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The Hawthorns

(Also known as: The Common, wildlife management, environment)

The Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre on Southampton Common, is Southampton City Council's natural environment information and management centre. This page gives you more information about what we do.

Contact Details:

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Details of service:

Our purpose is to enable residents of, and visitors to, Southampton to learn about, protect and encourage local wildlife and their habitats and advise and promote conservation management on city open spaces.

Situated on the south east corner of Southampton's premiere open space, Southampton Common, the Centre is built on land that had previously been a zoo, a tree nursery and The Hawthorns Cottage!

With the assistance of the National Lottery Heritage Fund the main display area has been completely refurbished. You can follow the history of the Common along the timeline and a photo montage shows the history of the Hawthorns site.

The interactive display has features such as 'Who's Baby' that shows what some of those strange looking things you find in the garden turn into, 'Friend or Foe' - do rats deserve such a bad press?, and the ever popular mice, newts and fish have fantastic new homes. A large illuminated map shows the location of the different habitats on the Common and how these habitats can be accessed through a touch screen display.

Before you enter the grounds you can see three possible alternatives for the future of Southampton Common and there are some questions to think about for 'The Common Good'.

Outside the grounds are planted and managed as different wildlife habitats. On a quiet stroll around the grounds, you can see many butterflies and other insects as well as birds and that rustling in the undergrowth maybe a shrew or woodmouse. The wide variety of plants all provide either food or shelter for wildlife and so it is important to keep to the tarmac paths so as not to crush the plants and mini beast that live by the path edges.

One of the most picturesque features in the grounds is the wood terrace that borders the dragonfly pond and where you can see carp and rudd among the water lilies, or watch the dragonflies and damselflies darting about or skimming the water. If you are lucky you may spot a kingfisher that on occasion visit the site. There are chairs and tables on the terrace where you are welcome to picnic or just sit and spend some time watching the clouds roll by!