

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

**Downs Committee**

**27<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

**Report of: Andrew Gordon, Estates Management Team Leader**

**Title: Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Annual Review 2013 and the Report of the Activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Seasonal Education Officer**

**Ward: Citywide**

**Officers Presenting Report: Becky Coffin, Nature Conservation Officer, Park Estates  
Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Officer**

**Contact Telephone Number: (0117) 3525656**

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the reports be noted.

**Summary**

To report, for information, on the fourteenth 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 2013.

**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**

Not applicable

**2. Consultation**

Internal

Robert Westlake, Downs Ranger

External  
Chris Westcott, Natural England  
Jen Nightingale, Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation

### **3. Context**

The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project was launched on 23<sup>rd</sup> 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.

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

This report provides a review of progress and key achievements of the project between January and December 2013.

#### Countryfile

In February, the Avon Gorge was featured on a BBC One Countryfile programme. Ben Skuse (Goat Keeper / Downs Ranger's team), Chris Westcott (Natural England), Angus Tillotson (Conservation contractor) and the Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Officer discussed why the Gorge is a special place for wildlife and our conservation work, including the role the goats play. About 7 million people watched the programme (it's the highest viewed factual programme in the UK). This was a great opportunity to raise our profile on a national level.

#### Conservation Grazing in the Gully

The goats have continued to browsing the invasive woody species like bramble, ash seedlings and holm oak. They are still looking healthy, and continue to be carefully looked after by the Down Ranger's team with regular help from Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FODAG). A student from UWE is also studying the effectiveness of the goat grazing project and analysing the data from the daily goat monitoring sheets.

Natural England have completed a habitat assessment and repeated a fixed point photography survey to compare the changes before and after the goat introduction. The initial findings from these surveys have confirmed that there is real evidence that the goats are helping to move the habitat towards open limestone grassland with target flower species being found more readily across the area. Considering it's still relatively early days, this is promising and a regular monitoring programme will continue to track the changes on the

ground.

FODAG have helped with temporary fencing work to protect common whitebeams, and plans are being developed to install permanent fencing around some of them. A viewing area has been installed by the Council's Woodland and Wildlife Team, to facilitate safer observation of the goats, which is particularly beneficial for school groups.

### Habitat Management Works in the Gorge

The on-going conservation works over recent years are clearly having a positive effect, with the invasive and non-native species noticeably reduced in a number of areas. During the summer this has continued, with further work to control and reduce invasive plants, such as everlasting pea, cotoneaster and holm oak. These works took place at a number of locations, including Sea Walls, Gully Edge and Gully Outcrop, the Great Quarry, St Vincent Rocks, Fairy Land and the Observatory area. This winter's works again focused on the removal of scrub to protect and enhance key areas of limestone grassland.

### Protecting Limestone Grassland on the Downs

This winter the Downs Ranger's team began a programme to remove selected areas of bramble and scrub that are encroaching onto limestone grassland on Zoo Banks. FODAG also repaired the hurdles that protect the wild-flower rich meadow areas on the Downs from erosion by joggers. This year, they have increased the number of hurdles so that further areas of meadow can be safe-guarded.

### Silky Wave Moth Monitoring

Staff from the Bristol Conservation & Science Foundation conducted surveys over an eight week period, covering six priority sites along the Gorge. Numbers of moths recorded were approximately 50 % lower than in the past two years, at all three priority sites on the Bristol side of the Gorge. Compared to 2012, the moth's flight season started 1-3 weeks later at all but one of the sites and the season as a whole ended one week earlier. This reduced, late flight season could be due to this year's late, cold spring. Alongside the monitoring, a BCSF student from UWE carried out two research projects (developing pilot studies carried out by students in previous years) to help inform habitat management within the Avon Gorge.

### The Education Programme

Overall, 10,997 people took part in one of our events, activities or educational visits this year.

### Events Programme

The events programme was as popular as ever, with something for all ages and interests. New events included; a talk about spiders, a 'Winter tree identification' course, a wild flower paper-making workshop, and a 'Singing under the stars' guided walk. We also ran a new children's event called

'Ladybird spotters' in partnership with Rhian Rowson from the City Museum.

### School Groups and Playschemes

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 2<sup>nd</sup> April – 1<sup>st</sup> November).

All the available summer term school sessions were fully booked and we ran more autumn term sessions than in any previous year. Overall 1,495 school children were taught compared with 1,229 children in 2012 and we welcomed five new schools

This was our best year yet in terms of numbers of playscheme children visiting for sessions. All available slots for summer holiday sessions were booked. For our first playscheme session in August, children from Space Cadets, from St George, were very excited to meet the Lord Mayor of Bristol. We were delighted that he took the time to visit us, to find out more about the project, and meet with the children.

### Your Downs - Widening the Audience

A small group consisting of the Downs Ranger, the Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Officer and four members of FODAG was set up to look at widening the range of people who visit, learn about and enjoy the site. The Bristol99 days (see below) were the first events organised by the initiative. We also teamed up with a Bristol City Council Health Trainer and Avon Wildlife Trust to plan a number of walks for people from inner-city areas. In September, we hosted our first walk for 15 people from St Paul's, Easton, Barton Hill and St George. It was a first time all but one of the group had been to the Downs. More walks are planned for 2014.

We are currently progressing a number of projects including walks for older people, sports coaching for children and we've joined the 'Walking for Health - Disability Access' group.

### Bristol99 on the Downs

In June we teamed up with the Bristol Natural History Consortium, FODAG and local naturalists to run 'Bristol99 days on the Downs' (part of a citywide series of wildlife recording events celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Bristol Festival of Nature).

Lower 6<sup>th</sup> students from Clifton College carried out a wildflower survey on one day. On the next, 100 people from the Family centre (deaf children), Khass (a playscheme for disabled children and their siblings) and Young Carers, took part in bug hunts, ladybird and butterfly walks. Tree and butterfly identification walks, led by members of FODAG, were also run for the public.

### Love Bugs

For this year's Bristol Festival of Nature we joined forces with Bristol Zoo's education team and Wild Place Outdoor Learning to run the 'Love Bugs' tent. Prior to the festival, we took 60 Year 5 children from Westbury Park Primary School onto the Downs where they searched for, learned about and sketched

minibeasts.

Back at school, they designed banners depicting a particular group of invertebrates. They also researched their chosen minibeasts and created fact files. Each group then worked with Zoo artist, Su Lees, to turn their designs into batiks which were displayed in the Love Bugs tent at the festival.

During the festival's schools day we ran habitat and food chain sessions for 153 children from 16 groups. A total of 7,166 people visited the tent over the weekend.

### Near Endangered Exhibition

The special wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs was featured in a very successful art exhibition call 'Near Endangered'. It was part of the North Somerset Arts trail and was seen by 633 people.

The exhibition was the brainchild of the graphic designer who works closely with the project. She got together with a four other artists to create artwork inspired by conservation projects that the Zoo supports, including the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project.

The exhibition included Bristol whitebeam sculptures, glass vessels inspired by butterflies found on the Downs and a painting of the Bristol onion. Each piece was supported by a fact file explaining the conservation story behind the artwork.

### Interpretation

The nine wildlife interpretation panels which were revamped and reprinted at the end of 2012 were installed on the Downs. Feedback has been excellent from the public. This work was carried out with funding from Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

The 'Peregrines of the Avon Gorge' leaflets were redesigned and 2,000 copies printed. The production of the leaflet was a joint project between us, the Bristol Ornithological Club, the National Trust and the Bristol Naturalists' Society.

All of the interpretation signs for the plants in the Brunel Garden (the area showcasing the rare plants of the Avon Gorge on the Clifton Suspension Bridge) were reprinted and replaced.

The M-shed requested our range of leaflets for a display about local wildlife which is part of the 'Photographer of the year' exhibition.

Our educational and promotional leaflet, 'Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs' was redesigned. 60,000 copies of the regular leaflet and 1,000 copies of a large-print version were produced. The R.N.I.B transcribed the leaflet onto audio CDs so that folks with visual impairments will be able to enjoy finding about the special nature of the site. The leaflets have been widely distributed and there has been very positive feedback about their new look. This vital work was funded by Downs Committee.

### Community Groups

The education officer gave a talk or guided walk to 408 people from 15 community groups. Groups ranged from the Clifton Suspension Bridge

Volunteers to the John Muir Trust, Women's Institute local groups, ramblers and gardening clubs.

### Volunteer Support

Many of our events couldn't take place without the support of volunteers and work experience students. We're grateful to the 26 people who gave 815 hours of their time over the year.

### Dark Sky Discovery Site Status

With support from Bristol Astronomical Society, Explorer Dome, FODAG and the Downs Ranger, we successfully applied for Dark Sky Discovery Site status for Durdham Down (only the second such designated site in Bristol). DSDS sites can be found all over the UK and are places with good public access and low light pollution where people can enjoy the night sky. A star party is being planned to celebrate and offer an introduction to stargazing.

### Britain in Bloom

Together with FODAG, we gave a presentation to the Britain in Bloom 'City category' judges as part of their tour of Bristol. On the following day, Clifton was judged under the 'Urban' category. The special wildlife of the Avon Gorge, the work of the Project and scrub management on the Observatory ramparts were the subjects of the part of the tour given by the education officer and Downs Ranger.

## **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 2013***

***Printed copies of the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project Annual Review 2013 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 2013

By Joss Smithson

*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.*



*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 2013

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

- 1,495 school children were taught compared with 1,229 children in 2012.
- 494 playscheme children were taught compared with 453 in 2012. The number of booked sessions has increased from 27 to 32.
- Five children's holiday events were run, involving a total of 81 children.
- Over 75 people attended our Bristol99 Day on the Downs event, taking part in minibeast hunts and scientific recording.
- 60 Year 5 children from Westbury Park Junior School worked with us to create minibeast silk batik banners and top trump style information cards in the lead up to the Bristol Festival of Nature.
- For the Bristol Festival of Nature we teamed up with the Bristol Zoo Gardens education team and Wild Place Outdoor Learning to run the 'Love Bugs' tent.
- 153 children were taught at the Bristol Festival of Nature schools' day.
- During the festival weekend 7,166 people came through the Love Bugs tent. 400 children decorated butterfly masks and 250 made 'bugs on sticks'.
- 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 11th March 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013. 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.'*



## 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

Having a good understanding of the project and its education sessions through volunteering with the project over two years, I was able to jump straight in and lead a school session on my second day in the post. Over the summer term I assisted with each of the different education sessions before going on to independently lead sessions.

At the beginning of April I updated the schools email contact database using the Bristol City Council website and then emailed the summer sessions flier to 140 contacts. This was a follow up to the postal mail out of the flier at the beginning of March to 117 teachers carried out by the Biodiversity Education Officer, Mandy Leivers.

At the end of June, I posted the autumn primary programme to 131 teachers and e-mailed it to 140 contacts. I then re-emailed the flier to teachers towards the end of the summer holidays, when they are preparing for the coming term.

### Results

School	Date	Age	Session	No. of sessions	No. of children
St Bonnaventures	12 <sup>th</sup> March	Year 1	Discover the Downs & Tree-mendous fun	2	60
Christ Church School	9 <sup>th</sup> April	Year 1	Habitats	1	18
Christ Church School	10 <sup>th</sup> April	Year 1	Habitats	1	21
Hotwells Primary	23 <sup>rd</sup> April	Year 3	Tree-mendous fun	1	30
Hotwells Primary	30 <sup>th</sup> April	Year 4	Habitats	1	29
Fishponds CE Academy	8 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 2	Habitats & Tree-mendous fun	4	47
Millpond Primary	14 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 5	Habitats & Mammal detectives	4	40
Parson's Street	15 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 1	Habitats & Mammal detectives	2	60
Elmfield School	16 <sup>th</sup> May	KS 2	Habitats	1	6
Westbury Park	21 <sup>st</sup> May	Year 5	Habitats & designing minibeast banners for Festival of Nature	2	29
Westbury Park	22 <sup>nd</sup> May	Year 5	Habitats & designing minibeast banners for Festival of Nature	2	28
Westbury Park	23 <sup>rd</sup> May	Year 5	Creating batik banners & minibeast top trumps for Festival of Nature	2	29
Westbury Park	24 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 5	Creating batik banners & minibeast top trumps for Festival of Nature	2	28
Westbury Park	4 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 2	Habitats	1	29
Westbury Park	5 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 2	Habitats	1	28
Clifton College	7 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 12	Wildflower survey as part of	1	15

			Bristol 99		
<b>Bristol Festival of Nature schools day</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> June	KS2	Food chains and habitats	8	153
<b>Compass Point</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> June	Year 3	Tree-mendous fun	1	29
<b>Compass Point</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> June	Year 4	Tree-mendous fun	1	24
<b>SS Peter &amp; Paul</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 4	Fabulous falcons and foodchains	1	27
<b>St John's</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> June	Reception	Minibeast hunt	1	24
<b>St John's</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> June	Reception	Minibeast hunt	1	21
<b>Home education group</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> June	8 -13 year olds	Fabulous falcons and foodchains	1	16
<b>St John's</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> June	Reception	Minibeast hunt	1	24
<b>Compass Point</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Year 2	Minibeast hunt	1	29
<b>Hotwells</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> July	Reception	Butterfly lifecycles	0	School cancelled
<b>Compass Point</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 1	Discover the Downs	2	58
<b>Elmlea Infants</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 2	Discover the Downs, Tree Trail & Wildflower treasure hunt	9	90
<b>Worle Community Centre</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> July	11 – 14 year olds	Film project	1	15
<b>St Werburghs</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 3	Wildflower treasure hunt	1	27
<b>Brentry Primary</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 5	Wildflower treasure hunt	0	Cancelled – teacher left
<b>Westbury Park</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 3	Hairy conservationists & Wildflower treasure hunt	4	54
<b>Compass Point</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 6	Hairy conservationists	1	10
<b>Compass Point</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> July	Year 5	Hairy conservationists	1	19
<b>St Francis, Nailsea</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Year 2	Map sticks and migration	1	30
<b>Torwood House</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	Year 4	Autumn art	1	17
<b>St Werburghs</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Year 2	Autumn art	2	60
<b>Hotwells Priamry</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Year 4	Autumn art	1	30
<b>Home education group</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Oct	8-13 year olds	Hairy Conservationists	1	22
<b>Westbury Park</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Oct	Year1	Autumn art	1	29
<b>St Ursula's</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Oct	Year 2	Autumn art & Mapsticks and migration	2	60
<b>Westbury Park</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Year 1	Autumn art	1	30
<b>Holymead Primary</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Year 2	Autumn art	2	59
<b>St Matthias Park</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> Oct	KS3	Autumn art	1	2
<b>Holymead Primary</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Year 2	Autumn art	1	30
<b>St Matthias Park</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> Oct	KS3	Tree-mendous fun	0	Cancelled – teachers on strike
<b>St Matthias Park</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> Oct	KS£	Mammal detectives	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>78</b>	<b>1,495</b>

**Red** = new school visiting for the first time in 2013.

### Discussion

In 2013 we taught 1,495 school children in 78 sessions, compared with 1,229 school children in 2012.

This year's summer programme mail out has been very successful. We filled all available dates for school sessions during the summer term, with some groups booking autumn sessions after being unable to visit during the summer term. The autumn mail out has also been well received with more sessions being booked for

the autumn period than in any previous year. There is clearly an increasing demand from schools for the service we provide.

This year we have had to turn away bookings for both the summer term school sessions and summer holiday playscheme sessions. With demand greater than we can meet it clearly shows the high value groups place in our education sessions. To meet future demand it is recommended that the seasonal education officer role is expanded, particularly during the summer season where we are currently operating at maximum capacity.



### ***Evaluation***

We gave an education session feedback form (*see Appendix I*) to the leader of each school group that visited us. We received back 33 forms, which is a 76% return rate, higher than previous years.

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

<b>Session Content</b>	9.5
<b>Presentation</b>	9.1
<b>Length</b>	9.3
<b>Level</b>	9.0

They were also asked how likely they are to book a session with us again (Very Likely, Fairly Likely, Fairly Unlikely and Very Unlikely). 94% said Very Likely and 6% 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:

Thank you for your dedication on such a cold day. The children really had a fantastic time

St Bonaventures 12.03.13

Thank you both very much for a cracking learning experience. The children (and adults!) really enjoyed themselves and it was a really memorable, fun morning.

Hotwells Primary – 30.03.13

Thank you to Mandy, Joss and Hetty, 4B had a fantastic day and educational experience.

Fishponds Academy – 08.05.13

The children of Fishponds Academy also took the time to give their own personal feedback of their experience, which is always lovely to receive.

*Thank you for letting us look at all kinds of weird bugs and insects in the mini-bug hunt. I found a weevil, they have a long nose and they are very rare to find on the Downs.*

James Aged 9

*I liked going on the tree trail because then we found out about our special tree, which is the Bristol Whitebeam. There are only about 300 and you can only find them in Bristol.*

Zara Aged 9.

*I liked the part where we had to present a play or song or rap. I was proud of what we did and I found out that holly trees grow berries in the autumn.*

Ugbad Aged 9.

## 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**

During the Easter holidays I assisted and then led my first play scheme sessions. Again, my experience as a volunteer with the project allowed me to quickly take on leading sessions. During May I updated the contact list for playschemes and then



sent out our summer playscheme session flier to 39 playschemes. By the end of June we were completely booked up for the summer period, with 15 groups booking sessions with us.

### Results

Playscheme	Date	Session	No. of children
Playcation	25 <sup>th</sup> March	Tree-mendous fun	12
Space Cadets	4 <sup>th</sup> April	Discover the Downs	20
Woodcraft Folk	29 <sup>th</sup> April	Hairy Conservationists	8
<b>Khaas</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> May	Discover the Downs	15
Longwell Green Brownies	11 <sup>th</sup> July	Bugs, bees and butterflies	20
Southville Centre	30 <sup>th</sup> July	Discover the Downs	15
Playcation	30 <sup>th</sup> July	Bugs, bees and butterflies	17
Space Cadets	2 <sup>nd</sup> August	Bugs, bees and butterflies	25
Playcation	5 <sup>th</sup> August	Mammal detectives	8
Oldbury Court	6 <sup>th</sup> August	Discover the Downs	23
Our Place	7 <sup>th</sup> August	Wild works of art	10
Torwood House	9 <sup>th</sup> August	Discover the Downs	10
Southville	9 <sup>th</sup> August	Hairy Conservationists	11
<b>Moose playscheme</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> August	Bugs, bees and butterflies	14
<b>Hannah Moore</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> August	Discover the Downs	11
Playcation	13 <sup>th</sup> August	Feathered Friends	19
Oldbury Court	14 <sup>th</sup> August	Feathered Friends	27
Totterdown Childrens Community Centre	16 <sup>th</sup> August	Discover the Downs	12
Torwood House	20 <sup>th</sup> August	Feathered Friends	22
Hannah Moore	20 <sup>th</sup> August	Bugs, bees and butterflies	20
Southville	21 <sup>st</sup> August	Mammal detectives	Playscheme cancelled
Oldbury Court	22 <sup>nd</sup> August	Mammal detectives	14
HAPPY	22 <sup>nd</sup> August	Mammal detectives	9
Space Cadets	23 <sup>rd</sup> August	Feathered Friends	22
Cedarpark	23 <sup>rd</sup> August	Discover the Downs	10
Torwood House	27 <sup>th</sup> August	Bugs, bees and butterflies	26
Sparks	28 <sup>th</sup> August	Discover the Downs & Bugs, bees and butterflies	24
Southville	29 <sup>th</sup> August	Bugs, bees and butterflies	20
Totterdown Childrens Community Centre	30 <sup>th</sup> August	Mammal detectives	12
Torwood House	2 <sup>nd</sup> September	Tree-mendous fun	20
Space Cadets	29 <sup>th</sup> October	Tree-mendous fun	18
<b>Total</b>		<b>32 sessions</b>	<b>494</b>

*Blue* = Playscheme visiting for the first time in 2013.

## Discussion

Our playscheme mail out has also been very well received this year, with all available summer sessions being booked. Between 12<sup>th</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> October 15 groups booked 32 sessions with 494 children attending.

This year, although we greatly increased (by 39%) the number of available sessions we only saw a slight increase in the total number of children attending. On average groups booking sessions with us were smaller in number than in previous years. Discussion with playscheme leaders revealed that reduced numbers have been seen across the board for their groups; with the on-going poor economic conditions fewer families have been booking their children onto playschemes. However, the provision of low cost/free activities such as those that we provide is of increasing importance and benefit to those groups and families that cannot afford greater financial burden, which is reflected in the feedback we received.



Our summer holiday playscheme sessions are highly popular with many groups. This year we had to take the decision to impose a maximum number of bookings per group to maintain fair access for all during the limited summer period.

The last playscheme of the season to come to the Downs, during the October half term holidays, was the Space Cadets group who also visited in the Easter holidays and throughout the summer. With groups such as this visiting the Downs throughout the year it is a great opportunity to develop in the children a deeper connection with the Downs as they get to experience the change in seasons and wildlife throughout the year. I found it also enables me to get to know better the children and staff and cater for their specific needs.

## 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 24 forms back, a return rate of 83%. They were asked to give a mark out of 10 for session content, presentation, length and level. The average results for these fields are:

<b>Session Content</b>	9.4
<b>Presentation</b>	9.4
<b>Length</b>	9.4
<b>Level</b>	9.0

They were also asked how likely they are to book a session with us again (Very Likely, Fairly Likely, Fairly Unlikely and Very Unlikely), 100% said Very likely. From this feedback we can clearly see that the groups value the sessions we deliver and are keen to return for more.

When asked if they had any other comments about their visit the group leaders wrote some lovely comments or took the opportunity for personal praise:

*Keep up the great work, thank you for having us, long may it continue.*

Space Cadets 02.08.13



*We found Joss to be very helpful and friendly. It was a pleasure for all.*

Totterdown children's community workshop 30.08.13

*What was the best part of the day? Joss' knowledge of the Downs and his warm manner with the children.*

Sparks 28.08.13

## 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.

### ***Bristol99 – Days on the Downs***

On the 7th and 8th June we teamed up with the 'Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge' (FODAG) and local naturalists to run 'Bristol99 days on the Downs'. Bristol99 was a citywide programme of wildlife recording events celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Bristol Festival of Nature.

On the 7th June, 15 lower 6th students from Clifton College carried out a wildflower





survey in the main meadow. Richard Bland (FODAG) designed the survey and we had also hoped to take part in a butterfly transect prepared by Martin Collins (FODAG). Unfortunately it rained so the butterfly walk was not possible. Instead, we took the pupils to visit the goats in the Gully and talked to them about our conservation work and FODAG's role in caring for the goats.

One of the central aims for our event was to widen the diversity of those who take part in activities on the Downs. We actively sought out the participation of the Family Centre (for deaf children), Khass (a playscheme for disabled children and their siblings) and Young Carers who all came to the Downs on the 8th to take part in bug hunts, ladybird and butterfly walks. Over 75 people from these groups joined us on the day. We had tremendous support in helping the children and families identify their finds from local entomologists and from the Festival of Nature and our own volunteers. Members of FODAG also ran an information tent and led tree and butterfly identification walks open to the general public.

We had great feedback from Eugenia Knight from Khass who wrote to thank us:

*"Thank you for offering these wonderful opportunities for our children. They thoroughly enjoyed the day which was full of fun, informative and really lovely. The facilitators (including the volunteers) were very welcoming and professional and with a wealth of knowledge about the environment. I would like to thank Joss especially this time. He led the activities with ease and enthusiasm. His input was engaging for children and play workers alike making it another successful play day for us all. We would love to take part in future Downs' activities".*



## ***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 14<sup>th</sup> June to Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June. We teamed up with the Bristol Zoo Gardens education team and Wild Place Outdoor Learning to run the 'Love Bugs' tent as part of the British and Irish Association of Zoo's and Aquaria (BIAZA) Big Bug Bonanza.

### ***Pre- Festival School Work***

This year for our pre-festival school project we worked with 60 Year 5 children from Westbury Park Primary School and the artist and zoo illustrator, Su Lees. Over the course of one week in May we took the two classes out onto the Downs and conducted minibeast hunts.

The children then made detailed sketches of the minibeasts they found. Once back in school the children split into groups with each group representing a taxa of minibeast. Each group then used their sketches to create designs for a large banner displaying their chosen taxa.

On the second day of the project artist Su Lees came to the school and taught the method for creating batik artwork. We helped each group turn their minibeast designs into full colour silk batik banners which we could then display in the Love Bugs tent at the Festival of Nature. To accompany the banners the children created 'Top Trump' style information cards for different species of minibeast.



### ***Love Bugs tent content***

We spent the Thursday before the festival setting up the tent displays and creating a welcoming and fun environment for all visitors to the tent. Throughout the event we had lovely comments from visitors about the children's batiks and many of the school children bought their families to see them over the festival weekend.

Along with our displays of the school children's work we also provided craft activities for children and families visiting the festival. Over the course of the weekend 400 children created butterfly masks and 250 bugs-on-sticks were made.



The Bristol Zoo Gardens education team set up a variety of different games and activities throughout the tent that emphasised the interest and importance of minibeasts. This included a giant butterfly art piece that was decorated with the painted fingerprints of visitors. As well as a recreated garden in one corner of the tent that demonstrated the actions visitors can take to conserve minibeasts in their own gardens.



The zoo education team also ran touch tables where visitors could view and handle live non-native minibeasts. Representatives of Wild Place Outdoor Learning had an information display and were on hand to talk to member of the public visiting the tent about the project.

### ***Munching Minibeast Trail***

Following the success of last year's tent trail we wanted to create a new trail to fit with this year's theme. I developed the 'Munching Minibeast Trail' with the aim to encourage people to explore all of the different areas of the Love Bugs tent. We created a trail card (see below), to give to the public as they enter the tent. Pictures of each of the nine minibeasts on the trail card were placed around the tent. Once found they had to be lifted up to reveal what that minibeast liked to eat.



As people went around the tent they had to write under the correct picture on their sheet what each minibeast liked to eat. The trail was very popular and saw many children and their families explore every corner of the tent to find all nine.

### ***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 one opening to the tent which allowed us to count how many people were coming through the tent. Over the festival weekend 7,166 people came through the Love Bugs tent.

## ***Schools' day***

Friday was the schools' day. We taught 153 Key Stage 2 children, from a variety of schools, in half hour sessions. They learnt all about the different macro-habitats present within the Avon Gorge and Downs, the plant and animals that inhabit them, with a focus on minibeasts, and their interdependence through food chains.

## ***Children's holiday events***

Since March 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. For two of our events we experienced a last minute high dropout rate of bookings, with children failing to attend due to family emergency, illness, etc.

Children's holiday event	Date	Number of places available	Number of attendees on the day
<b>Fabulous flacons</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> May	25	25
<b>Animal adventures</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Aug	20	10
<b>Wild works of art</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> Aug	20	19
<b>Ladybird spotters</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> Aug	20	12
<b>Creepy creatures</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct	20	15
<b>Total:</b>			<b>81</b>

For the May half term holiday children's event we ran a 'Fabulous falcons' day. We spent the morning on the Downs discovering all about the peregrine falcons that live in the gorge. This was followed by falcon kite making, and flying, in the afternoon.

Our first children's event of the summer holidays was 'Animal adventures' in which we discovered all about the amazing journeys animals make to and from the Downs, with making story sticks and eel masks in the afternoon. 'Wild works of art' was a very successful day of creating art and sculpture using natural materials as well as making paper with the artist Bridget Ely. 'Ladybird spotters' saw us team up with Rhian Rowson from Bristol city museum and art gallery who brought in specimens of UK ladybirds before leading us on a ladybird hunt on the Downs. In the afternoon we created pop up minibeast books.

Each of these events needed a significant amount of resource preparation. For our final children's event of the year 'Creepy creatures', held on Halloween, we had lots of fun creating bat bags and spider hats for the children to dress up in, for which I prepared the materials. I also created a new trail to put up on Zoo Banks for the event in which the children discovered all about the myths and truths of the creepy creatures associated with Halloween.

## **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 knew where to be and when. We had a combination of volunteers that had helped out in previous years and new volunteers. Between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> November 18 volunteers have given 233 hours of their time to this project. During this time six people on work experience came to work with us, working for 448.5 hours. In total these volunteers gave 681.5 hours of their time to this project.

## **Social Media**

Social media can be an extremely useful tool for getting information out into the public domain and in maintaining interest from prior engagement activities. We have used Facebook to advertise upcoming events, to display photos from events and to highlight significant wildlife sightings and activities on the Downs. At the end of August I created a Twitter account for the project with the aim of reaching a greater online audience.

## **Summary**

In 2013 the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project has run more school and playscheme sessions than ever before. We were fully booked for both the summer term school sessions and the summer holiday playscheme sessions, and more autumn term school sessions were booked than in any previous year. To meet future demand it is recommended that the seasonal education officer role is expanded, particularly during the summer season where we are currently operating at maximum capacity. We have also 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?



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