

Out on the Towans:

Cornwall's coral reef

by Martin Rule, Towans Ranger

As the year turns, it always seems natural to both reflect on the year which has gone, and look ahead to the blank canvas of 12 months stretching before us.

I'd like to wish you a very happy 2023, and I hope that you managed to spend at least some of 2022 out on the Towans, immersing yourself in the incredible environment and wildlife we have here.

Looking back at 2022, I would like to thank all the amazing volunteers who have worked so hard in recent months. More than 2,000 hours of work have been given across the year, from beach cleaning to bramble bashing to wildflower and butterfly monitoring, as well as increasingly working alongside local school children. All fantastic stuff which we plan to do more of in 2023.

Despite hideous weather, about 50 people attended our AGM in November, when we were treated to a fascinating talk by Dr Colin French, one of Cornwall's most eminent botanists. Using his incredible database, Colin demonstrated just how rich a place our Towans is for wildlife, especially plants. In his study of 100 of Cornwall's top nature sites, our very

own Gwithian Green, the 15-acre gem tucked in behind Gwithian Church, came out top of the league in terms of rare species per acre.

In fact, in preparing for this talk, it dawned on us that the land from Lelant to Godrevy makes up less than 1% of Cornwall, but holds about 25% of its wildlife species! This mirrors the world's coral reefs, which occupy less than 1% of the planet but support 25% of all biodiversity – hence the title of Colin's talk.

I really think we've hit on something here.

Everyone knows how valuable coral reefs are – but we need to keep on raising

awareness among local residents, as well as visitors, about how important and precious the Towans is. I want people to know they've entered a special place – like a National Park or the Jurassic Coast – and to take more interest in it and feel more inclined to help look after it. I must admit to being disappointed that lots of my 'Pick up (dog) Poo' signs placed around the Towans recently have been removed very quickly. This is not the sort of attitude that shows we care about the place, or that we feel it's special. I'm sure it is the attitude of a small minority of people, but it lets us all down.

You'll notice our grazing ponies and cattle are busy now, as are our twice-weekly work parties, winter being the time when we do the bulk of our habitat management work. As ever, if you'd like to get involved with any of this, just email me at martinrule@talktalk.net

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