

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

Normally, at the January meeting of Downs Committee Becky Belfin (Bristol City Council Nature Conservation Officer and co-ordinator of the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project) and Mandy Leivers (Avon Gorge & Downs Biodiversity Education Manager) present an Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project annual review. Unfortunately, Mandy contracted covid at the very end of November and has been too ill to pull the review together. We will therefore bring a report to the March meeting instead.

Due to Mandy being unwell, many of the planned activities had to be cancelled however here's an update on some of the work that did go ahead:

Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project events programme

The events programme for spring 2022 was finalised, designed by the Bristol Zoological Society Graphics Team and printed. Moving away from payment for events by cheques and cash, the bookings are going online and by payment over the phone. Bookings will be handled by the Zoo Bookings Team with Mandy sending out the joining instructions closer to the time of each event. Either an email and pdf of the programme, or a copy of the printed events programme, was sent out to 2,200 people on the mailing list.

Higher education group session

Final year South Gloucestershire and Stroud College students, on the BSc Zoological Management and Conservation course, came to the Downs for a session on bird ringing. Mandy supported licensed bird ringer, Ed Drewitt, as he taught the session which was part of the students' module on Management of Birds for Conservation. Mandy talked to the students about the wildlife importance of the Avon Gorge and Downs and about the work of the project.

The students' tutor, Debbie Berry, commented, *"The session with Ed and Mandy on the Downs was such a valuable opportunity to see first-hand the vitally important conservation work that goes on right on our doorstep here in Bristol.*

The demonstration of techniques used to carefully catch, ring and record data on the wild bird population, consolidated the theory taught in class, and enabled the students to experience a bit of field work for themselves and become familiar with techniques they may go on to learn and use in their own careers.

Listening to the conversations of my students on the way back to class, I can confidently say the session genuinely inspired and motivated them, and generated lots of considered questions and discussion back in class".

Clifton Conservation Hub

When Bristol Zoo closes the Clifton site and relocates to Wild Place, the plan is for the main entrance building to become the Clifton Conservation Hub. The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project education team will be based there, along with a café and an exhibition about the history of the Zoo. Mandy has taken part in a number of meetings to plan how the building could be used and laid out.