

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

Officer Presenting Report: Mandy Leivers, Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Education Manager

From late September to mid-November we engaged with 326 people through the education programme. With covid in mind we deliberately limited the number and type of autumn events and education sessions this year.

As part of the events programme we ran: three guided walks ('Postcard and poetry promenade', 'Meet the Avon Gorge goat keeper' and an 'Owl Prowl on the Downs'); an 'Identifying birds on the Downs in autumn' course and a 'Willow reindeer' workshop. We had also organised a 'Creepy creatures children's' half-term event but had to cancel this when three of the children dropped out leaving us with insufficient bookings. This was really disappointing as the October half-term event is normally fully booked and often over-subscribed. After speaking to a parent, they felt that many parents were feeling very cautious about their children mixing with other children due to the high Covid rates at the time.

We ran nine education sessions for 215 school children. Following on from their 'Autumn Art' sessions, where the children created Andy Goldsworthy style sculptures and crafted their own hedgehog, squirrel, fox or orb-web spider from clay and natural materials, one of the teachers wrote on their evaluation form that, *"The breadth of facts shared, the high quality resourcing for the activities and excellent behaviour management, made it all a really happy and exciting experience"*.

At the other end of the education spectrum, we ran a stall 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 111 students.

The Your Downs group met to catch up on what's been happening on the Downs since our last full meeting in February 2020, to review current project ideas and to plan events and activities going forward.

We have continued to develop the project website - www.avongorge.org.uk – creating more educational, downloadable 'Activity of the month' resources for the 'Kids Zone'.

The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project Learning and Engagement Officer's contract comes to an end on the 24th November.