

*glow of the main front and that of numerous spot fires. The twenty or so helicopters were wasting their time – the fire was winning in all directions and eventually petered out at the very eastern end of the gorge, but not until the winds died abruptly. The fire has given me a great opportunity to see how long the vegetation and wildlife takes to recover... [D]espite plenty of letters blaming either the Rural Fire Service or the National Parks and Wildlife Service for not doing enough ... [a]fter 4½ years I can say that the forest is looking just great ... Ain't nature wonderful! This fire and subsequent recovery of flora and fauna is so far the most exciting part of my study. I can't see it being beaten. On many a day my time in the bush has ended with my clothes covered in soot.*

Passionate, tireless, generous, private, modest, stubborn, kind. Des gave us so much, was lost to us, found, and now lost again too soon.

MEREDITH SHERLOCK

**My first contact with Des** was in the '90s when Peggy Mitchell gave me his phone number. I had been searching for a Powerful Owl for years and Peggy thought Des could help me. Living in New South Wales my friendship with Des grew during many long and interesting 'phone chats as I picked his brains on everything to do with the species. Des's enthusiastic and detailed advice is all recorded in my notebooks. I'm sure he got as much pleasure from relating his experiences with the owls as I got from learning about them.

When I visited Melbourne in 1998 I still had not sighted a Powerful Owl and Des offered to take me to Lysterfield Lake Park to show me the birds he had been studying for six years. He kindly picked me up at Chelsea where I was staying and took me there and back.

Over the years Des had seen eight birds (two families of four), and knew of others. His enthusiasm for the study and affection for the birds was obvious when he said, "First we will look for Harry and Hazel". After one and a half hours we then began looking for "Moses and Mary", whom we found in ten minutes. Their nests were 550 metres apart – the closest known in Australia. Harry and Hazel had 83 roost sites, which Des had numbered in order of finding – he once recorded 356 double "who" calls over 28 minutes – an indication of his thoroughness.

So there 10 metres up in a Blackwood my quest was fulfilled. Magnificent. I am pleased that the following year I was able to reciprocate Des's hospitality when he

not only stayed with me for nine days, but helped me move house in the middle of it. Such was Des. We birded hard every day for the nine days as I showed him around my patch of the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. Sadly we never got to do it again.

My last contact with Des was a long (as usual) seven-page letter in May 2010 updating me on his life ... I will miss our chats. 70 is too young.

KEN SHINGLETON  
(South West Rocks, NSW)

**I found Des Quinn** to be a most likeable bloke. He was a joy to work, walk or birdwatch with. He was a chatterbox with a keen sense of humour, to wit any person he gave a lift to after an excursion on French Island would be told to grab their pack and be ready to jump out as we neared Frankston station because he said he wouldn't be stopping to let us out. He did of course. Des was blessed with an unlimited amount of physical and mental energy and his knowledge of birds and their habits was second to none.

His disappearance from our midst left us stunned and very much poorer without his cheerful company, and so it was a delight to meet him again at the Friends Network Conference at Grantville in 2009 after so many years.

Why Des chose to live alone in the bush remains a mystery. Maybe he just wanted to get away from the sick society we find ourselves in today. I liked Des very much. He was a good friend and he contributed greatly to the betterment of French Island.

ART TERRY

**I have many memories of Des**, but one in particular sprang to mind when I looked at those long legs in the photo on the Order of Service at his funeral. This was the time he took Frances and me out to the pools beyond Gartside's (I have long forgotten the object of the exercise). "Follow me, it's not that deep, but there may be a few deep holes," he said as he strode into the dark waters. Frances and I were rather apprehensive, as thigh high for Des meant waist high for us, but we followed and survived, though well and truly soaked.

MARJORIE WALLACE