

The Observologist

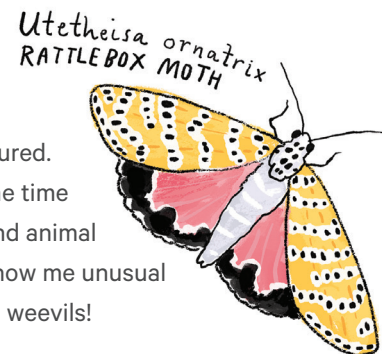
Giselle Clarkson



Giselle Clarkson is an illustrator and comic artist based in Greytown, New Zealand. Known for her non-fiction comics on conservation and environmental topics, she has illustrated a number of awardwinning books including *Egg and Spoon: An Illustrated Cookbook* by Alexandra Tylee and *The Gobbledegook Book: A Joy Cowley Anthology*.

Did anyone teach you how to be an observer or do you think people are born to it? Does it run in your family?

I think most people are probably born curious, but like any skill it has to be nurtured. Mum and Dad had me spending a lot of time outdoors and would always take the time to point out interesting things. Our bookshelves growing up were full of plant and animal identification guides. Even as a teenager they'd call me out of my bedroom to show me unusual creatures they'd found in the garden or wood pile – giant green moths or giraffe weevils!



Where does your loving kindness come from for living things?

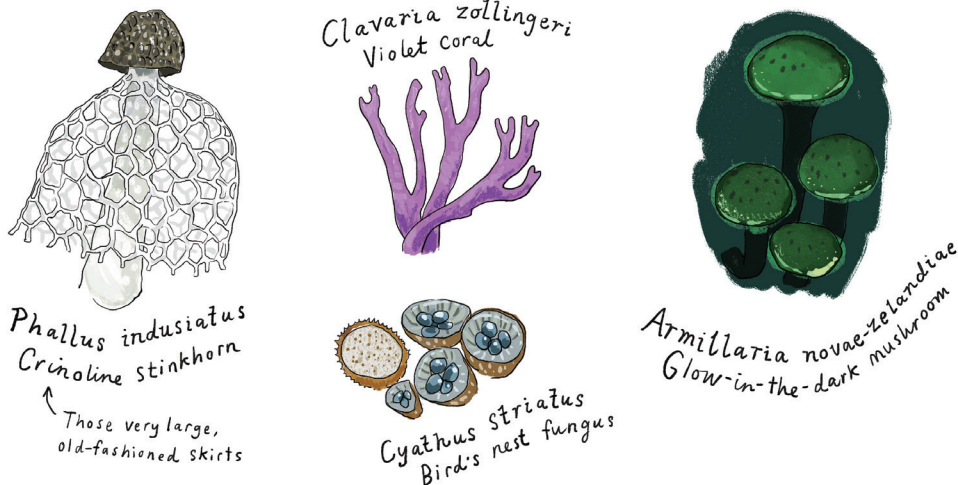
My parents taught me to treat invertebrates as thoughtfully as any other animal. Admittedly, growing up in New Zealand does have its advantages...with so few (dangerously) venomous creatures around there's little risk involved in getting up close and personal with things you find under a rock. And my family always had a lot of pets – quail, canaries, frogs, lizards, rats, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, mice, chickens, ducks, lambs and baby goats, a peacock...not all at the same time though! It was absolutely imperative that all of them were properly cared for, so that taught me a lot.



What inspired you to create this handbook for budding natural scientists?

Watching insects and looking for other tiny, interesting things genuinely is one of my favourite hobbies, and the content of *The Observologist* is all the stuff I talk about and point out when I'm walking with my nieces and nephews. Putting it all down in a book felt like a very logical thing to do.

FUNGI COME IN ALL KINDS OF STRANGE AND WONDERFUL SHAPES

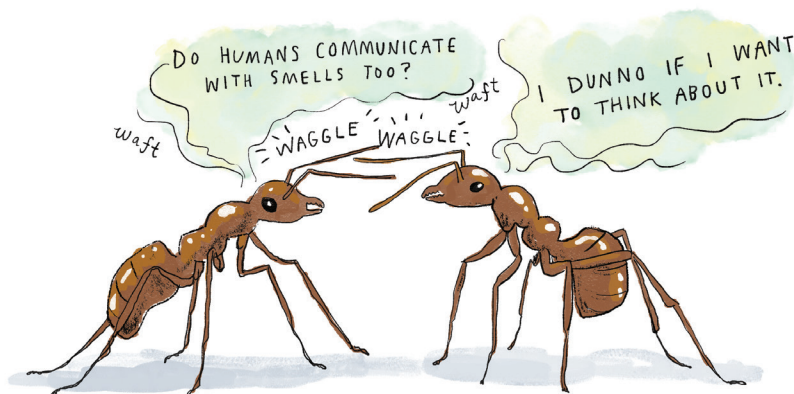


What was your writing and illustrating process while creating *The Observologist*?

I made a list of topics I wanted to write about and then expanded each one with all the facts I could think of. If I ever got stumped, I'd go out into the garden and watch bees, or flies, or worms, and write about what I observed.

Conservation and environmentalism are important for you – what do you hope your book helps children feel towards the natural environment?

I hope it will encourage children to see that a fascinating, lively, natural world is more than just big animals in faraway places – it's all around us. I think being a conservationist starts when you feel a personal connection to a plant or an animal or a place, and observing the quiet magnificence of a spider, a moth or a dragonfly is a wonderful way to begin building that relationship with nature.



The Observologist | Available October 2023 from all good bookstores

A highly illustrated creative guide to the small creatures and the natural wonders we find when we take time to open our eyes to the world around us—an ode to the power of quiet observation.



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