

PETER DANN IS A
LOCAL LEGEND

SKATEBOARDER'S
ROLL OF HONOUR

EAT, PLAY AND STAY
- A QUICK GUIDE

THE ISLAND

PEOPLE AND PLACES OF PHILLIP ISLAND AND SAN REMO

DIVING IN, DEEPLY

VENTNOR'S KADE MILLS HAS DIVED
ALL AROUND AUSTRALIA, BUT THE
WATERS SURROUNDING PHILLIP ISLAND
ARE AMONG HIS FAVOURITES.

GUIDING THE WAY

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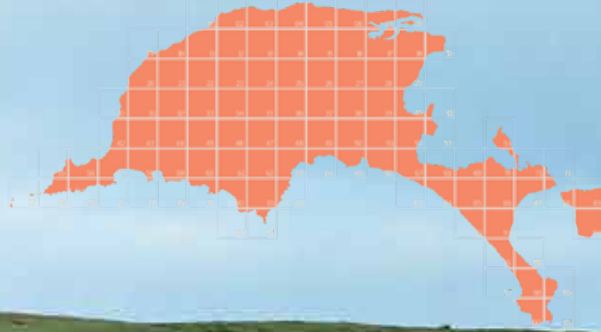
Balancing act

*Whether she's paddling out in the surf or her feet are firmly on dry ground,
life is a balancing act, says Jess Laing.*

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Cape Woolamai

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From where I'm sitting

What a wild ride it's been the last few weeks. We've had rain, hail, fierce winds and blistering sunshine – sometimes all in the one day. There's no doubt in my mind Mother Nature is sending us a strong and at times brutal message: look after the earth or suffer the consequences.

With holidays fast approaching, we're looking forward to putting all the rancour of the election campaign, another wave of Covid and the heartache of recent floods and storms behind us. We hope you'll be able to find a little piece of paradise and some peace this holiday season.

How many times have we all got to the end of the day feeling overwhelmed and exhausted? Just how do we balance the demands of a busy world and still find time to nourish ourselves? In this edition, we talk to surfer Jess Laing, who shares

her own journey of trying to create the life she really dreams of, and says she is finally finding her balance, in and out of the water.

Protecting penguins, discovering tiny orchids, a deep-sea diver counting sea slugs, a pilot guiding huge ships into port and a skating YouTube star are just some of the other tales we've got for you this edition.

As ever, The Island is here to celebrate some of the incredible and talented people who call this amazing place home.

We hope you love it as much as we do.



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Art pops up!

The Phillip Island Contemporary Exhibition Space is hosting its annual 2023 Pop-Up Art Show at the Ramada Resort from January 4 - 30.

Across the four weeks, there will be a rotating showcase of 26 different artists from regional Victoria and Melbourne. The exhibition organisers are out to challenge our views and perceptions of art. "We don't want to play it safe", they said, promising to showcase the extraordinary breadth of creative talent in the area.

The PICES team is also responsible for the outdoor exhibition Hoard, on the temporary fencing around the construction site of the new Cultural Centre in Thompson Avenue. The current display runs through until April 2023. For information on both exhibits, go to pices.com.au.

For all the latest events and local news, visit pisra.com.au or pick up a copy of the Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser.



Markets

From fresh food to crafty treats, the island's markets will satisfy every craving.

CHURCHILL ISLAND MARKETS

- first Saturday of each month. 8am - 1pm.

Showcasing the some of the best local produce from Phillip Island and Gippsland, there's always a fantastic range of stalls. Stop by for a coffee while you browse and after, take a stroll through the historic grounds.

COWES MARKET ON CHURCH

- fourth Saturday of each month. 9am - 2pm, St Philip's Parish Hall, 102 Thompson Ave, Cowes.

Plants, produce, clothing, crafts and the famous "trash and treasure" shed, as well as hot drinks and food at this fantastic local market on the grounds of St Philip's.

ISLAND FORESHORE MARKET, COWES FORESHORE

- twilight. December 27, 30, January 7, 14, 21, 28.

Against the spectacular backdrop of the Cowes foreshore, enjoy a great line up of

stalls - local and beyond, as well as food, live music and kids' entertainment. The idea spot for a picnic, it's a great outing for the whole family.

NEWHAVEN MARKET

- third Saturday of each month. 9am - 2pm, Newhaven Primary School, 22 School Ave, Newhaven.

Hosted by the local primary school, the Newhaven market features a range of fresh produce, food, crafts and goods. with everything from honey, vegetables and fruit to candles to baked treats, as well as live entertainment.

RHYLL CHRISTMAS MARKET

- December 17.

RHYLL TWILIGHT MARKET

- January 20, Rhyll Park from 4pm - 8pm.

Over 50 stalls, including hot food, fresh food, homemade produce, health food, clothing, toys, craft and pre-loved art.

Details of other Bass Coast markets at www.visitbasscoast.com.au/events/markets



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LOCAL LEGEND



Dr Peter Dann is synonymous with penguins and his retirement from Phillip Island Nature Parks in June marked the end of an era.

As one of Phillip Island's first penguin researchers, his renown in Nature Parks is almost equal to that of the feathered icons and their nightly parade. When he started 42 years ago the island's penguin population numbered about 8000 – 10,000. Today it totals more than 40,000 breeding birds.

His work has been critical to ensuring the penguins' survival. As well as working to remove foxes from the island, he was instrumental in the state government buy-back of properties on the Summerland Peninsula to create penguin habitat and remove the threat of road kill.

With 60 per cent of the world's 18 species of penguins currently threatened due to climate change, the fact that the local population is thriving is due in no small part, to the decades of work by Peter and his team.

His work with Phillip Island's penguins started back in 1980, when he took a three-year contract studying the population trends. At the time, penguin numbers were declining and it was believed the increasing tourism numbers were the cause.

Alongside the work around foxes and the Summerland Peninsula buy-back, Peter and the research team also investigated the impact of tourism, comparing populations at the parade against another secluded group on a different beach a couple of kilometres away.

They found there was no issue with visitors, and in fact, Peter says tourism has ensured long-term research funding to enable the health and viability of the penguin population.

Over his 42 years, Peter has clocked up an impressive list of achievements, including working on other penguin species in New Zealand and South Africa and at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, UK, as well as Heard Island in the Australian Antarctic Division.

He published more than 200 papers and book chapters and edited a book on penguin ecology and management and co-supervised about 50 PhD, masters and honours students.

His main research interests are population regulation, demography, climate change, ecology of islands and the conservation of threatened species.

He has also amassed a handful of titles: adjunct Professor at Victoria University, honorary fellow of Birdlife Australia and Melbourne University, a past board member and founding member of the World Seabird Union and past chair of the Australasian Seabird Group.

But perhaps the accolades from his co-workers best describe this local legend, including "humble and modest", "an extraordinary individual" and "a bloody good bloke".

Even though he's retired Peter says he won't be slowing down.

"I still have four PhD students I'll continue to co-supervise. I have a backlog of (scientific) papers to be written.

"I also hope to write a book on the birds of Phillip Island, which I've been keeping notes on for 20 years."





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Dinosaur delights for local author

The last three years of the pandemic have been strange and difficult times for everyone says author Chris Flynn. But at least he's had a dinosaur to keep him company.

The Phillip Island based writer is no stranger to dinosaurs, but even he's surprised by the recent turn his life has taken. He's now the Editor-in-Residence at Melbourne Museum and has helped bring to life the story of the most complete triceratops fossil ever found.

In 2020, Chris released his third novel *Mammoth*, narrated by a 13,000-year-old extinct mammoth, which tells the story of how the skull of a Tyrannosaurus bataar, a pterodactyl, a prehistoric penguin, the severed hand of an Egyptian mummy and the mammoth came to be on sale at a Manhattan auction in 2007. "It did remarkably well, considering it is so odd," Chris said. "It didn't occur to me that lots of palaeontologists and museum people would read it."

But read it they did ... and the book helped pave Chris' path to the Melbourne Museum. In April 2021, out of the blue, Chris received an email from the Head of Exhibitions at the museum. "He said they were all big fans of *Mammoth* and asked me to come in to discuss some projects."

Initially, Chris thought they might be interested in stocking the book at the museum shop. But it turned out to be a much more exciting proposition. "At the meeting, there were all these people staring

at me and smiling ... and then they said, 'We bought a triceratops'," Chris said.

The dinosaur, named Horridus, would become a feature exhibit at the Melbourne Museum – the most complete real dinosaur fossil on display at any Australian museum. "They wanted to produce a suite of books to accompany the exhibition and were also thinking of creating a voice and character for the dinosaur, so it could interact on social media."

Given Chris had already created voices for several prehistorical artefacts, it was a perfect fit. He was initially hired to create a "style guide" for a voice and character, including how the triceratops would talk, what it liked or disliked, what it would be interested in.

Once that was complete, his role soon expanded to include writing two books for Horridus. And the newly purchased dinosaur was an extraordinary tale. "This is the most complete triceratops ever found, it is 87 per cent complete. The skull is 99 per cent complete."

The fossil was found in a creek bed in Montana by a palaeontologist called Craig Pfister. "They think it had probably fallen in the river and drowned, then lay there for 67 million years," Chris explained. It was lifted out of the ground in its rock, which is known as a field jacket, then taken to Dino Lab in Canada, a company that specialises in cleaning and removing fossils from rocks. From there it was packed and shipped to Melbourne.

Along the way, every step in the process was photographed and documented. "I think it's the most photographed dinosaur in the world," Chris quipped. He was tasked with capturing all this in a coffee table book *Horridus – journey of a Triceratops*. He also worked with illustrator Aaron Cushley, to create a children's book *Horridus and the Hidden Valley*.

When the exhibition finally opened in March 2022, the response was amazing. "On the first Monday of the Easter school holidays, 5000 people came through the museum," Chris marvelled. "Some people burst into tears when they see it. There's something powerful about the fact that we share the same planet as a creature like that."

Alongside his museum work, Chris found time to write his latest book *Here be Leviathans*, a collection of nine not-so-short stories, which came out in September. The stories are all told from the point of view of non-human things, including a grizzly bear, a hotel room and an airline seat.

Chris said telling stories from the point of view of non-usual narrators gives him a "different viewpoint of the world" and inanimate objects can say things that humans can't.

"There's a brutal assessment from these objects," he said. "Us humans, we need someone outside of us to say – 'hey, you're stuffing this up'."

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A coastal connection



A piece of art that lives and breathes in the landscape it pays tribute to, is proudly on display at the entrance to Anzacs Beach in Cape Woolamai.

The ocean, Cape Woolamai and the Pinnacles glisten behind the metal sculpture, created by local artist and surfer Steve Ulula Parker, a Boon Wurrung, Yorta Yorta and Erub descendant.

Made from Core-10 steel stained ochre with cut-outs that represent both the local landscape and the movement of the tides around Phillip Island, the sculpture sits

at the edge of the dunes at the Anzacs carpark.

A passionate surfer who has worked for Surfing Victoria and run its state-wide indigenous program, Steve believes surfers play a vital role in preserving the island's environment.

The artwork celebrates a powerful connection to the land and the ocean.

"I always say the surfing tribe is like our First Nations people," said Steve.

"They were outcasts also at one stage and they've got the same connection to

Mother Nature. They're in tune with the environment and the weather around it."

The sculpture commissioned by Phillip Island Nature Parks, celebrates Anzacs as part of the Phillip Island National Surfing Reserve, as well as illustrating the spiritual significance of the area.

It's a companion piece to the Womin Jeka Welcome Sign erected at the start of the Phillip Island Nature Parks reserve at Cape Woolamai.



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By Eleanor McKay
Photos Tommy Williams Photography

Balancing

WHETHER SHE'S PADDLING OUT IN THE SURF OR HER FEET ARE FIRMLY ON DRY GROUND, LIFE IS A BALANCING ACT, SAYS JESS LAING.

Sitting outside the Smiths Beach Store, Jess looks every inch the classic surfer. Straight out of the water from a surf lesson, her slicked back blonde hair, tanned skin and clear eyes radiate health and vitality.

She's just back from a surfing trip in Indonesia and her Girls on Board surf school is winding up into the busy summer season. While it sounds like the ultimate surfing lifestyle, behind the picture-perfect image is a story of injury, chronic illness and self-discovery. It's only now, after decades in the water, that Jess feels she's getting the balance right.

It's a long journey from the 16-year-old who featured in the film *First Love* with her friends Nikki Van Dijk and India Payne, to the woman sitting here today.

The film set out to follow the girls' determination to join the pro-surf circuit and take on the waves in Hawaii. The film also captures the injury that took Jess out of the water for seven months, setting her on a new surfing path.

But the shoulder injury that led to surgery and months of rehab, was not her first health battle.

"From around 12 to 18, I had chronic fatigue syndrome," Jess explains. "But the shoulder injury was crap, because it was on top of chronic fatigue. I had low energy and was sick all the time. When I did my shoulder, everything came crashing down. I couldn't even go in the water anymore, which was the one thing that was helping me, my salt-water therapy."

Jess was out of the water for seven months, the longest time she'd ever been away from the ocean. "It was a long time to be land-bound for someone who was in the water every day. At the time I hated it. But I look back at that time when I was unwell and when I was injured as a positive thing. I learned so much. When you've been unwell for so long, once I was feeling better, I wanted to do as much as I possibly could. It gave me an appreciation of what it was like to feel good."

When she did return to the waves, she

stopped competing. "I realised I wanted to do it for fun and I didn't want the serious side anymore. I'd lost the desire to compete. It meant so much more to me to be able to get out there and enjoy it."

Leaving the world of competitive surfing behind was a major shift for a girl whose dad put her on a board at the age of four. "I grew up with competitions. From the age of eight I was very competitive. It was all I could see. I know when I was doing it, I loved it."


But the enforced time out brought a new perspective. "I realised I was not loving it so much. I started taking it too seriously and I was putting too much pressure on myself. I enjoyed competitions until I didn't."

"There's much more than just getting out there and trying to win. Surfing was always something that pulled me through. It was so much more beneficial to me and my mental health and my lifestyle."

She wanted to recapture the joy and fun of surfing, and to share that with others.



act

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a patterned one-piece swimsuit, is sitting in a swimming pool. She is smiling and looking towards the right. The pool is in the foreground, with ripples in the water. In the background, there is a modern house with large windows and a wooden roof. A palm tree is visible behind the house. The scene is set during sunset or sunrise, with a warm, golden light. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

In those years after the movie premiered, when she was feeling well, Jess travelled a lot. She soon realised there were girls everywhere interested in surfing, but there were very few female surf coaches.

She did a surf coaching course and helped to coach a female surfing program with Surfing Victoria and then in 2012, she started Girls on Board, focusing on teaching women and girls to surf.

She didn't have a big vision in mind, other than to share her love of the ocean and the benefits that surfing can bring to your life. "I know how powerful the ocean is in healing. Being in the ocean is an opportunity to change your life and use surfing as a form of therapy. It's a place to help you live your best life.

"When I'm in the ocean I feel pure happiness and as though I'm exactly where I'm meant to be," she explains. "It can be comforting, frightening, calm, wild and truly beautiful all at once. The ocean brings me back to myself, and no matter

where I am in the world I feel like I am home."

She poured that passion she once had for competition into her business, but focused on keeping lessons fun, for students and herself. "I always leave work feeling better than when I got there. There's a real art to teaching different people. That's why I like teaching both (adults and children). You need to keep it simple so everyone can understand. There's so much going on when you're learning to surf. It doesn't need to be information overload. It's important not to push someone past their comfort zone too early."

But she also loves giving women the confidence and the skills to tackle the waves and be part of what has been a male-dominated sport. "I see women I have taught down at the beach and they'll say thank you so much for introducing us to this. That's why I do it. I love seeing them out there."



She said the lessons are about empowering the women and girls to get out on the waves. “They feel confident going out with a group of other women, because even putting on a wetsuit is daunting. It can be intimidating but they’re just as welcome out there as everyone else. They should be out there. I want them to have a sense of community, to feel like they’re part of something.”

Girls on Board was thriving, but Jess was paying a price. Illness struck again in 2020, just as Victoria went into lockdown.

“It was all the same sort of symptoms as chronic fatigue, but they never worked out what was wrong with me. I was really sick – hospitalised and bed bound. But it was different this time. I was older and understood myself a little bit more. I was able to figure out what I needed and understand it.

“But one of the hardest parts with any illness that people can’t see, they often don’t believe that it’s there. It can take one

little comment to take you back to that 12-year-old kid where people would say, ‘oh why can you go surfing but you can’t come to school?’. That was triggering for me again as an adult. I could barely even go to work. I’d go to work and go home and sleep between lessons. Getting back up the stairs after lessons was a struggle. Everything was so hard. I said I can’t live like this.”

With her business unable to operate, Jess used the time to focus on her own health. “Straight away, I knew I had to do something about it, I had to find answers. I never had an answer as to what is wrong with me. Western medicine in the past hadn’t worked at all and I decided to go down the natural path.

“I said to myself, I am going to get better. It was a lot of hard work, a lot of appointments and testing and dietary changes and lifestyle changes ... emotional work as well. But I just knew I was going to get better.”

When she was able to open the business again, Jess made some changes, bringing on other instructors.

"In the past I was trying to do as much as I could on my own. The illness was overwhelming me. I couldn't think properly. I had the worst brain fog and I was so fatigued that thinking was hard enough, let alone trying to run a business and get to work. It forced me to let go of the business a bit and allow others in, which has helped it grow. It was a blessing in disguise.

"I had run the business pretty much on my own for eight or nine years and had massive separation issues – that if I wasn't there, things would fall apart. But in reality, everything was fine. I was able to bring on some other amazing female coaches and it's allowed more people to come through the surf school and get the benefits of the ocean."

While she's still working on managing

her health, Jess is focused on balancing her life. "At the start of the year, I said I would say yes, and do things. I'm feeling positive and excited. I've been on a few trips, to Indonesia and Queensland. I want

to keep the business running and allow myself travel and balance. I don't want to ever lose that. I'm promoting a lifestyle and I need to be living that."

A recent trip to Indonesia has seen her return to Phillip Island, recharged and refocused. First she travelled with a girlfriend then met up

with island photographer Tommy Williams and started exploring, before her partner Dyl was able to come over and join her.

A highlight was a chance encounter on a beach which saw her teaching English to some young Indonesia kids. "We met a local guy who lives on the beach and he told us he was teaching English there the next day. Tommy asked if he could take

photos, so we rock up and get handed the English book. Tommy and I ended up teaching English for half a day to the kids from the local village.

"To be honest, I think we got more out of it than them. Tommy had taught me a couple of Indonesian words and there was a moment where I was playing with the kids in the water and one of the girls spoke to me in Indonesian and I understood what she said.

"It was just so heart-warming connecting with these kids who were so bright, bubbly and vibrant. They probably have very little material things but showed me they can live such rich lives without those things."

Back on Phillip Island, she's determined to hold onto that joy and to embrace whatever is coming her way.

"Life is so much about balance. Sometimes we get caught up living a certain way when maybe it's not the healthiest for us. I don't want that to happen."

*"IT'S ONLY NOW,
AFTER DECADES
IN THE WATER,
THAT JESS FEELS
SHE'S GETTING
THE BALANCE
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Encouraging visitors to choose tap water over single-use bottled water is an easy way to reduce plastic pollution on our beaches this summer.

Did you know one plastic water bottle takes around 450 years to break down?

And that bottled water costs 2,000 times as much as tap?

To encourage people to Choose Tap, Westernport Water works with the community and local tourism operators to ensure visitors and locals alike have access to free, convenient tap water when they're out and about.

Permanent Water Refill Stations can be found at 19 popular locations serviced by Westernport Water, making it easy for visitors to fill up their water bottles or have a drink. The organisation has plans to install a further nine in the next few years.

At community events, such as the San Remo Carols by Candlelight, the Cowes Classic and Kilcunda Lobster Festival, you will likely find Westernport Water's portable water stations providing free tap water - so remember to take your drink bottle.

We all love a free glass of water with food and most of our cafes and hospitality venues support Choose Tap and will happily provide you with free tap water and refills. If you are in a licensed restaurant, it's a law that they provide access to free water.

Kim Storey from Destination Phillip Island says many tourism operators have now stopped selling single-use plastic water bottles altogether.

"Thanks to leadership from Phillip Island Nature Parks, who made the move to remove single-use plastic drink containers at their sites, many other tourism venues have adopted the same approach."

"Destination Phillip Island is keen to take the next step and reduce the purchase of water in single-use plastic at our supermarkets and other venues across the Island."

By working together to raise awareness of the quality of tap water in our region, we can help protect the area's unique biodiversity and pristine beaches from plastic pollution caused by single-use plastic bottles.

Tap water on Phillip Island is safe and high quality

Westernport Water supplies drinking water to 27 townships across an area covering 300 square kilometres, encompassing Millowl (Phillip Island) and mainland communities from The Gurdies to Archies Creek.

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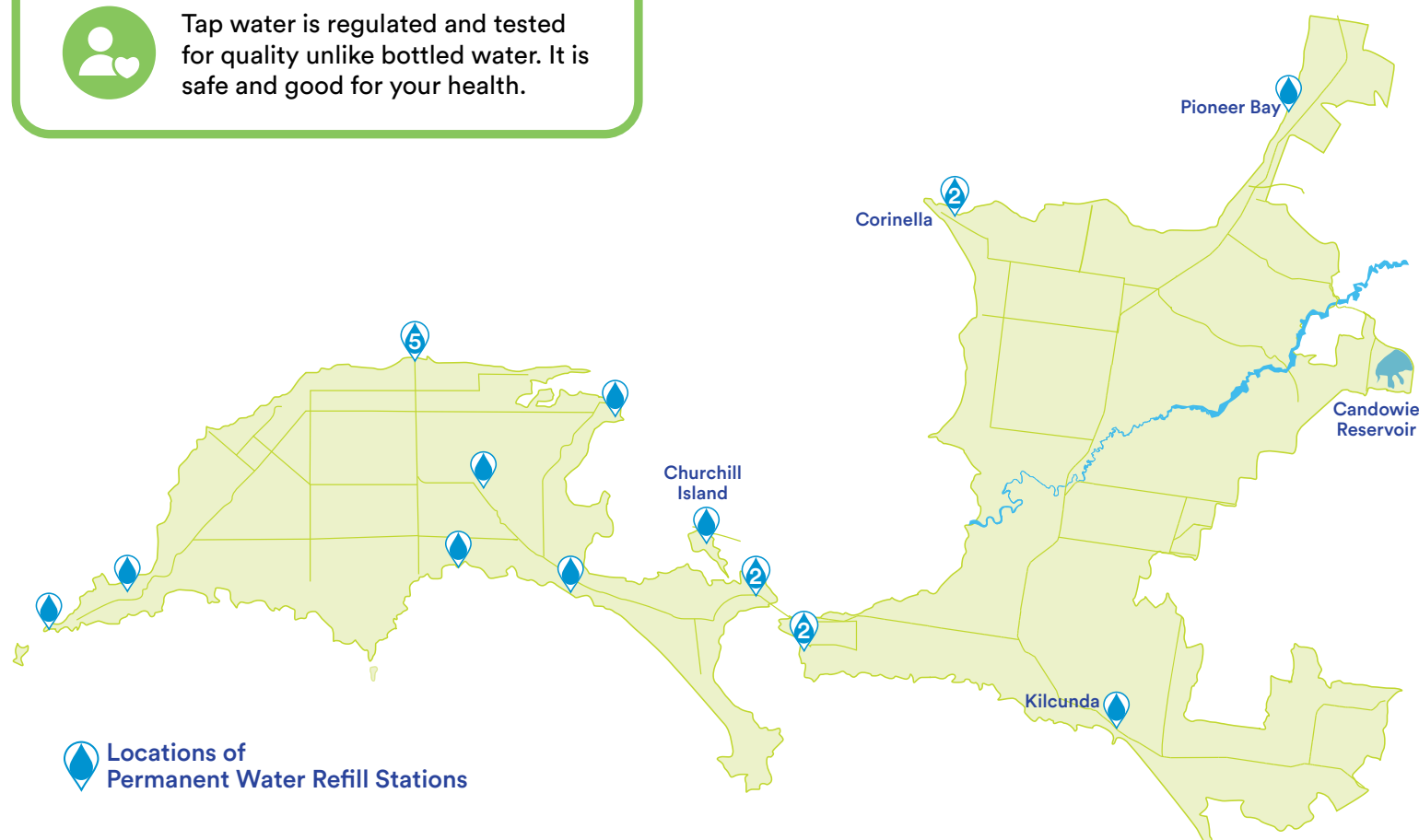


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FACT: About 80% of plastic bottles end up as landfill or litter.



BY SARAH HUDSON
PHOTOS JULES ELLIOT, TRAVIS ADAMS AND STEPH THORNBORROW

Skateboarder's roll of

In the world of skateboarding Ricky Glaser is a legend. With more than one million followers on social media, his own merchandise brand, a host of lucrative sponsorship deals, and most recently headhunted to live in the USA as a pro skater, the 30-year-old is one of a handful of people on the globe making a full-time income from skateboarding.

But it was on Phillip Island, at the age of 13, taking part in a competition at the Cowes skate park, that he got his first big break. "I won the competition, and I was given a board and a t-shirt," he recalls.

"Island Surfboards saw me and thought I was good. I showed them a video of my best tricks and they became my first sponsors."

Ricky – whose mum Grazyna Mackiewicz lives in Cape Woolamai – says it was even surfing buddies on the island who first inspired him to take up skateboarding at the age of eight. "When I was growing up I'd visit my grandma in school holidays. It was great because she was in skating distance to the Cowes skate park," Ricky says. "The park was small but skateboarders are creative. We tend to

work with our environment, always finding ways to skate, whether or not there are good facilities."

Currently based in Los Angeles – where he lives with his winter Olympic snowboarding girlfriend Jenise Spiteri – he still has strong family connections to the island. After Covid restrictions lifted, he flew to Australia to visit his mum, as well as his 97-year-old grandmother who lives in Melaleuca Lodge in Cowes, who both came down to watch his meet and greet with young fans at the Cowes skate park. "What I'd like to do eventually is come



honour

and go between the US and Australia.”

During his visit, he spoke up in support for a regional skate park on Phillip Island. “For young children there are a lot of playgrounds on the island, but there’s nothing for teenage kids,” he says. “A skate park is a positive thing for a lot of people. They should give it a chance.”

Ricky says residents should not be concerned about the impacts of a skate park. “If people have concerns it’s based on their own perception, not reality. If you go to a skate park and talk to anyone, you’ll find that’s not how skate parks are.

But if you don’t build facilities that’s where kids will start skating where they’re not supposed to, like at schools or on the edge of the street.”

Even though Ricky showed enormous skateboarding potential from a young age, on the advice of his mum he went to university, studying a Bachelor of Film and TV at Swinburne, graduating in 2012. He worked in a variety of random jobs before the evolution of social media proved his entrée into the global skateboarding world.

“I’d been skateboarding for fun, with sponsorship, but at 25 I started to post

videos – not just photos – on Instagram, doing skate tricks and that’s when my following grew. Instagram video is so suited to skating. I did difficult tricks and they went viral overnight. Even respected skate publications began commenting. It snowballed from there.”

In 2020 he was offered a full-time job with Braille Skateboarding in San Francisco, ever since working as part of a team to post daily skateboarding videos on the company’s YouTube channel, which has 5.7 million followers, mainly male aged 16-35. Through Braille he has released four



signature decks (the wooden platform on a skateboard), including a “Rikimite” tribute to Australia.

In addition, Ricky posts his own content to his personal social media, including TikTok and YouTube, which has more than a million followers and where some of his high-level tricks videos have been viewed more than 35 million times. He also has his own personal line of merchandise, I Like Sk8, which

sells t-shirts, hoodies and other products through Braille.

“The videos are all about getting more people excited in skateboarding, so it can be outrageous and outlandish, a spectacle. For Braille we’ve done videos like skating on a rail across a pool, doing tricks on a skateboard made from glass, and another was doing a difficult trick on a skateboard made from an axe.

“Not many people make money from

skateboarding and it is tough to make a living like I do.”

Not surprisingly – given the degree of difficulty of the tricks he performs – Ricky has suffered his fair share of injuries. “I’ve broken five bones: finger, toe, ankle, wrist and knee (he still has five screws in his knee) and of course I’ve torn a lot of ligaments.

“I’ve been skating for more than 20 years so five bones is not too bad. I’m healthy now and always make a full



recovery.” He says there is considerable pressure to be both fit and creative. “Skating is really, really physical, demanding, and you always need to feel in good shape.”

He explains that his professional skateboarding differs to the Olympics. “I’ll sometimes try 200 times to do a difficult trick and land it one time, whereas Olympic skateboarders have to be sure they can accomplish it on the day. All

skaters are really determined. It’s the same now as when I was a kid, persisting in learning a new trick. At a skate ramp everyone can relate to the feeling of accomplishing a trick for the first time.”

As taxing as it is, he says there is no use-by-date for skaters, with many continuing into their 50s or opting for other opportunities in the same field.

Ricky says he has always enjoyed skateboarding largely because of its

freedom and individuality. “I had a huge amount of energy as a kid and it takes a lot to skate. I’ve surfed, rollerbladed, biked, done gymnastics and athletics. I was drawn to it because it’s individual and you don’t have to rely on a team, or the conditions to be right, or a field.

“It’s the convenience and simplicity but at the same time so complicated and intricate.”

www.youtube.com/rickyglaser



A mother of two who works full time, Anna Carson says it's not always easy to pursue her photography passion.

"There are three things that will have me grabbing my camera and racing for the door. Stars, lightning storms (yes, I've been called crazy!) and Auroras. This image has two of the three.

"I've been capturing Auroras for the last seven years, and I still find it just as exciting as my first capture. Auroras occur when solar winds carrying particles from our sun interact with the earth's magnetic field. The human eye doesn't see the bright vibrant colours displayed in this photograph. Even with a strong display, we may only see a very dull translucent glow of light.

"Just because we may not be able to see something, doesn't make it any less real, and our cameras give us the ability to see those colours. There is something magical about hitting the

shutter, waiting 15-30 seconds before seeing the image come to life on the back of your camera.

"What do I like best about taking photos of San Remo? It's my home! It's where I went to kindergarten, primary school and where I grew up. It was my grandparents' home, my parents' home, my home and now my children call it home.

"I have walked many hours on its shorelines and know most (not all) of her secrets. It's this local knowledge that allows me to abandon dinner with no notice, head out the door to a location I've tried many times previously without success to unexpectedly be rewarded with something special like this."

2023 calendars featuring this photo are available for purchase. Contact Anna via email or through her social media channels.

**ANNA CARSON,
SEABRAE PHOTOS**

DETAILS:

Taken approx. 7pm on July 19, 2022

TECHNICAL SPECS:

Camera: Nikon D750, Lens: Tamron
15-30 Settings: ISO 4000, f3.2, 20mm,
15 secs

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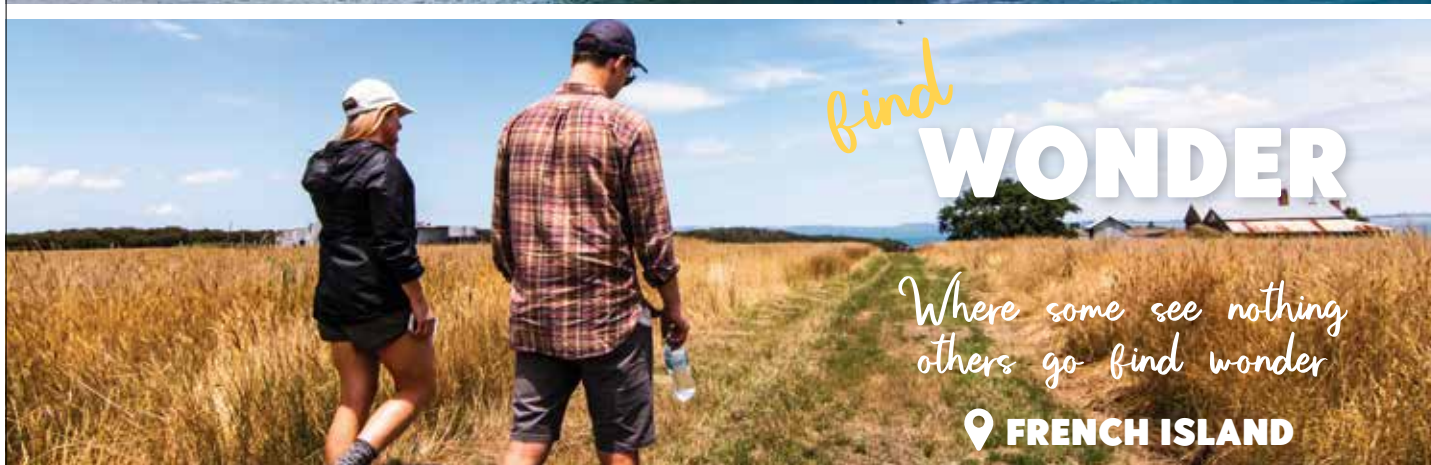
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THE
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BY SARAH HUDSON
PHOTOS STEPH THORNBORROW, KRIS O'KEEFE AND KADE MILLS



Dividing in, deeply

VENTNOR'S KADE MILLS HAS DIVED IN CROCODILE-INFESTED WATERS OFF DARWIN AND ALL ALONG THE EAST COAST OF AUSTRALIA, BUT SAYS THE WATERS SURROUNDING PHILLIP ISLAND ARE AMONG HIS FAVOURITES.

He has seen vast swathes of eastern Australia's underwater world, including scientific monitoring of recreational abalone and snapper fishing.

And the deepest he has dived was 60 metres under the waves off the Solomon Islands. "That was in a World War II wreck and because it was so deep it was like a moment frozen in time. There were human remains on the deck and machine guns with spent bullets," the 46-year-old diver says. "It was like an underwater museum."

But as extensive as his 3000 diving hours are, the waters surrounding Phillip Island are among his favourites. Kade has been showcasing the island's ocean and bay in his role with the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA).

On December 3-4 he ran a Great Victoria Fish Count event at Kitty Miller

Bay, part of the VNPA's annual count, which is in its 20th year and runs for five weeks with events around the state. The count saw divers buddy up, looking for 35 common species such as morwong, leather jackets and blue-throated wrasse.

Earlier this year for a fortnight Kade also ran a Victorian Sea Slug Count off San Remo, along with fellow divers counting nudis, or nudibranchs, slugs described by scientists as having some of the most fascinating shapes, colours and patterns of any animal.

"There is one species of nudi off San Remo that is a beautiful pink and is camouflaged because it is found on a pink sponge," Kade says. "There is a green one that eats seaweed and stores it on its back like solar panels, to provide energy. The slug count is like a treasure hunt. They are hard to find but the more you

look for them you get rewarded for your persistence."

Kade says he willingly dons wetsuit, snorkel or scuba gear – whether for work or play – to highlight the majesty of the underwater world. "It's hard to care for something if you don't know it's there. When you go snorkelling in the fish count, for instance, it's something people don't forget. The fact you're putting yourself in this ridiculous outfit, waddling around like a duck, maybe getting cold, but seeing things you've never seen before, that's quite powerful. It leaves an impression on people and they see 'look we have this and it's something we should care about'."

Kade says the citizen science work is also about contributing to scientific knowledge, with all the data from the fish and slug counts, for example, going into a larger database. "That database is



then used by policy makers to help make decisions, and is a resource for future generations. We know a lot about birds and koalas but by comparison little is known about the underwater world.”

For example, when a marina was mooted to be built off San Remo several decades ago, it was the knowledge of the nudi community there that stopped it. More than 90 species of nudis have been found in a triangle section of intertidal foreshore off San Remo, he explains, which is protected by the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.

Recently Regional Roads Victoria has proposed widening the Phillip Island Road at San Remo, which would include reclaiming the foreshore area next to the nudi colony. “We don’t know if the San Remo nudi population is the biggest or the best,” Kade says. “There’s so little we know about this species and that’s why the count is so important, because it forms a baseline.”

Kade actually considers himself more of a surfer than a dive enthusiast. Growing up in Geelong, he surfed from the age of 13.

After he studied natural resource

**KADE SAYS HE
WILLINGLY DONS
WETSUIT, SNORKEL
OR SCUBA GEAR
– WHETHER FOR
WORK OR PLAY
– TO HIGHLIGHT
THE MAJESTY OF
THE UNDERWATER
WORLD.**

management at Deakin he worked for five years at Sydney University exploring the ecological impact of coastal cities and on weekends worked as a dive instructor. “Diving started as a hobby but then I got more intrigued. I loved teaching people, pointing out seahorses or nudis and getting back on land and talking about it.”

For three years Kade then worked as

an environmental consultant, “spending a huge amount of time in the water, at one stage diving most of the headlands of NSW’s coast” counting abalone and estimating grey nurse shark populations. Kade has worked as a science diver off Darwin for a gas project, monitored albatross off Lakes Entrance and even surfed off New York, where his then girlfriend (now wife) Kerri grew up.

One of his most formative jobs was six years at Fisheries, as a research scientist based at Queenscliff, a role that exposed him to recreational fishing issues, including the health of the snapper population. He and the team would catch juveniles in Port Phillip Bay and – using lasers – analyse the fish ear bones, “which can tell a lot of information including age and where they were born”.

Kade says the scientific work was critical to monitor the health of the recreational fishing industry and since he worked there the team of 60 scientists has now been cut to about 10. “Fisheries has let a lot of people in research go and they are now a fish authority not about marine research. I would like to see more



monitoring done. It's not about locking up areas – I don't have a problem with recreational fishing – but there should be more capacity for research to ensure the fisheries are there for anglers, their kids and grandkids, which is what any fisherman wants too."

Kade joined VNPA six years ago, moving to Ventnor last year, and says his focus is now on engaging the community to care about marine issues. "There's a thirst for information out there. People want to know about the environment, but they don't know where to start.

"I'm good at saying I don't know all the answers to questions but this is who does. My role is more like a conduit. Even now I'm not confident about marine life. The more I know the more I realise the less I know."

Nature loving on land is a little easier, he confesses, than underwater. For those nervous about taking their first tentative

steps into the deep blue, an event such as the fish count comes with the safety of camaraderie.

"Diving is a big commitment, snorkelling not such a big thing. But if people still feel anxious joining a group

gives them a taste. Part of the appeal for some people is that it's a challenge. You need a bit of courage, strength and tenacity. A snorkelling group in Melbourne pre-Covid had 2000 members and post-Covid it has jumped to 7600. People

are wanting to discover their backyards."

He says it's incorrect that tropical waters are more beautiful for diving than Victorian waters. "Coral reefs are what most people know because that is what is presented in the media. Tropical waters may be easier because of the water temperature but off Victoria the colour and diversity of marine life is just as beautiful. Some algae have an iridescent sheen. Sponges are phenomenal, some like hands

and fingers, others like cups and saucers."

Kade adds that wetsuit technology has improved to beat the cold, although some people choose to be seasonal snorkellers in warm weather.

In all his years of diving, not once has he encountered a white pointer or felt in danger. "That's not to say white pointers have never been near me, it's just that I haven't seen them. I'm relaxed under the water. I can be anxious on the surface but once I dive it's very Zen. My breathing calms, I'm weightless, gravity disappears.

"Everything is an adventure, different, new and novel. It's just a joy."

***"I CAN BE
ANXIOUS ON
THE SURFACE
BUT ONCE I DIVE
IT'S VERY ZEN."***



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From December 26 – January 26, Cowes foreshore beach will also be patrolled. Patrols start at 10am and mostly run through until 6pm. For the full patrol details, visit www.woolamaibeach.org.au or @ WoolamaiBeachSLSC Facebook page.



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Recipe by Udder & Hoe.
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STINGING NETTLE PURÉE WITH ROASTED PUMPKIN, HERB SALAD AND SOFT FETA

INGREDIENTS:

1 litre apple juice
1 tsp fennel seeds
4 x 1 – 2cm thick wedges of pumpkin, skin removed
Olive oil
2 shallots, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, finely diced
5 handfuls stinging nettle tips (with minimal stalk)
Salt to taste
1 handful fresh herbs (eg parsley, chives)
6 radishes, sliced
4 squares soft sheep's feta
1 lemon, juice and zest
Edible flowers for garnish (optional) (eg borage, calendula and nasturtium)
8 walnuts, freshly cracked

METHOD:

Heat oven to 160°C.
Pour the apple juice into a saucepan and add the fennel seeds. With the lid off bring to a light boil and leave to reduce until it becomes a thick sticky consistency. Remove and allow to cool.
Coat the pumpkin slices in olive oil and a little salt. Roast in the oven for 25 minutes or until cooked through.
Heat a frying pan, add olive oil and sauté the shallots and garlic on low heat until clear, about 5 – 10 minutes. Remove from the heat to cool.
Boil a saucepan of water and add 1/2 teaspoon salt. Once boiled add the stinging nettle with tongs, to blanch. After 30 – 60 seconds, remove the nettle with tongs and rinse in cold water. This helps retain the beautiful bright green colour. Using a tea towel, press out excess water.
Place the nettle in a food processor with the cooled shallot mix. Blend until smooth. Add

a small amount of nettle cooking water or extra olive oil to thin out the mix if needed.

Once blended, put through a sieve and discard firm leftover pieces to the compost. Set aside the stinging nettle purée.

Combine the radish and herb in a bowl (or preferred salad greens such as asparagus or peas). Add lemon juice, salt and a drizzle of olive oil.

Coat the walnuts in the apple juice reduction and lightly toast in the oven.

To serve: paint a generous dollop of the stinging nettle purée on each plate. Layer the warm roasted pumpkin on top, ensuring the purée is not completely covered.

Top with the fresh herb mix, then the feta. Garnish with micro greens, edible flowers, lemon zest and walnuts. Lastly drizzle a little apple reduction on top.

For a more substantial meal add a soft-boiled egg and sourdough.

Serves 2

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A taste of surfing history



A stunning collection of vintage surfboards on display at Bang Bang Bar and Food in Cape Woolamai is capturing the history of Victorian and Phillip Island surfing.

The brainchild of local surfer Lindsay Becker who runs Tattoo's by Lindsay and founded Phillip Island Surfboard Display and Bang Bang's owner Pat O'Garey, this is a museum with a twist.

The boards have been mounted on the roof and walls of the popular bar and restaurant. There's no entry fee and surfing enthusiasts are welcome to wander in, enjoy a beer and take in the surfing history.

Anyone dining in the restaurant will also get to enjoy the display, which reflects the pair's passion for surfing and for the history of board making.

"We have a real appreciation of the history and craftsmanship of board making, both in Victoria and nationally," Pat explained.

"It is an amazing array of surfboards and there are some special ones that are really historically significant."

The boards date from the 60s through to the 1990s, with a focus on the 70s and 80s.

Board makers such as Klemm Bell and Russell Francis, as well as shapers from Island and Islantis eras are included in the showcase. It also features many shapers from Victoria's west coast, such as Pat Morgan, Wayne Lynch, Greg Brown and Don Allcroft.

"We picked what we thought was relevant for the display or for the history of surfing around Victoria," Pat said.

While many of the boards have been ridden, Pat said some are "old school boards and you wouldn't want to ride and damage them". He said the craftsmanship of the old boards is what is most appealing.

Pat believes the display is unique in Victoria, with the only other major

surfboard display in the Australian National Surfing Museum in Torquay.

A way to showcase the rich surfing history of the area, he said it was another way of supporting the surfing community – "a bit of giving back".

"We live on a surfing island and people love and are passionate about surfing."

And there's plenty more to come.

"It will be an evolving display, so we might hang up some more, or change the boards. We've got a plethora of boards still to run through the display. We could have had two Bang Bang's and it still wouldn't have fitted."

Get a taste of surfing history with a visit to Bang Bang at 13/18 Phillip Island Road, Cape Woolamai. Open every day except Tuesday and Wednesday.


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Maja Wolnik, Director



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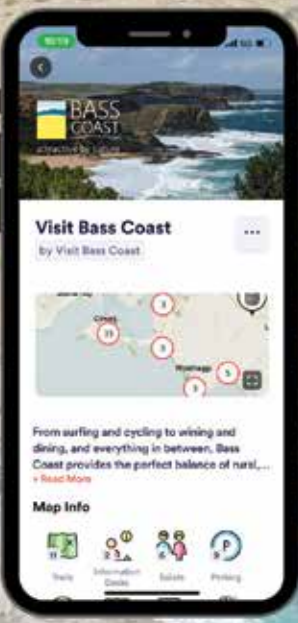

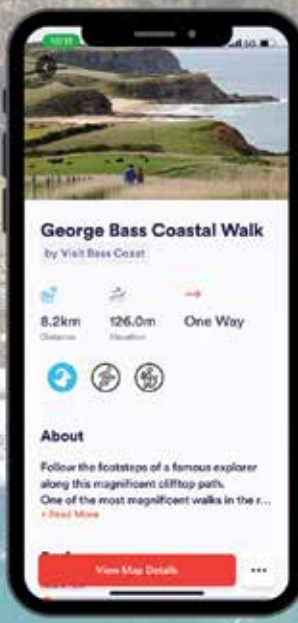






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By Sarah Hudson
Photos courtesy of Susan Spicer
and Phillip Island Nature Parks

A passion for plants



Nature Parks ranger Susan Spicer has become renowned in the conservation world after discovering not one – but five – never previously recorded plant species on Phillip Island.

In October 2021 Susan was working on the Summerlands Peninsula when she came across the tiny yellow twisted sun orchid, a new record for Phillip Island, which is now recorded in the Atlas of Living Australia.

“It was an exciting find because while there are records of them in other parts of southern Australia, it’s rare to Phillip Island and was not found in any previous vegetation surveys,” says Susan, who is one of the longest-serving rangers after three decades at Nature Parks. “When I found it

I was like ‘wow, it’s yellow’, because that group of orchids has mostly blue or purple flowers with a couple of species of pink or yellow.”

But on top of that eureka moment, Susan in the same month discovered another rare find: a pale grass lily in the Rhyll wetlands, which is listed on the Victorian rare and threatened species list. “That one too is rare to Phillip Island and something never found here before. There’s also not a huge number of records for it in Victoria. Around the same time I found another species, which isn’t rare in Victoria but has never been recorded on Phillip Island before, the rough bush pea. To find three in a few months is a pretty

rare event in itself.”

On top of those discoveries, this year Susan discovered two more species, at the Koala Conservation Reserve, which are locally rare and new records for the Nature Parks: another of the pea family, the grey parrot-pea; and also an orchid, white fingers.

There are about 23 rare and threatened plants recorded on Phillip Island and many more species considered locally rare, she says. The discoveries were all the more special given Susan’s long association with Nature Parks.

She grew up on the Mornington Peninsula but moved to Phillip Island to work at the first Grand Prix in 1988.

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"I worked in the Motor Sport Hall of Fame but then it closed because at that time Phillip Island lost the Grand Prix event."

So Susan then went to work at the Nobbies, when it was just a quaint weatherboard kiosk, long before it was demolished to become the current major Nobbies attraction. "At that point there was no Nature Parks and I worked for the Penguin Reserve Committee of Management."

"I was absolutely heartbroken when they shut the old kiosk because it was such a great relic of a previous era and the locals would even be out there in the dead of winter to enjoy the view and the wildlife while having a cup of tea. Mind you it certainly needed an upgrade in sanitation. The staff toilet facilities were still the old tin can."

She became a ranger in 1992, in those days "wearing multiple hats", from school talks to fox trapping and hosting the Penguin Parade. "There were a lot fewer staff then too, different management, a different era."

Nature Parks was created in 1996 and staff were required to manage a much larger chunk of land, from Cape Woolamai, along the south coast, Churchill Island and Koala Conservation Reserve.



"Like the whole island, Nature Parks has changed a lot in 30 years and there have been some amazing achievements in conservation."

Now in her role as environment ranger Susan works in the conservation team. Her passion is to protect rare and threatened plants, and in 2019 created three recovery action plans to protect five threatened and rare plants, which includes

such actions as guarding them against browsing from wildlife.

"We've had to complete ropes access training because some of the plants live on cliffs and protecting them can be tricky. We recently installed exclusion fencing down a cliff face to protect the critically endangered crimson berry from being eaten by wallabies."

Even on her days off Susan will travel off the island to search out and study plants and says she was surprised by her recent finds. "It's amazing they are even still growing here given the pressures on the environment, let alone the fact they haven't been found before. Besides their intrinsic value and beauty, these plants are an important part of the ecosystem. They have relationships with other plants, bugs and fungi and the more indigenous species we can retain the healthier our whole environment will be."

"We can all do our bit by removing environmental weeds from our gardens, going to the Barb Martin Bushbank to obtain native species, admiring plants in the wild without trampling them and respecting the fact it's pretty amazing they are there."

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BY SARAH HUDSON PHOTOS ALIA SCHONBERG

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WITHOUT QUESTION, ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS JOBS IN THE WORLD HAPPENS ALMOST EVERY DAY ON PHILLIP ISLAND'S DOORSTEP. BUT FOR CAPTAIN TOBY SHELTON, IT'S JUST A REGULAR DAY IN THE OFFICE.

Today the ocean off Phillip Island, near the Nobbies is glassy, as the tiny pilot boat's rubbery fender smacks into the side of the giant LPG tanker. Pilot boat driver Stuart Bachmann needs to ensure the pilot – Captain Toby Shelton – can make an easy leap to the tanker's dangling rope ladder.

“Even though it's a calm day today there's still a one metre swell and we have

to be constantly mindful,” Stuart says. “We work 24/7 regardless of tides and weather so imagine Toby doing this at 3am, in winter, in the middle of a storm, with six metre swell, climbing a tanker the equivalent of a 15-storey apartment.”

It is a legal requirement by most governments around the world for every international ship to take a licensed pilot into a port, to protect infrastructure,

environment and water users. In Western Port any ship over 35 metres – including pleasure yachts – have to take on a pilot, in this instance Toby, who boards the ship to navigate the 1.5 hour journey through the bay – past the island – to Hastings.

“It's all about safety,” Toby explains, above the noise of the pilot boat motor as we head out to meet the Singaporean-registered Epic St Agnes tanker, which is arriving in the

way



bay from Fiji to load up on LPG.

“The captain of any tanker has no choice. They have to take a pilot to take control of the ship. All pilots are ex-captains and we’ve done extra study to know every rock in the bay. Each port has its own challenges. Western Port is deep and wide but it has strong currents and is exposed to Bass Strait winds.”

Toby works for Port Phillip Sea Pilots,

one of Victoria’s oldest continuously operating companies that is owned in equal share by pilots. The company has more than 50 staff – including 26 pilots (six for Western Port), launch crew, boat maintenance and control room operators – who provide guidance when vessels are arriving at Victorian pilot boarding grounds (Hastings, Melbourne, Geelong, and Portland).

Today, like most days, Toby is dressed in a suit and tie, with polished RM Williams boots. Not the best attire for leaping from a pilot boat to ships measuring hundreds of metres in length and climbing rope ladders, in all weather conditions?

“My work uniform is a throwback to 1839 when Port Phillip Sea Pilots first started,” Toby says. “It’s a bygone era,



tradition. When I board cruise ships I fit in but sometimes I'll get on board a tanker and the crew are in oil-stained boiler suits – or in the case of Chinese ships full Hazmat because of Covid. Then I stand out.”

Adds Stuart: “He’s also boarding ships with \$30 to \$40 million worth of cargo, so it’s part of a corporate role.”

Even though ships sail almost the entire length of Phillip Island, the pilot boat is housed at the Flinders jetty, on the Mornington Peninsula. The pilot boat was even manufactured on the peninsula, at Yaringa boat harbour, to a French design, which is the world-standard in pilot boat safety.

Boarding the pilot boat is a little strange as there is no parameter safety rail, only a rail attached to the cabin and despite the calm conditions we’re told to hang on. The photographer and I then sign an indemnity form, clearing Port Phillip Sea Pilots of any responsibility and ensuring we understand safety procedures.

Toby explains we don’t need to wear life jackets: we’re reassured, it’s safe. “It’s

a self-righting boat. If it turns upside down the vent to the engine automatically seals so it doesn’t take on water,” he says. At the rear of the boat there’s a hydraulic lift and a giant hook, to lift anyone out of the water in case they fall overboard.

Stuart then reverses the boat past all the fishing lines hanging off the Flinders jetty and motors out three nautical miles (1.8km) from land to an official dot on the nautical map where pilot boats meet ships for boarding.

“Hastings Harbour Control, this is Ranger III we are underway,” Stuart says on the radio, while working off his large GPS screen.

Heading closer to the Epic St Agnes, Stuart confirms on radio which side of the tanker the rope ladder will be (depending on the height of a ship there can be different combinations of ladders: rope, rail, steps). “Each job changes with conditions. It’s always dynamic,” Stuart adds.

Toby says they work in all weather conditions, “although there are limits”.

When conditions are really rough, tankers can perform a choreographed 90-degree manoeuvre that “sweeps the sea flat” to provide a small window of opportunity for Toby to board. “It can be very hairy. There’s a vortex of water when a ship turns that creates suction and it can smash us along their hull. So it’s a controlled collision.”

When the wind is 30 knots, for instance, a ship will park at the Cowes anchorage in the middle of the channel. Toby says he works closely with the Western Port harbor master and the

“WE STRIVE TO BE BORING, ROUTINE AND NORMAL.”

captain of a ship to assess conditions. “I’m no hero. We are well trained so we know our limits and every port will put out guidelines. I’m constantly weighing up the risks.”

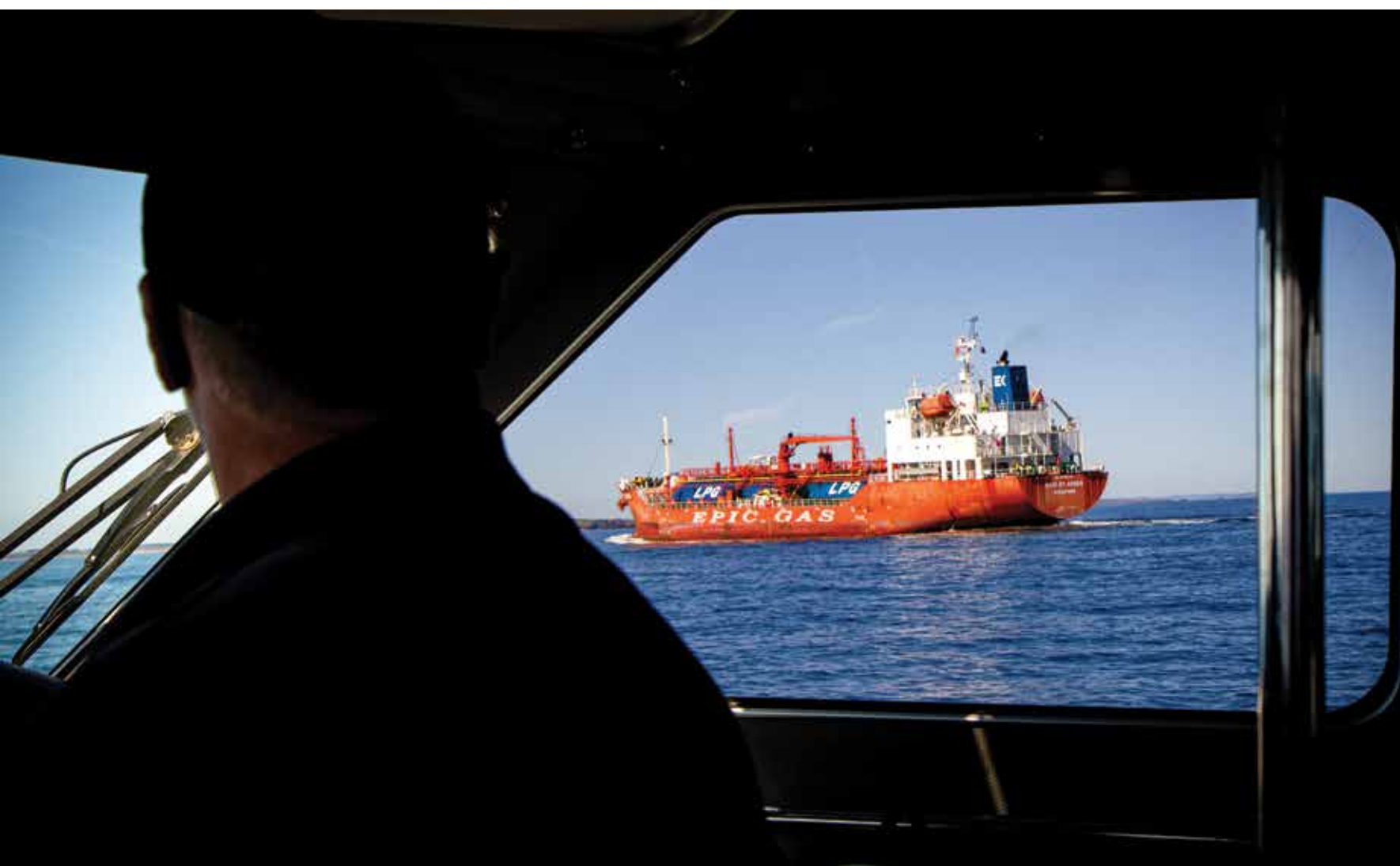
As we approach the Epic St Agnes, it’s hard not to be intimidated by the imposing size of a tanker from the perspective of a little pilot boat. Many metres up you can spot the crew, even out here wearing masks to protect against Covid. “They are not like the Love Boat,” quips Toby, “most of the ships are work horses.”

Coxswain Wayne Wood – the third staff member on the boat, who lives in Rhyll – up to now has been mostly quiet at the back of the pilot boat. But as Stuart hovers cheek-to-jowl alongside the tanker, it’s now Wayne’s job to ensure Toby doesn’t fall overboard.

Wayne straps himself to the only safety rail and guides out Toby, a life jacket over his suit and tie, who is also strapped to the rail. Toby makes it look easy, moving from pilot boat to rope ladder to the tanker’s deck in mere seconds.

He says once on board he works as a team with the existing crew, taking control of the ship. Given the international nature of the job, sometimes communication can be tricky. “Some captains travel the world and know what answers they need to give but the moment I go off track from the standard questions, then it can be difficult.”

The 47-year-old says generally he takes a ship the full distance to Hastings, occasionally stopping at the Cowes anchorage in the channel if, for example, a ship is too early and a berth isn’t available. Long-term island locals will remember when Western Port was bustling with shipping activity, many tankers anchored in the bay at one time. This slowed in the early ‘80s after BP refinery at Crib Point closed and with the decline of oil and gas



in Bass Strait.

Very rarely, Toby says, a fishing boat will cross in front of a ship in the channel. “The big ships can’t turn or stop quickly. Most fisherman are sensible but I have had them come in front of me. We’ll use the whistle and I’ll avoid them at all cost.”

If not stopping to anchor in the channel, Toby will meet two tugboats near Sandy Point and they will attach strong tow ropes to the bow and stern of the ship to guide it to wharf. “If a ship hit the wharf too hard it would demolish it.”

Generally, Toby will leave his car at Hastings so he can then either drive to his home in Warragul, or back to Flinders if he needs to pilot another ship. Working 24/7 – two weeks on, one week off – the father-of-four says it’s vital he manages his fatigue and pilots have permanent access to a room in a Flinders motel.

In his career prior to becoming a pilot Toby would be away from home for four weeks, but then have a month at home.

Toby’s love of the sea started early thanks to his parents’ love of boats, growing up near the Gippsland Lakes. After school he studied four years at the Australian Maritime College in Launceston, which included 18 months on ships around the world.

For 14 years he then worked for

IT’S HARD NOT TO BE INTIMIDATED BY THE IMPOSING SIZE OF A TANKER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A LITTLE PILOT BOAT.

shipping companies as a deck officer around Australia, Asia and the Pacific, followed by a SeaRoad captain on cargo ships between Melbourne, Tasmania and King Island. During this period he qualified for his exemption licence (ships such as the Spirit of Tasmania don’t require pilots when travelling the same route).

In 2011 Toby started working for Port Phillip Pilots, about a year ago completing one month’s study to work in Western Port (the normal study period would be about eight months for a captain without his experience).

He says he loves the job for the variability, with no two days the same, whether it’s currents, wind, or meeting the

ship’s crew. “It’s like travelling the world but not. I meet Ukrainians and Russians on the same ship, about 80 per cent probably are Filipino, but also Koreans and Indians. We talk cricket.”

He agrees piloting ships is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world and early in his career bad weather conditions would cause him anxiety. But not anymore. “I don’t lose sleep with wind or worry about tomorrow, because I just have to deal with it.

“For me the most dangerous time is transferring to a ship, but we minimise the risk as much as possible. We strive to be boring, routine and normal. My fear now is being caught in weather but not having the resources to deal with it, like when a tug breaks down.”

And his most dangerous experience?

“It was about 13 years ago and I was in Bass Strait in a storm and the waves were about 18 metres high. Stuff was flying everywhere and the ship was a mess. But I wasn’t worried. I was like ‘wow’ look at that, just seeing Mother Nature in full fury. It was awesome.”



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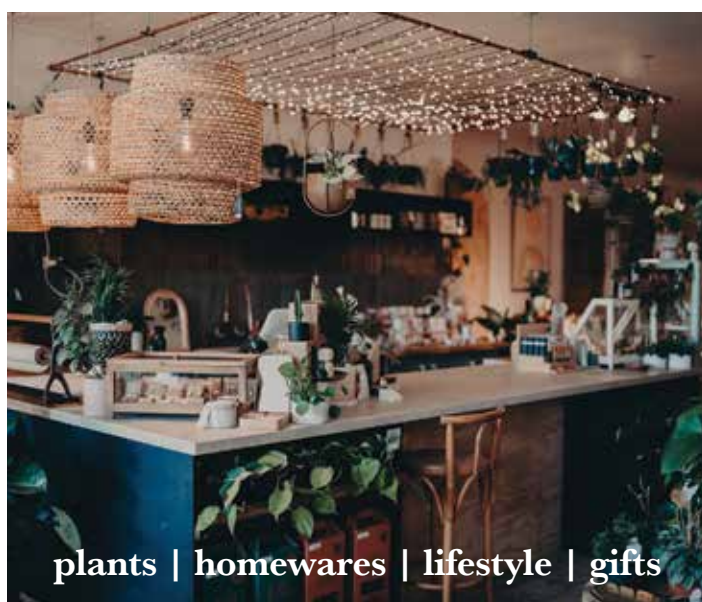
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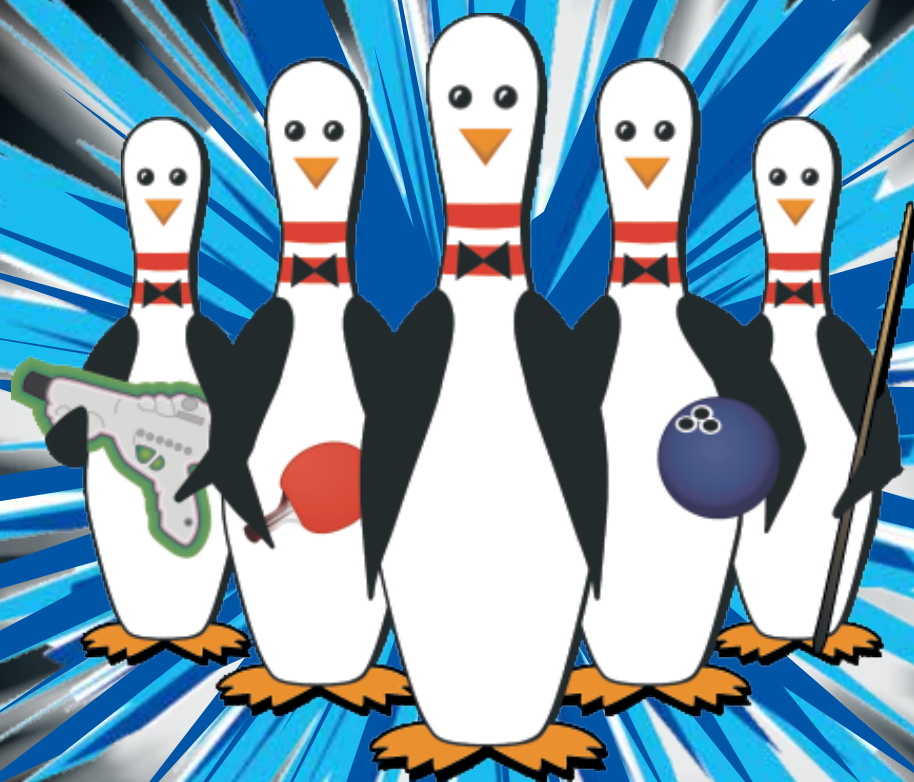
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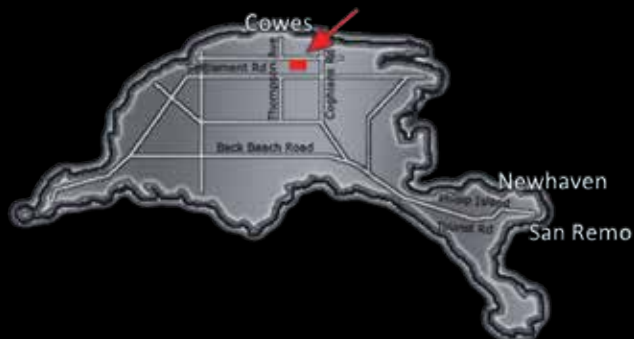
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MY
OBSESSION

Mad about MotoGP



BY ELEANOR MCKAY | PHOTO STEPH THORNBORROW

Kirri and Andrew are MotoGP devotees. They watch every race of the season, and their collection of memorabilia is an enduring record of their obsession.

The walls of the shed on their Phillip Island property are adorned with MotoGP memorabilia and the couple's devotion to the sport has seen the collection steadily grow over the years. "We've collected bits and pieces along the way, and when we go through the stuff, we remember the events, or when we met the riders," Andrew said.

Every part of it represents a moment in the couple's enduring love affair with the MotoGP. Like the massive picture of Casey Stoner on his Ducati, which Kirri spotted in a motorcycle shop in Sydney. "I told them it was old news, because he doesn't ride for them anymore," she laughed. "I said you should give it to me. I gave them 10 minutes to think about it and when I came back, they pulled it off the wall and

handed to me."

Similarly, Kirri sweet-talked her way into a life-size cardboard cut-out of Valentino Rossi. "That one was at the football club in Cowes," explained Andrew. "We went there for dinner one night and the bloke on the door gave it to her."

A T-shirt and hat signed by Andrea Dovizioso came into the collection after the couple spotted the Italian rider in a restaurant. "We were sitting at table 4, which is his number, so I held up the number 4 sign and waved," Kirri said.

Also gracing the walls are riders' photos, and a 10 metre Yamaha banner, as well as three GP flags that adorned the Phillip Island bridge in 2013, 2014 and 2016.

Over the years, they've met plenty of riders while at dinner, and spotted many more. While their MotoGP love spreads to all the riders, including the Moto2 and Moto3 competition, Australian champ Casey

Stoner holds a special spot in their hearts.

As well as the big photo from the Sydney shop, there's a number 27 flag, which they took to the track in 2012 for Stoner's last ride. "Kirri got a number 27 flag and an Australian flag, and we got a three-metre piece of dowl and she carried it to the track on the back of my bike," Andrew explained. "We had a seat up the back of the grandstand on what's now Casey Stoner corner and we took this three-metre -high thing with the flags and tied it to the top of the stand. It ended up on the TV coverage, and then we brought it back home, flying it from the back of the bike."

They both nominate the photo of Stoner with his Ducati as their favourite piece in the collection.

"One day, we've got to get him to come here and sign it," Andrew laughs.

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