

Out on the Towans:

Clouds of blue

by Martin Rule, Towans Ranger

So here we are. We've reached the heady days of summer, when many more people – both locals and holidaymakers – discover the Towans. I always encourage people to pause and look around as they walk through the dunes on their mad dash to the beach!

There's so much wildlife to see and hear right beside you if you just take the time to look and listen. We have one of the largest populations of the silver-studded blue butterfly in the country – reaching into thousands! During June and much of July, groups of these beautiful butterflies can easily be seen in many areas, usually flying quite close to the ground, where the grass is shorter and less tussocky.

You can often find yourself walking through little clouds of silver-studded blues – a real treat! In the grassland below them, you will see many lovely pink spikes of pyramidal orchid, along with mountains of sweet-scented, foamy yellow lady's bedstraw. This was used many

years ago to add some pleasant perfume to human bedding.

In some places, often where the ground has been disturbed by digging rabbits, you'll find one of my seasonal favourites – the blue and mauve viper's bugloss. This is the native version of the tall echium plants which many people can grow in their gardens, if they are frost-free. Viper's bugloss often grows alongside the yellow flowers of ragwort. This plant might deserve a whole article at some point, but right now I just encourage you to look for the black and gold striped caterpillars of the cinnabar moth. Ragwort is its only foodplant, so is essential to its survival.

Friends of the Towans' summer programme of nature walks and beach cleans is going really well, and is clearly being enjoyed by newcomers as well as our ever-growing band of regular volunteers. As ever, if you'd like to get involved with our work, just email me at martinrule@talktalk.net and don't forget to check out our website, www.friendsofthetowans.co.uk, and Facebook page.

Along with the whole of the Hayle community, we were shocked and saddened in May to learn of the sudden death of John Bennett, one of our trustees. John was certainly a true friend of the Towans – he played a major role in the process of registering Friends of the Towans with the Charity Commission, and then provided us with great service as our treasurer. His legacy is widespread in the town and beyond, and we express our condolences to his family. I have a bittersweet memory of the last time I saw John, when he came on a birdwatching walk which I arranged in and around Godrevy in April. He was thrilled to see his first ever choughs.

www.friendsofthetowans.co.uk

