

Report for December 2023 summary of activities of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife learning and community engagement programme

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Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife (AGDW) events programme

Unfortunately due to separate reasons – illness of the workshop leader for our **Christmas Wreath** workshop and the weather for our **Star Party on the Downs** event – both our events in December were cancelled. However, luckily had discussions with Explorer Dome who are partners in our Star Party and we will run an altered session in February half term so as not to lose our audience. We had taken around 60 bookings on this event, many of which will be a new audience. We aim to run the event so that even in the case of poor weather visibility we can still go ahead.

Our 2024 programme of funding events has now been finalised and will be available to book online shortly. Our events programme this year will begin in February.

Formal educational sessions

Our first A level pilot session took place in late November and was well received and went according to plan. There are some areas which we will work on to improve the learning offer. We will now be offering secondary sessions through this year. We have purchased some equipment for this purpose but also have the use of the Higher Education department equipment at BZS.

Committee members are welcome to observe any learning session AGDW runs this year in order that they can understand how we operate in the formal education capacity. AGDW will need to seek permission from the education group attending.

Outreach to schools

We delivered an assembly to all years at Stoke Park Primary as well as their in-school workshops where we followed sessions over two days complementing the national curriculum in-school. Bespoke sessions were created to this purpose. Assemblies and workshops were well received and it is planned to deliver in further schools next winter. One comment given in feedback was:

“The workshops were engaging and full of incredible local knowledge for our children. We are from a community who do not always access the Gorge or Downs but Anna brought the location to us and a smile to our children's faces! Thank you so so much!”

Pre-school age sessions

Our very last session of term took place before Christmas and had a fabulous Christmas theme which saw the children leaving with fun natural decorations they had made to hang on the tree. Sessions continue and begin in January to take us through to the half term break every Monday until 5th February.



Nature Works

After discussions with the Off the Record representative, who would like this session to be drop-in for their young people, we are happy to go with this plan. To this end we feel the summer break is the best time to offer these sessions to Off the Record when we have fewer groups than in the spring and summer terms, and will result in no other children or young people missing out. This could be the case if none of Off the Record young people attend on days when we could be delivering to school groups. The Learning Engagement Officer will take this project forward in 2024 with the representative from Off the Record.

Adoption West and Children in Care

We have now been put in touch with a service manager who deals with the Recruitment and Assessment teams and we are waiting to hear how they would like to proceed with our offer of engagement.

Bird survey

Our bird survey in conjunction with Bristol Ornithological Club (BOC) continues but due to lack of time and manpower we combined our November and December sessions and ran only one survey at Sea Walls. Surveys will continue next year and we are building up a useful overall picture of diversity of birdlife on the Downs.

Volunteers

Our volunteers were invited to the Bristol Zoological Society Christmas party and each received a very thankful Christmas card from the AGDW engagement team for all their incredible support in 2023.

Social media and website

During the past month a total of 1626 people used our website and our followers on Facebook currently stands above 2300. During the past month our Facebook posts reached 3345 people and our Instagram posts 144. Our Facebook page can be found [here](#) , our Instagram page [here](#) and our website can be found [here](#).

25th Anniversary of AGDW

Tree Trail

One of the main plans is to completely revamp the Tree Trail at the Observatory and the Promenade. We met again with Sarah's Wildlife Projects representatives to discuss the new trail and to go via each tree in turn to assess which activities will work at each tree. Sarah's Wildlife Projects are kindly offering to donate the cost of the signage which will be needed in order to achieve this revamp. The trail is planned to be linked to the AGDW website with activities for children and families and information. A suitable organisation which can produce the types of arboretum sign required to be attached to the trees has now been found. Further work on this will be taking place in January.

Sponsorship of 3x3s

A proposal is put forward to the Downs Committee for the Engagement team to run a sponsorship programme in celebration of the 25th anniversary of ADGW, whereby members of the public can financially sponsor a 3mx3m plot of the Downs or Avon Gorge (to be decided which areas exactly). This will be a fundraiser for the project and helps to raise awareness and nurture ownership and value of the sites. It also encourages people to look after their plot through litter collection and reporting of any issues. This scheme has been used successfully by other organisations to raise awareness and raise funds.

Other

Steering Group

A Steering Group meeting takes place in late January.

Sparks Project

The Engagement Manager and AGDW partners, the Botanical Gardens, spent some time down at Sparks sustainable department store in Broadmead prior to the Christmas holidays to carry out some minor repairs to their installation in advance of the Christmas holidays. A new sculpture created by schoolchildren along with Heart of BS13 stands alongside our installation to highlight local biodiversity. In regard to this the Engagement Manager has contacted the CEO of Heart of BS13 to ask if they are willing to meet in early 2024 to discuss some ways in which we might collaborate, to introduce and engage both adults or children in the community with their incredible city wildlife.

Talks

A talk will be delivered to a Women's Institute group in January which allows for some small donation to the project.

Team Days

Both the Biodiversity Engagement Manager and the Engagement Officer will attend two team days at Bristol Zoological Society as part of their training in January.