

#### 4. THE DUNE SYSTEM



Sand dunes constitute one of the Park's most valuable assets. Sustained winds of relative intensity blow in a fairly constant direction and carry sand grains, forming these accumulations of sand.

Vegetation plays a major role in the development of the dune, as plants trap sand on their base and help build up the dunes as they grow. As the dune forms, species diversity increases and different environments are generated. Thus, the plant species on these ecosystems have a fundamental ecological function, as they are responsible for dune stability. The common species present are marram (*Ammophila arenaria*), sand couch-grass (*Elymus farctus*), sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*) and sea holly (*Eryngium maritimum*).

Although this landscape may seem static and invariable, the fact is that dunes are very dynamic systems that constantly change due to natural causes or human interference. Over the last decades, the beach and the dune system have been severely affected by a progressive regression. Given this scenario, several years ago a project was conducted to restore the coastal dune areas by using wind sensors, revegetating and placing information panels.

#### 5. RUDDY TURNSTONE

During winter, the ruddy turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) is easy to find in this area. This small wading bird of orange legs and mottled plumage presents a short wedge-shaped beak that allows him to turn over small stones or miscellaneous objects such as dead fish and catch any invertebrates hiding below: spiders, crustaceans, mollusks, etc. A curious fact is that a group of ruddy turnstones gather to turn over large objects.

The ruddy turnstone breeds in northern latitudes across the Holarctic, in arctic tundra landscapes, and withstands adverse weather conditions. After a long-distance migration, they winter on Spanish coastlines and in here, in Es Trenc-Salobrar Natural Park, where he feeds mainly on small invertebrates that swarm in the pebbles and algae along the beach.

Look closely. You might see a marking ring on the turnstone's leg, either a numbered tag or a color ring. This marking method is used to identify and monitor individuals and to study bird behavior and bird populations status. Ultimately, bird marking allows us to delve into the biology of species.

Ruddy turnstone (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

#### 6. «THE ENGINE HOUSE»



About halfway through the hike the trail joins the Engine House. It owes its name to the engine or pump that conducts seawater through a conduit into to a set of artificial ponds, where salt will be harvest. This flood usually occurs around the month of April.

Ses Salines' productive activity facilitates an optimal habitat throughout the year for many birds to breed, to spend the winter, and to migrate. This saline soil, together with Ses Salines, is key to maintaining and guaranteeing the regular presence of most animal species in the area, such as the black-winged stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), the pied avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) and the unmistakable flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*).



Faunistic animal species in the area (Photo: Gràcia Salas)

#### 7. ES TRENC TOPONYM



A little further on, we will reach s'Estany d'en Pedreres. Es Trenc beach owes its name to this zone, because water from the salt pond follow its natural outflow, break through (in Catalan trencar) the dune system and open its way to the sea. Another version, according to oral tradition, states that in the middle of the 8th century a tsunami, caused by the Lisbon earthquake, broke the sand dunes that separated the sea from the wetland.

The area around this wetland is characterized by the presence of species adapted to living in saline soils, such as the perennial glasswort (*Sarcocornia fruticosa*) and the *Arthrocnemum macrostachyum*. Both plants are easy to recognize because of their fleshy, articulated stems and tiny scale-like leaves.

As we walk by the sea, we will reach the Peregons Grans beach and the Peregons Petits beach. In this area we can look for species that live in the supralittoral zone, such as the periwinkle (*Littorina neritoides*), the turbate monodont (*Monodonta turbinata*) or limpets (*Patella spp.*). Now that we have made it to sa Colònia de Sant Jordi, it is time to hike back to where we started. Follow the path towards the urban center of Ses Covetes.

