

Coasts and Islands: Coastal Marshes and Sand Dunes - Claudia Beamish

Hello, I am Claudia Beamish, former Member of the Scottish Parliament for the South Scotland region Hello, I am Claudia Beamish, I'm a former Member of the Scottish Parliament for the South Scotland region. I was also the Nature Champion, or Species Champion as it was, for the Forester Moth.

Forester Moths are an extraordinarily striking, emerald-green colour with a metallic sheen. These beautiful moths prefer damp meadows, but can also be found in coastal marshes and sometimes on sandy heathland and sand dunes. In Scotland, they're found in the south-west, near Dumfries, and on the West Coast of Scotland near Oban and on the isles of Lismore, Mull and Jura.

Coastal habitats include any place where land meets the sea, and these habitats are incredibly diverse themselves, encompassing a wide range of ecosystems that support a rich array of wildlife.

For example, saltmarshes, nestled between land and sea, support a rich diversity of birds, including waders and waterfowl, while estuaries serve as a thriving meeting point for freshwater and saltwater species. These estuaries also sometimes contain mudflats, which draw in flocks of wading birds who come to rest and feed on worms, molluscs, and tiny shellfish during their migrations.

Of these coastal habitats, sand dunes are listed as one of the most at-risk habitats in Europe. Scotland has the bulk of the UK's sand dunes, and they play a crucial role in stabilising our coastlines.

Sand dunes are also home to a variety of species. They provide nesting grounds for birds like terns and the ringed plover, and their shifting sands nurture unique plant life, from important lichens and liverworts in dune slacks, such as the sand deceiver and petalwort, as well as the carder bee, great crested newt, natterjack toad and kestrel, to name a few.