

Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge and Downs



How to get here

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.

By Road: follow the map below.



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

Contacting us

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

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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

Photography: Front cover: View of the Gorge (©zedphoto.com) | Bristol onion (Phil Jearey) | Peregrine falcon (©iStock) | Goat (Helen Hall) | Peregrine watching (AGDWP).
Inside poster: Silky wave moth (Mark Parsons, Butterfly Conservation) | Goat (Helen Hall) | Bristol rock-cress, peregrine falcon, raven, lichen, yellow rattle (Denice Stout) | Bluebell (Emma Wills) | Autumn squill, Bristol onion (Phil Jearey) | Jackdaw (Ray Cottrell/NWBCC) | Bristol whitebeam (Nicholas J. Wray) | Fieldfare (©iStock)

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Hedgehog

Grey squirrel

Fox

Small blue

Meadow brown

Marbled white

Goat in the Gully

Conservation work

Bristol onion

Mammal magic

Why not use the Downs bird trail leaflet to find out more?

We've counted 35 species of bird breeding on the Downs. Look out for unusual residents such as **bullfinches** and **green woodpeckers** whilst you're here. Many other birds also come here to feed. Big flocks of **rooks**, **carrion crows**, **jackdaws** and **gulls** can be seen probing the football pitches for juicy worms and grubs.

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. Pick up a copy of the **Peregrines of the Avon Gorge** leaflet to find out more.

Brilliant birds



Green woodpecker

Bullfinch

Peregrine falcon

The Gorge and Downs are teeming with amazing insects and other invertebrates. One of the rarest is the **silky wave moth**. It's only found on two other sites in the UK. 27 species of butterfly live here. On a sunny summer's day look out for **marbled whites**, **common blues** and **meadow browns**. In the Gully you might also spot a rare **small blue** or a **chalkhill blue**.

After the plants have had time to flower and set seed we cut the meadows to make hay. **Why not use the Downs meadow trail leaflet to find out more?**

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.

Marvellous meadows



Harebell

Small scabious

Knapweed

From Observatory Hill and Seawalls you can enjoy stunning views of the Avon Gorge. Just below, rare wildflowers grow on the craggy ledges. Over 30 different kinds of rare plant grow here, making it one of the top botanical sites in the UK. It's particularly famous for its whitebeam trees, some of which grow wild here and nowhere else in the world! Amongst these are the **Bristol, Wilmott's, Houston's and Leigh Woods whitebeams**. The Gorge is also home to the delicate **Bristol rock-cress** and lollipop-like **Bristol onion**. This is the only place they grow in the UK. In the winter you may see dare-devil conservationists working from ropes on the cliffs below. These specially trained workers protect the rare plants by clearing invasive scrub and non-native weeds. In the Gully we've introduced a small herd of **goats**. They're here to restore wildflower-rich grassland by munching woody species like bramble and scrub which, if left unchecked, shade out and kill the rare plants.

Gorgeous plants



Bristol whitebeam

Wilmott's whitebeam

Bristol rock-cress

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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**.



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.



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?**



DURDHAM DOWN



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.

River Avon

Seawalls

The Gully

Main Meadow

CLIFTON DOWN

Peregrine Watch

Bristol Zoo Gardens

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?**



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 **honesty, autumn squill, spiked speedwell and little robin** on its craggy ledges.



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.



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**.



AVON GORGE

Observatory Hill

Clifton Suspension Bridge

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).