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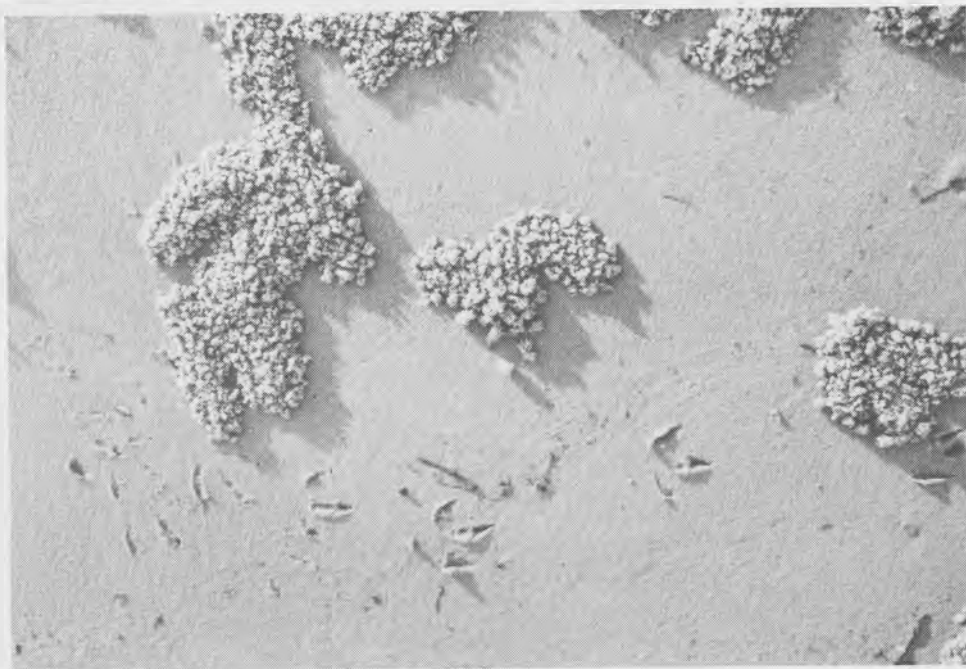
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Stories in the Sand: *The inter-tidal zone is a busy but dangerous world. Balanced precariously between the twelve-hour needs of oxygen and light on the one hand, and the sea-given cycle of food and moisture on the other, the inter-tidal zone has its two full cycles of life every day. In any 24 hour period one patch of sand or rubble sees four kingdoms in full swing as the high-low-high-low scene changes and different creatures hold centre stage for their allotted hour. This photograph shows the "tracks in the sand" in this dangerous world, at low tide. The soldier crab mounds of sand and the footprints of a gull mark the path of these two scavengers of the Bay littoral. Hectares of disturbed sand, ploughed twice-a-day by the regiments of soldier crabs, in turn oxygenate the zone and provides microscopic nutrients which are at the base of the foodchains of the region.*

Photo by John Pearn, January 1993.

WITHDRAWN FROM
BCC COLLECTION



The Zones of Life: The view from Morwong Beach on Coochiemudlo Island, looking north to Peel Island, on the horizon.

This low-tide vista shows the well-marked zonation which characterizes the estuarine islands of Moreton Bay. In the foreground are the grasses, 'Portulacca' and succulent vines ('Ipomoea pes-caprae') which bind and stabilize the sand.

Beyond this is the clean white beach sand, rich in rutile, which is above most of the tidal flow but which is washed clean at Spring tides.

Next is the flotsam-line of the prevailing high-water mark.

Then is seen the nutrient-rich zone of rubble, beachrock and mud-sand, stabilized by the pneumophores of the mangroves.

Below that are the broad exposed sandbanks, their surface broken twice daily by the regiments of soldier crabs which loyally plough and harrow the surface. A small 'island' of beachrock, a marker of the inter-tidal zone from former millennia, is at centre in the middle distance. A Sheoak ('Casuarina') frames the picture at right, with the leaves of a Cottontree ('Hibiscus tiliaceus') at left.

Photo by John Pearn, January 1993.



