

# **Wildlife at Fanore Sand Dunes**

## **or**

# **Flora & fauna of Fanore Sand Dunes**

During the summer months, when visiting the dunes at Fanore, thread carefully around the grasslands of the area in front of the car park as this is rich in plant and animal lifeforms.

For instance many of the Burren flowers flourish in this picturesque part of the Burren. Plants like the **Spring Gentian** *Gentiana verna*, **Bloody Cranesbill** *Geranium sanguineum* and **Carline Thistle** *Carlina vulgaris* can all be seen in early summer. While other tiny growers like the Eyebright *Euphrasia officinalis*, and tall **Harebells** *Campanula rotundifolia* will be plentiful in mid to late summer.

Mammals also frequent the sand dunes. **Rabbits** *Oryctolagus cuniculus* live in small pockets where soft sand mounds allow them easy digging into the ground and lush grass to feed on just outside the front door.

The **Stoat** *Mustela erminea* regularly ventures into the sand dunes from the nearby limestone walls and crags, to chase rabbits.

A great variety of other insects also attracted to the flowers and plants of the sand dunes. The **5-Spot Burnet** moth *Zygaena trifolii* and **The Cinnabar** moth *Tyria jacobaeae* with their red and black wings are day fliers that regularly appear in the grasslands.

While **Beetles** hunt out smaller insects and dead plant matter in the undergrowth. **Bumblebees** and **Small Tortoiseshell** Butterflies *Aglais urticae* scent out the flowers for nectar spreading all important pollen as they go.

Many different types of birds frequent the Sand dunes. The rich meadows and marram grass are suitable for nesting **Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* and **Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*. Also nesting in this area is the trans Saharan migrant **Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*. The nest in underground burrows, holes in walls and in crag limestone pavements. **Wheatears** arrive back from Africa in late March and stay in this region to raise their young during summer. Once August comes in, Wheatears begin to depart for their long migration back to south of the equator.

On the beach there are lots to see. Late summer into autumn is best for exploring the sandy areas and rocky shore. On low tide rock pools will hold **Rock Gobies** *Gobius paganellus*, **Common Shrimp** *Crangon*

*vulgaris* and **Father Lashers** *Myxocephalus scorpius*. While clinging onto the rocks will be **Beadlet Anomes** *Actinia equina* and **Goose Batnacles** *Lepas anatifera*.

Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvichensis* also gather in large flocks on the beach before heading off the Southern Oceans. While keep an eye out on the sea for diving seabirds such as **Gannets** *Morus bassanus* and the smaller pengiun like **Guillemots** *Uria aalge*. **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** *Tursiops truncatus* are ocassionally seen breaking the surface of the sea as they chase fish along the coast.