

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

Reporting Officer: Vanessa Adnitt, Avon Gorge and Downs Learning and Engagement Officer

From September to October we directly engaged with 516 people through the education programme. As Mandy left the project at the start of September, the number of school bookings and events has been limited to enable Vanessa to run them independently.

Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project events programme

As part of the events programme we ran: an 'Owl prowl on the Downs' guided walk; an 'Eight-legged wonders' talk on spiders; and a course on 'Identifying birds on the Downs'. We also ran an autumn half term children's event called 'Awesome owls' which was fully booked – a relief since the last few children's half term events were cancelled due to low numbers.

School education sessions

During this period, we taught eleven educational sessions to 255 school children from five different schools. One of the schools, Fair Furlong Primary School, was visiting the Downs for the first time. Following on from a 'Mammal Detectives' session, the teachers commented, *"The whole session was really good and I was impressed with how you interacted with the children including those with extra learning needs. There was a really good balance of input and interactive learning and the children really enjoyed the session."*

University of Bristol Students' Union Welcome Fair

Vanessa ran a stand at the University of Bristol Students' Union Welcome Fair and spoke to 152 students about the special wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs and the role of the project. 45 students signed up to the mailing list to find out more about volunteering opportunities and/or events.

SGS Bird Ringing Demonstration

A group of 11 final year students from South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, completing their BSc in Zoo Management and Conservation, attended a bird ringing demonstration with Ed Drewitt from the British Trust for Ornithology, on Zoo Banks. Two chiffchaffs were ringed. Vanessa helped Ed to set up the mist nets and was able to explain more about the special wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs, events and volunteering opportunities to the students.

Talk to Pawlett Women's Institute

Vanessa delivered a talk to 28 ladies from Pawlett Women's Institute about the 'Wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs'. They were very interested and surprised by the diversity found on the site, despite some of them already being familiar with it.

New Avon Gorge and Downs Biodiversity Engagement and Learning Manager appointment

Mandy officially left the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project after 21 years of dedication to the role. Vanessa's contract for the role of 'Learning and engagement officer' was extended from the end of October to the end of the year in order provide

continuity to the project whilst a new 'Biodiversity engagement and learning manager' is being recruited this November.