

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

From late September to mid-November we engaged with 549 people through the education programme. We deliberately limited the number of autumn events and education sessions this year, to give us time to work towards the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) bid.

As part of the events programme we ran: four guided walks (Trees of the Granny Downs, Fantastic fungal foray, and two Trees in winter walks); two talks (Fascinating fungi and author Stephen Moss gave a talk on wrens); an autumnal bird identification course, and a Creepy creatures children's half-term event. Before the end of the year we will also be running a 'Willow reindeer' course (fully booked) and a 'Christmas star party' (run in conjunction with Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge).

We ran seven education sessions for 209 school children. Following their trip, Horfield primary school posted two comments on our Facebook page, *"Year 2 had a glorious morning learning about the Bristol whitebeam tree that is unique to our city. They created an amazing natural piece of art and topped the morning off by creating local animals out of clay and other natural resources".* And, *"Thank you for a truly excellent morning. We learned so much and had great fun!"*

At the other end of the education spectrum, we took 23 first year students on the UWE Foundation Degree in Integrated Wildlife Conservation on a guided tour of the Avon Gorge and Downs, as part of their induction. We also had neighbouring stalls with the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge at the University of Bristol Students' Union 'Welcome Fair' on the Downs. This event is a great opportunity for us to promote the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs, the work of the project and explain about our volunteering programme. During the day we talked to 101 students and three of them have applied to volunteer with us.

As part of our 'Your Downs' initiative we co-led a guided walk for the Man Alive! group, from Knowle West, with the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge.

We have continued to develop the new project website - www.avongorge.org.uk. More educational, downloadable 'Activity of the month' resources have been created for the 'Kids Zone' and month-by-month guides to the wildlife have been produced for the Downs Diary section.

There have been numerous planning meetings for NLHF bid. We have also met with Avon Wildlife Trust and the Friends of Troopers Hill to find out about their successful Lottery bids. At the end of October, some of the officers involved in planning the bid met with our National Lottery case officer at their regional office in Exeter. It became apparent that the volume of work needed to prepare the bid is significantly more than we anticipated, so we have agreed to aim for the March deadline instead of submitting on the 19th November, as originally planned.

Mandy attended a meeting at Merchants Hall to discuss next year's Downs Commoners' Grazing Event. She will be planning the educational element of the day in conjunction with staff from Badminton School.

The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project education officer's contract came to an end and she left at the end of October.