

There wasn't too much back-peddling in the question session, despite searching questions. Alternatively, it threw-up interesting discussion on how fire- and mammalian-browse-adapted traits in plants from Australia might have been inherited by the New Zealand flora from long-distance dispersal. Matagouri, the only native plant with true spines is one such candidate as a comparatively recent immigrant. Lignotubers – the underground swollen basal part of stems used as storage organs as a survival mechanism in times of disturbance (fire) or climatic extremes - are rare in the New Zealand flora but a frequent plant trait on dry, fire-prone continental landmasses.

23 July, Tunnel Beach field trip.

Allison Knight

A very low tide after a full moon is a perfect time to explore Tunnel Beach, and Graeme Loh made the perfect guide to all the extra sights. As well as the fairy prions (apologies for calling them fairy terns in the last newsletter) there were white-fronted terns and rock pigeons nesting on the cliffs. Embedded part way down the sandstone cliff was a partly exposed fossil whale, while on the wind-eroded top were exposed fossils of shells including cardiocrinum, scallop and the gizzard stones of ancient seabirds.

A closer look at the coastal turf revealed a mat of *Leptinella dioica*, the first flower of spring on *Samolus repens*, the sea primrose, and the last fruit of autumn on *Selliera radicans*. *Atriplex buchananii* was also in flower while the *Salicornia australis* and the *Disphyma australe* (native ice plant) on the exposed slopes were looking a bit weather-beaten. Down near the shelter of the tunnel mouth we spotted *Hebe elliptica*, *Senecio lautus* with purple stems and veins, and the stout form of the native celery, *Apium prostratum*. For the daring, right on the edge of the cliff grew sea blight, *Suaeda novae-zelandiae*.

Rocks and fence posts were host to a variety of lichen communities. Graeme introduced us to the best botanical aid to kneeling he'd come across – Eazi-fit neoprene knee protectors, from Placemakers. I've got some now - they're brilliant for lichening and I can garden all day without getting a sore back or damp knees!

Thanks to John Barkla for preparing the handout. Braving the winter weather were: Graeme Loh, Toni Atkinson, Janet Ledingham, Judy Russell, Francie Beggs and Allison Knight.

21 Sept. Leaving the white line: Conserving tropical forests in the Adelbert Range, Papua New Guinea. A talk by Matt Scott.

Norman Mason

The audience was treated to a typically vivacious talk by Matt Scott on tropical forest conservation in a remote part of Papua New Guinea. Matt began by explaining that the flora and fauna of Papua New Guinea was a mix of Gondwanan and Asian origins, with podocarp-like and acorn-producing species occurring in close proximity to one another. We were reminded that the human diversity of New Guinea is as fascinating as the rest