

On November 1st, Julian Cremona gave us a talk about a trip he had taken 8 years before to Namibia on the west coast of Africa

He and his wife had hired a motorhome equipped with an extra large fuel tank in Cape Town and headed north into the fynbos with myriad proteas, heading for the Orange River, 1500km away. Over the course of the journey they noticed how the vegetation changed every 100km as the various microclimates came into play

The coast is washed by the cold Benguela ocean current sweeping up from Antarctica. Coupled with the intense heat further north, nutrients are stirred up and provide a habitat rich in sea life

They were told that by arriving in late August, they had missed the best displays of wild flowers that carpet the land to a few hours out of Cape Town. Then 7,000-12,000 flower varieties could be seen. Never the less the Cremonas were still overawed by what they saw We saw 260 slides in the hour, covering a variety of tame wildlife, insects and plants

The Namaqua National Park was deserted, seemingly coming into its own during the flower season earlier in the year. Large aloes were the substitute trees in the area which was rich in various succulents and pelargoniums.

Sociable Weaver birds took any opportunity to colonise an aloe or telegraph pole with up to 1000 untidy nests

Campsites were hundreds of miles apart, separated by deserted Tarmac or dirt roads

Eventually they reached their goal- Namibia- a desert land of coastal sandunes. In the south is Fish River Canyon, second to only the Grand Canyon and over 100 miles long. There is a small area of rocky coast where German Miners looking for diamonds built a port. In recent years the mines have been deserted and now a fleet of boats leave port daily to dredge for diamonds with significant success.

Due east lay the Kalahari Desert- in between were fur seals, flamingoes meerkats, springbok and cheetahs. The vegetation had changed again-camel grass, mistletoes and bushes full of sharp and unforgiving thorns- so much so that they cut their stay a little short and headed back to Cape Town.

He plans to take his four young grandchildren back to the area next year to show them unspoiled nature and beautiful sunsets.