The colour of a New Zealand species of tree may have protected it from becoming dinner in what scientists believe is the first known example of camouflage in plants. The leaves of *Pseudopanax crassifolius*, commonly known as the New Zealand lancewood, go through several strange colour transitions from germination to maturity. Researchers at the Victoria University in Wellington found the colours of the leaves acted as a defence against the moa, a giant flightless bird which was hunted to extinction about 750 years ago. The researchers say the tree had several defences against the moa, including a mottled colour of seedling leaves similar to the appearance of leaf litter, which would have made them difficult for the bird to distinguish.

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Sea sponges may hold clues to advancing stem cell research. Scientists working at University of Queensland's Heron Island Research Station and the St Lucia Campus are examining sponges to find out how embryonic stem cells have the potential to give rise to many other cell types. They found sponges had stem cells remarkably similar to those currently being trialled for use in human regenerative medicines. Lead researcher Professor Bernie Degnan said because sponges and humans came from the same ancestor, any common features must have survived about 600 million years of evolution.

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Around the globe, 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty. These people are the reasons for a worldwide movement to take action, and according to the Global Poverty Project, everyone can make simple changes and be part of the solution. The 1.4 Billion Reasons presentation will put forward leading research detailing the facts of extreme poverty and how individuals can make a difference. The Global Poverty Project is the vision of Hugh Evans and Simon Moss, who were involved in the Australian Make Poverty History campaign. The presentation will take place in Canberra on Wednesday from 6pm until 9pm at the Australian National University Haydon-Allen Lecture Theatre (the Tank), building 23. For more information, visit www.globalpovertyproject.com

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Nano-sized diamonds found off the Coast of Santa Barbara in California suggest a cosmic impact occurred almost 13,000 years ago, which may have led to the extinction of the pygmy mammoth. The study, led by a father and son team at the University of California Santa Barbara and the University of Oregon, describes a diamond with a hexagonal crystalline structure found just 4m below the surface of Santa Rosa Island.

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US researchers are calling for greater equality in video games after a survey of game characters revealed minority groups were being under-represented. The first comprehensive study of video game characters shows the video game industry does no better than television in representing American society, and in some cases, video games are worse. The study, led by a social psychologist at the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication, looked at the top 150 games in a year. It found less than 3 per cent of video game characters were recognisably Hispanic, and all of them were non-playable, background characters. Only 10 per cent of playable characters surveyed were female, though research shows women now make up 40 percent of video game players. The study is published online in the journal, *New Media & Society*. 

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