88 Year 5 and 6 children (three classes) from St. Johns Primary School. We took each class out for a 'Hairy conservationists' session on the Downs. In this session, through a variety of different activities and games, we look at how the decline in sheep grazing on the Downs led to an increase in the number of trees. This meant that there was less space for rare plants and flowers to grow, resulting in a decline in their numbers. Our answer to this problem was to introduce six billy goats to an area of the Avon Gorge called the Gully to eat the trees and scrub, making more space for the rare plants. We also looked at how the goats do this, and why they are suited to this job.



We later visited each class at their school to do some felt making. Each child made a felt picture, depicting wildlife they learnt about on their trip to the Downs. These felt pictures, along with related displays that they produced, were destined to be displayed in our tent over the festival period.

Wild Bristol tent content

This year the aims of the Wild Bristol tent were:

- To create an exciting space that promotes and celebrates Bristol's green spaces.
- To showcase how visitors can make a difference to green spaces and wildlife by 'getting involved'.

Bristol City Council's Wild City Team had displays on their work at Hengrove Park, and ran bag rubbing activities. The Crayfish in Crisis project focused on promoting the "Check! Clean! Dry!" campaign, ran a badge making activity, and contributed a large soft play river, which ran through the centre of the tent. Jackie from Wild About was promoting the project aims to inspire children and adults of all ages, providing opportunities to experience beautiful ancient woodland and learn new skills. The Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge were talking to people about what they do, and how to get involved.



We spent the Thursday before the Festival dressing the tent. Our area had a goat and meadow theme. We displayed the beautiful felt pictures, produced by children from St Matthias and Dr Bells Primary School and St Johns Primary School. The St Matthias children had also created a fantastic collage of the gorge, a display about their trip to the gorge and a stunning book of goat and Bristol onion paintings. Tissue paper butterflies hung from the ceiling to add to the meadow atmosphere. Also hanging on the walls in our area were some lovely posters celebrating why meadows are

special. These were produced by Martin Collins, from FODAG. During the festival

we ran mask making activities, had a goat display and our leaflet there for people to look at, had a volunteers dressed as a Bristol onion and had a Nurturing Nature Trail running throughout the tent.

Nurturing Nature Trail

To encourage people to explore all of the different areas of the Wild Bristol tent, we created a trail card (see *right*), to give to them as they enter the tent. I developed the 'Nurturing Nature Trail' and trail card. There were 10 pictures on the trail card each of which corresponded to a check point around the tent marked with a star with a number in. As people went around the tent they had to put the number by the correct picture and indicate whether or not the picture represents something that is good for nature or bad for nature. In practice, the trail generated lots of discussion about what good or bad for nature, particularly between children and parents.



Mask Making



Children could make either a goat or a Bristol onion mask. We had pictures of the Gully goats and Bristol onions, as well as sample masks, around the area to give the children inspiration. It was a great opportunity to explain to parents the significance of the subjects of the masks that their children were making.



Schools' Day

Friday was the schools' day. We led 90 Key Stage 2 children, from a variety of schools, in mini 'Hairy Conservationists' sessions. They learnt all about the goats in the Gully and why they were there, and were each given a 'Make your own goat mask' pack to take away.

Public days on Saturday and Sunday

The weather over the weekend was variable, Saturday displaying the worst with heavy showers and thunder. During the rainy periods our tent became particularly full, as it was undercover with lots for children to do. We had two openings to the tent, an entrance and an exit. This allowed us to count how many people were coming through the tent. Over the festival weekend 4,462 people came through the Wild Bristol tent.

Children's Holiday events

Since April we have run five children's holiday events. Each of these is on a particular theme so that children learn about our wildlife through discovery, games

and crafts. We have not had as many bookings on our events compared to previous years. This could very well be due to the poor, changeable weather conditions.

Children's holiday event	Date	Number of places available	Number of attendees on the day
Brilliant butterflies	7 th June	20	17
Lets go fly a kite	26 th July	20	11
Animal athletes	2 nd Aug	20	12
Gorge-ous goats	16 th Aug	20	14
Awesome owls	1 st Nov	25	23
Total:			77

'Brilliant Butterflies' turned out to be a rather soggy affair, and as a result we did not make it out onto the Downs to look for butterflies. But despite the weather we all had lots of fun learning about butterflies, playing a rather waterlogged game of 'gulp' and creating fantastic butterfly and caterpillar sock puppets.



For 'Lets go Fly a Kite' I spent time preparing kite making materials and creating a new game 'Which minibeast am I?'. As it turned out to be an extremely hot day, this new game, which can be played while relaxing in the shade, turned out to be ideal. We all had a great time bug-hunting in the morning, and kite making and flying in the afternoon.

For 'Animal Athletes' we developed a morning of Olympic linked activities. One of our fantastic volunteers Bryony designed a trail where the children discovered the gold medal winners among the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs. Then I put together an animal sports day where the children got to try and run as fast as a peregrine flies, eat ants as fast as a woodpecker, flap their wings as fast as a bumble bee and jump as far as a grasshopper. However, my favourite event to watch had to be them carry awkward loads, like ants. Unfortunately, the rain decided to descend during the morning, and I won the gold medal for getting the soggiest. In the afternoon we all dried off while making and flying super speedy peregrine toys.

During the morning I led our 'Gorge-ous Goats' session, having developed some of the activities during the summer play scheme sessions. We ventured down into the Gully to look for and sketch the goats, and in the afternoon made fabulous felt pictures.



For our final children's event of the year, 'Awesome Owls', Ian McGuire from Wild owl came in to teach the children about British owl species, and brought in one of his birds for the children to draw. In the afternoon, using all the materials that I had prepared, we did various owl related crafts activities, making pinecone owls, owl felt badges and owl masks.

Other Duties

Administration

Administration tasks that I assisted the Biodiversity Education Officer with include; taking bookings, sending out booking confirmation paperwork, producing posters and fliers for events and sending out events programmes.

Volunteers



Volunteers are vital for us to be able to run the sessions and events throughout the year. As part of my role I took charge of organising our volunteers, interviewing and inducting new volunteers, making sure that we have the correct number of volunteers to help us on any particular day, and ensuring that they know where to be and when. We had a combination of

volunteers that had helped out in previous years and new volunteers. Between 2nd April and 1st November 16 volunteers have given 778.5 hours of their time to this project.



Facebook

Facebook can be an extremely useful tool for getting information out into the public domain. I have used it to advertise upcoming event and to get in touch with people who could help us to collect the hundreds of jam jars needed for the Jubilee Downs Day in June.

Summary

In 2012 the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project has run more school and playscheme sessions than ever before. For eight schools and five playscheme groups this was a first time visit. A successful new session, 'Hairy Conservationists', has been developed. We have taken part in a variety of fun and exciting community events and run five of our own children's holiday events. The wealth of positive feedback demonstrates that the project continues to progress from strength to strength and has maintained a reputation for high quality outdoor learning.

Appendix I – Education Sessions Feedback Form given to school groups



Education Session Feedback Form

Thank you for your visit today.

Please help us to improve our sessions for the future by giving us some feedback.

Date of visit: _____ School: _____ Year group: _____

Session: _____

How did you hear about the sessions?

How useful was your pre-visit information?

What was the best part of the session?

What could we do to improve the session?

Please give a mark out of 10 for the following:

Session Content ☐ Presentation ☐ Length ☐ Level ☐

How likely are you to book a session with us again?

Very likely ☐ Fairly likely ☐ Fairly unlikely ☐ Very unlikely ☐

Do you have any other comments about your visit?



Please return your completed form in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Appendix II - Sessions Feedback Form given to playscheme groups



Thank you for your visit today.

Please help us to improve our sessions for the future by giving us some feedback.

Date of visit: _____ Name of Group: _____

Session: _____

How did you hear about the sessions?

How useful was your pre-visit information?

What was the best part of the session?

What could we do to improve the session?

Please give a mark out of 10 for the following:

Session Content ☐ Presentation ☐ Length ☐ Level ☐

How likely are you to book a session with us again?

Very likely ☐ Fairly likely ☐ Fairly unlikely ☐ Very unlikely ☐

Do you have any other comments about your visit?



Bristol Conservation & Science Foundation

Please return your completed form in the pre-paid envelope provided.