



Pevensy's Environment - The Beach

The least robust of our coastal environments is the beach itself. Shingle beaches are not widely found outside northwest Europe, Japan & New Zealand. Beaches sufficiently stable to support perennial vegetation are rare even in the UK. Dungeness is by far the largest site at over 2,000 ha, and there are only five other sites in excess of 100 ha in the UK. One fifth of the area found in England is in East and West Sussex. Small pockets of vegetated shingle are found around Pevensy Bay.



A shingle beach is a relatively inhospitable environment for plants and animals given the amount of salt that comes from sea spray, the risk of periodic sea water inundation and erosion from wave action. A lack of soil and fine material makes them very dry places, poor in nutrients.

Specialised plants do colonise the beach, often down to the berm defining the limit of last winter's storms, creating habitat for animals, particularly invertebrates.



Yellow Horned Poppy



Orache



Sea Kale

Further back from the active beach, where shingle becomes more stable, habitats become richer with a larger variety of plants, birds and animals.

Ironically works to maintain the width of the sea defence embankment are helpful to all these species. Almost all work is done in the active beach, the part that is affected by wave action every winter. Also, very little work is done in the summer, thereby giving plants a full growing season undisturbed.



Ring Plover nest + eggs



Vipers Bugloss

By working with various environmental groups (such as the East Sussex Vegetated Shingle Project) it is hoped that the size, quality and species range supported will be improved during the course of the project.

Links to some more detailed documents relating to vegetated shingle habitat can be found on the Environment page of the website; <http://www.pevensey-bay.co.uk/environment.html>