

Prologue

Headland Coast: a Profile

Wade Doak

With a pack on my back full of camera gear and a breakfast snack I tread a moonlit path to the cliff edge. Cautiously I descend a giant staircase to the noisy black brink of ocean.

East beyond the offshore islands a faint glow on the skyline spurs me on. Feverishly I set up tripods and camera array. Just in time. With the rising sun my lenses capture the sequence of pastel worlds from darkness to glaring sunlight. A haunting time of subtle colour change. Another headland day has begun.

A headland coast is the most dramatic meeting place for land and sea. Here we can read the story of millions of years of land formation and erosion; the struggle of upthrusting strata under the knife of endless wave action.

Out from a fingertip promontory I scuba dive ten storeys to an ice age beach. Down there my camera finds an ancient community of colonial sea creatures crowding a patch reef like highrises on Manhattan Island. I ascend the submarine headland slope, level by level of ocean life, to emerge at the interface where land and sea collide. My profile continues.

From tide pool to cliff base and ascending, my cameras explore the transition of life from seaworld to forest glade. All day I roam the headland wilderness marvelling at its richness of pattern, colour and texture. Then at dusk another colour movie which I camera click through to moonlight. Stars etch their paths on film as my camera drinks in the moonrays long enough to record a silvery sea framed by wine dark promontories.

Month after month, tree by tree, I record the forest cycle, marvelling at its complexities - and how little one can gain from a casual visit to the coast unless a special effort is made to include the time dimension. Headland Coast is my attempt to distil something of its magic and beauty, compressing insights from many years in order to share them with those whose visits may be briefer, inviting them to explore nature's library.

