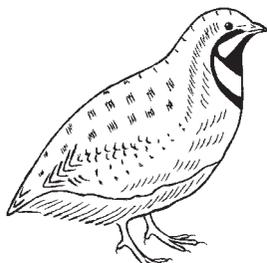


**I only met Des once**, so my first memory is also my last. It was my first FOFI outing – a search for King Quail in September 2009. I knew about Des because some friends who had taken me to see a Powerful Owl in Belgrave had told me about him. He had chosen to disappear and no one knew where he was, they said. This attracted me to him. It took some time on that FOFI day before I realised that the man sitting next to me was the man I had wanted to meet! Des was thrilled to be returning to the island. Cape Barren Geese were new to him, he joked. He sensed the soil and the heath. He taught us how to flush King Quail – the fast zig-zag walk, the low line, the decreasing circles. On the way back on the crowded ferry, we both stood outside. Dark clouds covered Western Port. A storm was coming and the rain started. Des was happy. “Isn’t that beautiful”, he said. That’s how I will remember him, and whenever I look for quail.

JOHNNY LOY

**Des was so enthusiastic** and full of life it is hard to believe he is gone. He could talk all day, and everything he said was interesting and informative. Des gave us experiences that most people never have. When camping he would always be first up with a warm fire and his magic tea recipe on the go. We swam among mangroves at “The Cut”, floating on our backs watching pelicans fly over us. He allowed a huntsman spider to crawl on his arm (ugh!), admiring the beauty of the sunlight on its hairs. He “encouraged” a tiger snake onto the track so that we could get better photos. He led us through swamps and wetlands, getting us wet, muddy and delighted. We walked across the bay from Tortoise Head to catch the ferry, in ankle-deep water with storms all round us. Des’s own treks around the island were legendary.

The photo on the front of this newsletter shows Des in the Burnley Gardens in 1998 with his much-deserved Best Friend Award from the Victorian Environment Friends Network.



King Quail

MARGARET MEDLEY

**I first met Des** on a trip to French Island in 1968. He was so open and friendly and his knowledge of the birds of French Island knew no bounds. I had never met anyone with such an in-depth knowledge of birds and his ability to recall facts on the geography, history and fauna of French Island was phenomenal.

I was a newly arrived migrant from the UK and his patience and willingness to answer my unceasing avian questions in those early days were much appreciated. I attributed my growing knowledge of birds mainly to Des and to long days tramping around French Island. He was a joy to be with and his enthusiasm for the island rubbed off on everyone around him. He was energetic, positive and had a great sense of humour. I always came home from a long day on French Island with Des feeling uplifted, but also tired, as anyone who has spent time with Des will testify that walking pace for Des was running pace for vertically challenged people like me who tried to keep up with those long legs and that huge stride.

I once spent a memorable night with Des in Greens Bush looking for Powerful Owls. We set out at dusk and wandered through Greens Bush until well after midnight. I still have a vision of that magical moonlit night walking beside Des without the aid of a torch and he was periodically giving his rendition of a Powerful Owl call and in the distance Powerful Owls were returning the call. A magical “Des” moment for me that I will never forget. He also took me on a tour of his Powerful Owl study group in Lysterfield Park and what a thrilling moment it was to see “Hazel” at the entrance to her nest. He knew those birds intimately and I was so in awe of his knowledge of these Powerful Owls and their behaviour and personality traits. He got to know each bird by their different personalities by spending hundreds of hours in the field and talked incessantly on the behavioural differences of each bird. I doubt that anyone knew more about Powerful Owls than Des.

Des also took me to Ferntree Gully and showed me a pair of Sooty Owls that he had been studying, and there they were roosting deep in an Antarctica Dicksonia tree fern. He knew exactly where they would be roosting and everything else there was to know about them. During my times with Des I always felt I was in the presence of a very gifted person. He only failed me in one thing and that was that he was never able to find me a King Quail. To this day I have never seen a King Quail on French Island!

I have walked miles and miles of French Island with Des, long before the days of FOFI and the luxury of vehicle transport to parts of the island. We walked everywhere and would often make it to the far north of the island checking wader roosts and inland swamps. We always caught the early ferry over and the late ferry back to the mainland and memories of cold dark evenings waiting for the ferry come to mind. I