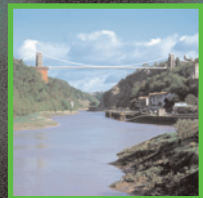


Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge & Downs



Welcome to the Avon Gorge, Clifton Down and Durdham Down

Imagine a place where a vast Gorge stretches before you. Its wild and rugged rock faces, home to rare wildflowers, plunge down to a glistening river.

Close by are the Downs where you can go for a stroll, play football, fly a kite or enjoy a perfect picnic beside wildflower meadows.

Just two miles from Bristol city centre, this is one of the most exciting places to enjoy wildlife in Bristol. What's more it's open all year round and it's free!



HOW TO GET HERE

By Bus – The following services all run past the Downs - 1, 8, 41, 42, 43, 54, 55, 99, 586 and 587. For further information call Traveline on 0870 608 2608.

By Train – The nearest train station is Clifton Down Station, 10 minutes walk from the Downs. Call National Rail Enquiries on 0845 7484950 for further details.

By Road – Use the map below.



For further information about the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project or for a copy of our events programme, contact:

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The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project is a partnership of:



The Downs Committee

We are also working in partnership with the National Trust who manage part of Leigh Woods on the North Somerset side of the Gorge.

Production of this leaflet is supported by:



Gorgeous plants



Bristol rock-cress delicate Bristol rock-cress and the lollipop-like Bristol onion, aren't found anywhere else in the UK.



Wilmott's whitebeam

In the winter you may see dare-devil conservationists working from ropes on the cliffs below. Working on behalf of the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project, these specially trained



Photo credits: Avon Wildlife Trust (scabious, marbled white, common blue, fox, bird's-foot-trefoil, brimstone, burnet moth), James Barke (pictures of people), Nick Dixon (flying peregrine), Paul Gillis (workers on cliffs), Chris Gomersall / RSPB-images.com (green woodpecker, redwing), David Green / Butterfly Conservation (silky wave moth), Libby Houston (spiked speedwell), Helen Hall (oxeye daisy, harebell, autumn squill), Mark Hamblin / RSPB-images.com (bullfinch), Chris Jones (peregrine falcon, Avon Gorge), Su Lees (jackdaw), Nick Martin (Bristol rock-cress), T. J. Rich / naturepl.com (roe deer), Colin Seddon / naturepl.com (rook), Keith Taylor (Bristol onion), Nicholas J. Wray (Bristol and Wilmott's whitebeam).

From Observatory Hill and Seawalls you can enjoy stunning views of the Avon Gorge. Just below where you are standing rare wildflowers grow on the craggy ledges.

Two of them, the



Bristol onion

The Gorge is also home to Wilmott's and Bristol whitebeams, two species of tree that grow wild here and nowhere else in the world.



Bristol whitebeam

workers protect the rare plants by clearing invasive scrub and non-native weeds.

Marvellous meadows

In summer why not come to the Downs for a picnic. At this time of the year the meadow areas are brimming with wildflowers. Notice how many different kinds there are. Orchids, oxeye daisy, scabious, harebell and wild thyme all thrive here.



Oxeye daisy



Scabious



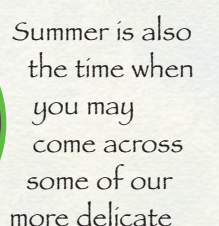
Harebell

After the plants have had time to flower and set seed we cut the meadow areas to make hay.

Bugs and beasties



Marbled white



Common blue

Summer is also the time when you may come across some of our more delicate inhabitants. We have counted 21 species of butterfly here. Look out for marbled whites, common blues and meadow browns.

Caring for wildlife

The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project looks after the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge and the Downs. We have three roles:

- Surveying and monitoring wildlife
- Habitat management
- Education



Brilliant birds



Peregrine falcon

From the Peregrine Watch point you may be lucky enough to catch sight of a peregrine falcon. For the best chance of seeing one of their spectacular aerial displays, visit in May and June.

We've counted 22 species of bird breeding on the Downs. Look out for unusual residents such as green woodpeckers and bullfinches whilst you're here.



Green woodpecker



Bullfinch

Many other birds also come to feed. Look out for flocks of rooks, jackdaws and gulls probing the football pitches for juicy worms and grubs.

Mammal magic

An early morning stroll or jog might reveal some of our more secretive animals. Foxes, hedgehogs, weasels and roe deer have all been seen. Endangered lesser



Roe deer



Fox

and greater horseshoe bats also roost in the Gorge. The easiest mammals to spot, however, are acrobatic grey squirrels.

Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge & Downs



Silky wave

On warm July evenings look out for the rare silky wave moth as it flits about looking for its food plant, rock-rose. This moth is only found on two other sites in the UK.

Silky wave moth



As the crow flies

The Downs are a great place for spotting members of the crow family. Look out for ravens, rooks, crows, jackdaws, magpies and jays.

Jackdaw



Unique to the Gorge

Two types of tree (Bristol and Wilmott's whitebeam) are endemic to the Gorge (ie, they grow naturally here and nowhere else in the world). You can see examples of Bristol whitebeams here.



Bristol whitebeam

Super speedy

Peregrine falcons have bred in the Gorge since 1990. These spectacularly fast falcons can often be seen from the Peregrine Watch point.

Peregrine falcon



Funny goings on

Roe deer sometimes swim across the River Avon, from Leigh Woods, to the Bristol side of the Gorge. There have also been reports of badgers using the Suspension Bridge to get from one side of the Gorge to the other.

Leigh Woods

This side of the Gorge is managed by the National Trust and Forest Enterprise.

Spiked speedwell



Famous flora

The Avon Gorge is home to some very rare plants. For at least 450 years plant lovers have been searching the craggy ledges for rarities such

as honewort, spiked speedwell, autumn squill, dwarf mouse-ear and fingered sedge.

Autumn squill



True Bristolians

Did you know that three rare plants living in the Gorge have Bristol in their name? They are Bristol whitebeam, Bristol rock-cress and Bristol onion.

Bristol rock-cress



Bristol onion



CLIFTON DOWN

Peregrine Watch

6-spot burnet moth



Spotting spotty moths

As well as butterflies, day-flying 5 and 6-spot burnet moths also live on the Downs. Can you get close enough to one to count its spots?

Observatory Hill

Clifton Suspension Bridge

DURDHAM DOWN

Ladies Mile

Water Tower

Whiteladies Road



Redwing

Bird café

Many birds come to the Downs to feed. In winter keep your eyes peeled for flocks of migrant redwing and fieldfare. They particularly like berries on the old hawthorn trees around the Downs.

Bird's-foot-trefoil



Meadow magic

The large areas of limestone grassland on the Downs are packed full of wildflowers such as bird's-foot-trefoil, oxeye daisy and harebell. Visit in the summer to see them at their best. Don't forget to leave the wildflowers for others to enjoy.

Oxeye daisy



Special designations - what's in a name?

The Avon Gorge is such an important place for wildlife that it has been given the national designation of a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It's also recognised internationally as a candidate Special Area of Conservation. The Downs are designated locally as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest.