

Summary of activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project education programme

From April to June we engaged with 6,878 people through the education programme. This included: seven guided walks, one course, a musical event for toddlers and a children's holiday event. Two of the guided walks were focussed on the trees of the Granny Downs, encouraging exploration of the new Granny Downs tree trail. Both walks were run in partnership with the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG), one of them as part of the Bristol Walk Fest.

During this period, we taught 167 University students and 533 school children (with two of the schools visiting the Downs for the first time).

The new Granny Downs Tree Trail was launched on the 12th April. It was a really successful event with 48 people attending including: the Lord Mayor; Downs Committee members; steering group members; FOD+AG Committee members; as well as representatives of OVO Energy (principal funders of the trail). The trail was dedicated to the memory of Richard Bland (who carried out the preliminary research for the trail) and his family joined us on the day for the launch event and the inaugural walk of the trail.

The Bristol Zoological Society Marketing Team issued press releases and a couple of journalists came to the launch event. This resulted in good coverage in local magazines and on-line. As a result, the trail has been incredibly popular with requests from the public to send copies of the trail to them. We've also been struggling to keep the dispensers at Café Retreat topped up, and the leaflets taken to the Tourist Information Centre for the Easter weekend had all been taken by the beginning of May. Boxes of the leaflets have been taken to the TIC and to the Central Library (for distribution to libraries across Bristol). Leaflets are also available from the University of Bristol Botanic Garden and the Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre.

From April to June we ran the first four 'Botany without Boundaries' project sessions with a group of older Asian women from an organisation called Dhek Bhal. This is an Audience Development Plan project that we are running in conjunction with Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, with funding from Arts Council England, as part of the Museum's Natural Selection exhibition. The sessions were:

- 1 - An introductory session at the Museum which was attended by 10 women, including two Dhek Bhal staff members who translated for us. After a talk about the wildlife and rare plants of the Avon Gorge and Downs, the group had a 'behind the scenes' tour of the museum where they saw antique botanical drawings, herbarium sheets and a range of botanical specimens. This was followed by a tour of the art collection, focusing on the depiction of plants in both paintings and sculpture.
- 2 - A tour of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden focusing on the rare plants of the Avon Gorge and Downs and on plants from South Asia. In the afternoon the group enjoyed a botanical drawing workshop with an artist, who showed the participants some of her own work before teaching them simple illustration techniques.
- 3 - A visit to the Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre, to see an exhibition of paintings and drawings of the rare plants of the Avon Gorge by artists from the Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden.
- 4 - A guided walk to explore the meadows on the Downs and collect specimens of common plants. This was followed by a workshop to learn how to press plants for the creation herbarium sheets and for art projects.

In June we joined the Bristol Zoo Gardens' and the Wild Place Project's education teams to run activities in a tree-themed tent at Bristol Festival of Nature. In our section of the tent we focused on trees found on the Avon Gorge and Downs and promoted the Granny Downs Tree Trail. Visitors went on a 'mini tree trail' looking for pictures of trees that can be found on the Granny Downs and

identified them using the id dial provided. The tree names were written into a crossword puzzle grid. Once filled in this revealed the name of a very special tree - Bristol whitebeam - in a highlighted section of the grid. Having completed the trail and found the answer participants could meet a real Bristol whitebeam tree. Our section was very popular with 5,899 people visiting the tent over the weekend.

The new Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project website was launched in early June. It was a huge piece of work (and there are still some sections which need writing and editing) but it is looking great. The website should encourage a wider range of people to discover, explore and enjoy the wildlife, geology and landscape of the Avon Gorge and Downs. The website redevelopment was partially funded through the grant from the OVO Foundation. You can see the new website at www.avongorge.org.uk