Welcome to the Avon Gorge, Clifton Down and Durdham Down

With stunning views and awe-inspiring geology, the Avon Gorge’s wild and rugged rock faces are home to rare wildflowers, beautiful insects and nesting peregrine falcons.

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!

Caring for wildlife

The Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife Project was set up to look after the wildlife of the Bristol side of the Avon Gorge and the Downs.

We have three roles:
- Wildlife surveying and monitoring
- Habitat management
- Education

We have a wide range of schemes and projects to help protect and conserve our wildlife. There are nesting peregrine falcons. 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.

Marvellous meadows

Birds and beasts

Brilliant birds

Great for going on a circular walk to see the Gorge and Downs. 

How to get here

By Bus: the following services all pass the Downs – 1, 6, 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.

By Road: follow the map below.

Contacting us

For copies of our nature trail leaflets or events programme, or details of our school and play scheme sessions please contact:

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www.avongorge.org.uk  www.facebook.com/avongorge

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.

Production of this leaflet was funded by the Downs Committee.

This leaflet is also available in large print and audio CD. Tel: 0117 9030609

Mammal magic

Marvellous meadows

Habitat management

We have three roles:

Silky wave moth (Mark Parsons, Butterfly Conservation) | Goat (Helen Hall) | Peregrine falcon (©iStock) | Goat in the Gully | Peregrine watching (AGDWP).

Photography: Front cover: View of the gorge (Gambleshi.com) | Bristol zoo (Phil Hewitt) | Panoramic View of Bristol | Bristol Zoo (Phil Hewitt) | Peregrine falcon (©iStock) | Goat in the Gully | Peregrine watching (AGDWP).

Photography: The Downs (Simon Muir) | Common blue, goat in the Gully (Helen Hall) | Dog walking on the Downs, Enjoying Observatory Hill (James Barke) | Common spotted orchid (Su Lees) | Bristol whitebeam (Nicholas J. Wray) | Herb-Robert, Wilmott’s whitebeam, Bristol onion, knapweed, harebell (Phil Jearey) | Bristol rock-cress, peregrine falcon, raven, lichen, yellow rattle (Denice Stout) | Bluebell Bristol whitebeam (Nicholas J. Wray) | Fieldfare (©iStock).


At the Avon Gorge and Downs we are aware that Managing the landscape is both a challenge and a privilege. We have a responsibility to find the balance between our natural landscape and the needs of wildlife. In the summer we leave our meadows unmown so many species of butterflies and moths such as the Small blue, chalkhill blue, small scabious, meadow browns and meadow brown butterflies can thrive here. The Gorge is also home to the delicate blue, small scabious. Over 30 different kinds of rare plant grow here, making it one of the top botanical sites in the UK. The Gorge is also home to our extremely rare Woods whitethorn.

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Weeds and invertebrates

Endangered lesser spotted woodpecker make their nest in the cliffs below. These specially trained workers are sometimes seen ‘buzzing’ over the Gorge. For further details, visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 0871 2002233.

Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs

Visit and enjoy a perfect picnic beside wildflower meadows.

Small scabious, Bristol whitebeam, peregrine falcon, raven, lichen, yellow rattle (Denice Stout) | Bluebell, Bristol whitebeam (Nicholas J. Wray) | Fieldfare (©iStock).
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Silky wave
In late June and early July, look out for the rare silky wave moth. It’s only found on two other sites in the UK.

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

Goats in the Gully
Look out for our small herd of goats here. These ‘hairy conservationists’ are helping to make room for rare wildflowers by eating invasive woody plants like scrub and bramble.

Super speedy
Peregrine falcons have bred in the Gorge since 1990. These spectacularly fast falcons can often be seen from the Peregrine Watch point. Why not pick up a copy of the Peregrine leaflet to find out more about them?

Leigh Woods
This side of the Gorge is managed by the National Trust and the Forestry Commission.

Famous flora
The Avon Gorge is home to over 30 different kinds of rare plants. For at least 450 years plant lovers have been finding rarities such as honewort, autumn squill, spiked speedwell and little robin on its craggy ledges.

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.

Unique to the Gorge
Four types of tree. Bristol, Wilmott’s, Houston’s and Leigh Woods whitebeams, are endemic to the Gorge (i.e. they grow naturally here and nowhere else in the world). You can see some Bristol whitebeams here.

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.

Lovely lichens
Winter is the best time to spot strange and beautiful lichens growing on trees. Why not pick up a copy of the Downs lichen trail leaflet to find out more about them?

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 yellow rattle. Visit in the summer to see them at their best. Don’t forget to leave the wildflowers for others to enjoy.

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).

Aerial photograph © Getmapping plc