

Southampton – Weymouth

South West Trains operate services on the route between the ocean port of Southampton and Weymouth. Travelling in Thomas Hardy's Wessex for most of the way, the line is also a window into the New Forest and parts of the south Hampshire and Dorset coast.

Leaving Southampton, this route passes through the New Forest, used and developed for hunting in the eleventh century by William the Conqueror, a very important area for wildlife and worth exploring. The lowland heathland that makes up a large proportion of the New Forest is a fascinating habitat with some very special wildlife. **Hobbies** are small, fast and incredibly agile falcons that specialise in hunting flying insects and even birds like swallows and martins. The areas of gorse and heather are home to the tiny **Dartford warbler**. This delicate bird stays with us all year rather than migrating like most other warbler species. From the train, one of the best opportunities for viewing birds comes as the train crosses Poole Harbour. Look out here for pure white **little egrets***. Also to be found in the New Forest are **New Forest ponies**, one of several hardy indigenous breeds of pony found in the UK. The whole route through to Weymouth is an excellent place to see **common buzzards*** soaring over hillsides and **roe deer** grazing areas such as golf courses. At dusk it is also worth looking out for **badgers***, particularly in pastoral areas, as they groom and play together, before moving off to forage alone for earthworms and other crops. These charismatic social mammals are particularly numerous in this part of the world.

*Little egret – picture on page 19

*Common buzzard – picture on page 19

*Badger – picture on page 15



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Dartford warbler - A tiny but distinctive heathland bird with a scratchy song.



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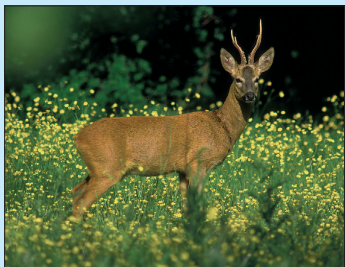
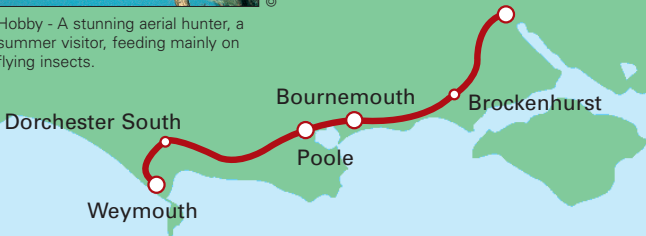
Hobby - A stunning aerial hunter, a summer visitor, feeding mainly on flying insects.



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New Forest pony - one of a number of species of tough ponies whose histories have been lost in the mists of time.

Southampton Central



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Roe deer - mostly seen on their own, unlike fallow deer. Males also have shorter antlers, rarely longer than 25cm.

