

Par Beach Nature Reserve: The Dunes

Did you know

Our dunes here at Par are a bit special. Sand dunes are the only alkali-rich soils in Cornwall, due to the calcium from sea-shells finely ground by the sea that the sand contains. At Par the dunes have been slightly modified by ships dumping their ballast here before loading up with china clay, and ballast in the form of rubble (as it used to be), has made the dunes slightly less alkaline than elsewhere in Cornwall. Seeds can be spread in ballast from wherever the ship has come from in the world, and some of these accidental imports can grow & flourish, and are known rather picturesquely as "ballast aliens". One example is the Wallflower Cabbage, a brassica as its name implies, native to France & Germany but not to Britain. This has established itself in the dunes & can be seen growing on the path from the FoPB Beach Hut to the beach. Ballast Aliens add to the floral diversity of the Par dunes, which as a result partly of this and partly because of the wide variety of habitats contained in the area, are the most species-rich dunes in Cornwall, and that makes them a bit special. Cathy Trodd FoPB

Some of the plants you can see on our dunes.



Sea
Buckthorn

1. **Marram grass: to stabilise the dunes**
2. **Sea Buckthorn, invasive, not native to Cornwall**
3. **Rosa Rugosa, invasive, needs control, Japanese**
4. **Ragwort**
5. **Sea Knotgrass: very rare, a Mediterranean plant, endangered, (only 250 plants in Britain)**
6. **Birds Foot Trefoil, food plant of the 6 Spot Burnet**



Marram Grass



Ragwort



Rosa Rugosa



Sea Knotgrass



Birds Foot Trefoil

On the foredunes (these are the youngest emerging dunes nearest the sea) you can see: Sea Bird Weed, Sea Sandwort, Sand Sedge, Sand Couch, Sea Rocket, Curly Dock.
On the fixed dunes: Red Fescue (grass) Cocksfoot (grass) False Oat grass and other grasses.

Among the many insects on the dunes it is possible to see two day moths:

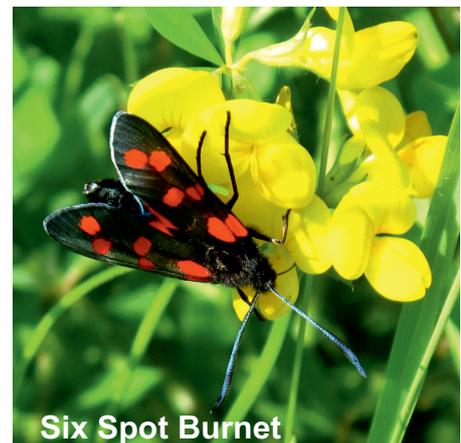
- the **Cinnebar Moth**: larval food plant is Ragwort, the poisons from which are stored in its caterpillars, which is why they are yellow and black as a warning to birds.
- The **Six Spot Burnet**, food plant Birds Foot Trefoil



Cinnebar Moth



Cinnebar Moth Chrysalis



Six Spot Burnet

All flora and fauna on the dunes can be identified by FoPB.... photograph please, don't pick it. Bring your pic. to our hut or post on our Facebook page.