



Bristol rock-cress

The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project is working to protect the outstanding wildlife interest of the Avon Gorge and the Downs. We also aim to raise awareness about the importance of this unique place for people and wildlife. The Project is a partnership of:



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

Welcome to the Avon Gorge, Clifton Down and Durdham Down...

one of the most exciting places to enjoy wildlife in Bristol!

Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs



For further information, copies of our natural trail leaflets or events programme please contact:

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This leaflet is also available on audio CD.



Bristol onion



How to get here

By Road: Use the map below.

By Bus: The following services all run past the Downs – 1, 8, 9, 40, 41, 54, 586 and 587. For further information visit www.traveline.info or call Traveline on 0871 2002233.

By Train: the nearest train station is Clifton Down Station, 10 minutes walk from the Downs. Visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 0845 7484950 for further details.



Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs

Caring for Wildlife

The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project has three roles:

- Surveying and monitoring Wildlife
- Habitat management
- Education

Gorgeous plants

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

Unique to the Gorge

Four types of tree, Bristol, Wilmott's, Houston's and Leigh Woods whitebeams, grow wild here and nowhere else in the world.

Cliff hanger

In the winter you may see daredevil conservationists working from ropes on the cliffs below. These specially trained workers protect the rare plants by clearing invasive scrub and non-native weeds.

Goats in the Gully

In a specially fenced area of the Gorge, known as the Gully, we've introduced a small herd of goats. These 'hairy conservationists' are helping make room for rare wildflowers, by eating invasive woody plants like scrub and bramble.

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.

Many different kinds such as orchids, scabious, harebell and wild thyme all thrive here.

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

Common blue



Goat



Peregrine falcon



Observatory hill



Bugs and beasties

Summer is also the time when you may come across some of our more delicate inhabitants. 27 species of butterfly live here. Look out for marbled whites, common blues and meadow browns. In the Gully you might also spot a rare small blue or chalkhill blue.

Brilliant birds

We've counted 35 species of birds breeding on the Downs. Look out for unusual residents such as green woodpeckers and bullfinches whilst you're here.

Super speedy

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.

Bird café

Many other birds also come here to feed. Big flocks of rooks, jackdaws and gulls can be seen probing the football pitches for juicy worms and grubs.

Mammal magic

An early morning stroll might reveal some of our more secretive animals. Foxes, hedgehogs, weasels and roe deer have all been seen. Endangered horseshoe bats also roost in the Gorge's caves. The easiest mammals to spot, however, are acrobatic grey squirrels.

Special designations – what's in a name?

The Avon Gorge is such an important place for wildlife, that it has been internationally recognised as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and nationally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Downs are a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).