

Away from the island, Des was also kind enough to take me on several trips to Wilson's Promontory in search of the elusive Ground Parrot. He chose areas that were not readily accessible and this in itself was a great pleasure. In spite of Des's suggestion that we two spread out, no Ground Parrot appeared until Marg Medley joined us and she spotted one immediately! I was also fortunate in joining Des and Marg on a year-long observation of the full cycle of behaviour of two pairs of Powerful Owls at Lysterfield Lake Park. This involved sitting in the damp terrain of leeches but, as ever, Des ignored this discomfort – and we did too because we treasured the opportunity Des had provided.

In all, I shall always remember Des as one who infected others with his love and vast knowledge of the bush and all its wonders. We will all miss him and I will always cherish the gifts of awareness and joy he gave me.

FRANCES GARNER

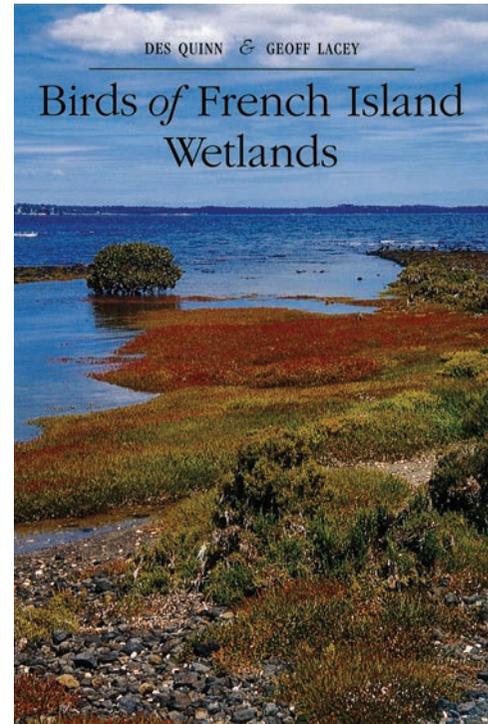
I first met Des on the day I joined FOFI in October 1989. He gave me a ride from Dandenong station to Stony Point for a day of Pittosporum weeding and Sea-eagle monitoring on French Island. At that time I was keen to become more familiar with our Victorian landscape and its plants and animals. From that day on Des became for me a guide and a friend.

I quickly discovered that Des had a profound and practical knowledge of all the bird species. Furthermore, he had a great feeling for the bush – in its wholeness, its intricate web of connections and its mystery. He conveyed this subtly through his explanations in the field and in his descriptive writing. He did not use a computer but had a rapid, neat printed style of handwriting. When published, people found his descriptions very appealing. They contained precise scientific detail, but underlying this he managed to convey a deeper sense of joyful wonder.

Des sometimes seemed uncomfortable in groups of people, though his sense of humour was irrepressible. In the bush, however, he was different; he was at home and comfortable on these journeys of discovery. I greatly enjoyed every one of the trips I went on with Des, sometimes with other FOFI members. Through such experiences I gained the deepening understanding of nature that I sought.

By 1996 Des and I decided we would like to publish a book presenting the records that Des, Chris Chandler and others had accumulated for the wetlands, high tide roosts and Sea-eagle breeding sites. The following year the Sydney-based Scully Fund gave us a grant to do this. We published *Birds of French Island Wetlands* in 1999. This will remain a resource to guide management and future studies at these sites.

Throughout the past ten years Des lived in the Blue Mountains, where he was doing extensive bird studies in four adjacent areas of the National Park: namely the Blue Gum Forest, and the Grose, Carmarthen and Govett Gorges. He had a special love for the Blue Gum Forest, and to reach it he had to walk down a steep track deep into the Grose Valley.



Des was not living in a house but slept in his car (a van) outside the National Park. He was not bothered by the cold. During periods of bad weather he carried out his research and writing in libraries at Lithgow, Springwood or Sydney. Why did he not rent a unit somewhere? Perhaps the clue is given in one of his letters: "*At my camp site the Scarlet Robin and Chestnut-rumped Heathwren fill the early daylight hours with their delightful songs.*"

In spite of this hermit life, he made a number of friends in the district and he also provided helpful advice to the park management and government authorities. He even played the detective when necessary: he once caught two men poaching Crimson Rosellas, and on another occasion caught a man trying to start a bushfire. In both cases the culprits were prosecuted.

I am including some extracts from Des's writing. The first is from a letter he sent on 20 July 2011. It gives a picture of the varied aspects of his involvement in the Blue Mountains. The other extracts are samples of his descriptive writings.

• Extracts from a letter from Des Quinn – 20 July 2011

Four trips to go to reach my initial aim of visiting Blue Gum Forest 75 times... Can't wait to go to the forest again following the horrific windstorm of 5 July, when tens of thousands of trees came down in these mountains, especially on the first day... I was on a train leaving Penrith station at 8 pm but not reaching Mt Victoria till 12.05 am... I couldn't get to my camp site because of the many fallen trees. I had to