

# Gough



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## Some Photo Fun

Hi all. Having a camera is a must on this beautiful place. Karen and Sylvain went to Gonydale to count Tristan Albatross's for two day. So the next day Marius and I decided to go and help them. The walk took forever, we finally got their "pewww". Had some fun with the camera.



I'm not that good with a camera still experimenting. Some plant life taken with super macro. The Tristan Albatross is a magnificent bird. A photo of one close to our camp area.



At Snoekgat we found these curios animals in the ocean. Two Fur Seals looking at us like we strange beings.

Hope u enjoy the pics.

Sunette



## Good day all

By now I hope you have all recovered from all the ill effects in the wake of Christmas and all the financial implications it entails. But I suppose there is some neat tans out there for all you lucky ones who had the chance to be frolicking on the great beaches of sunny S.A. At least we were spared the temptation of spending and I am sure most of us has already forgotten what money looks like.

Although we had some warmer weather this side and a bit of sun. The Ocean is of not much use to us. The water is too cold and there are no sandy beaches to enjoy. Ag well, I suppose I will just have to wait my turn. Luckily we will soon get some visitors in the form of the Edinburg fishing vessel which has returned to the area. Although we do not have contact with the crew except for a few radio chats it will be nice to see the little orange bouts bobbing along the coast again. It kind of breaks the monotony and loneliness of island life.

We had some terrible winds during summer which tried to rip the roof off the base, break down antenna wires and makes you cling to your bed at night when the whole structure starts rocking like a Waltzing Matilda. Then I lay awake thinking about a prediction that someone made that the world will end in December 2012. All the planets will align up in a certain fashion which will result in terrible storms and flooding of land. Hopefully I will be off the island by then and somewhere deep in the centre of Africa where the cruel blue ocean cannot reach me easily. I surely would not like to be on a small island if the sea starts to rise. At home I can at least get a boat ready with the necessary rations and refreshments.

I am getting a bit tired of typing newsletters so I am trying to establish a local website for the island. I think it will be nice if people from over the world can log into a site with up to date information off all the activities on the islands. If there is any specific category of information that you would be interested in or have any bit of historical information you can share please send me an e- mail so I can include it.

Leo.

## THE GOFFS - A STORY OF AN ISLAND FAMILY



Once upon a time, long long ago, in the middle of a big lake was a tiny island called Goff. On this little island lived a family of elves, a mixed bunch, who at times did not seem totally normal.

There was Grandad, who would spend hours in front of a gadget he called a server access point, his fingers would be tapping away as he told the server what to do in a foreign language, that only they understood. Many times the server would not do what Grandad wanted; Grandad would then use some naughty words that he learned from his boss in Flat top mountain city, back in the Real World. When the server was not listening to Grandad, Grandad would go have a calming herbal drink, made of hopps and barley, or one made of grapes. Grandad would then talk about what he missed in the Real World, his pawed friends and a, sometimes furry, little creature he called Poeding.

Redcross was younger than Grandad, but looked after the not so normal family like a mommy. She would make sure the elves still had enough blood in their bodies, by sticking a needle in their fingers, if they leaked they were okay. Redcross was also missing a friend in the Real World, but going for walks or having a herbal drink with Grandad always made Redcross feel better.

Techie was the fix-it elf, he would make sure the magic machines always had enough to drink and that they were always in good health. The magic machines gave the elves on Goff the invisible power to make food and to keep warm. When the magic machines where happy, Techie would join Grandad for an herbal drink or two and talk about the Real World. The herbal drinks were like a magic potion, the more they had, the more intelligent they got. Some of the elves are going to be super intelligent in the not too distant future.

Princess was the pretty elf, she would spend her days with a notebook writing down information she gathered in the fields, and on the rolling green hills of Goff. For Princess the feathered creatures of Goff were fascinating, for her an exiting day would be to go count and measure the feathered creatures. Princess had her favourites, and rewarded them with nice shiny bracelets.

Zoom was the quickest elf on Goff, in the fields or on the hills, no one could catch Zoom. Zoom helped Princess with the measuring of the feathered creatures and fitted the shiny bracelets. Zoom would spend hours outside in the rain, wind or cold, watching the feathered creatures as they came to land on Goff.

Tall, Shorty and Mop made up the rest of the Goff family. They spent their days in deep discussion, contemplating the difference between rain and drizzle or how fluffy is a fluffy cloud. Grandad and Techie think they need some herbal drinks, clouds look so much different after a few herbal drinks.

To be continued .....

Marius

## From the Lab by S. Dromzée & K. Bourgeois

January sounds already like the end of our enjoying stay on Gough. The middle of the summer is a very busy month for many seabirds that are breeding now and for us to monitor them while their breeding cycles are overlapping. The month starts with the hatching of great shearwater chicks and the laying for the Tristan albatross. Adult rockhopper penguins are moulting and look fat and fluffy while the chicks are losing their down and are close to fledge. We visited several colonies to count the fledglings in order to assess the breeding success which is only 31 % on average. It might be already the last time we go to beautiful places like Admirals, Tumbledown and The Glen where we have never been before! At the beginning of the month, we also went for the last time to the giant petrel colony to monitor the chicks before fledging. We were happy to find all the 121 chicks we ringed at the end of November. All sooty albatross eggs hatched, so we counted chicks to determine the hatching success.

We were happy and relieved to finish the counting and description of burrows in all transects dedicated to the great shearwater. Starting in December, we have described and recorded 1283 burrows, marking 318 of them for further visits during the breeding season in order to evaluate the breeding success for this species. January is also the start of the Tristan albatross monitoring with the record and marking of all nests with an egg at Gonydale and Tafelkop, and the identification of each partner. This is the occasion to spend two nights a week at Gonydale.

Great Shearwater Chick



White Bellied Storm Petrel



Moulting Rock hopper



This place is for us the realm of the mountain with the wind, the calm, the lack of smell and the stretches of grass. We enjoy this place after a while spent on the shore which is noisy, smelly and often stressful with an abundant wildlife crowded in a small area. But we enjoy switching one place for the other. Marius and Sunette gave us a surprise and joined us at Gonydale helping to spot and then mark albatross nests with poles.

During a misty night at Gonydale, we caught our first white-bellied storm petrel for some measurements and blood sample. We walked in the pitch dark and the mist, visibility only for short distance with the diffuse beam of our headlamps which yet dazzled many prions that crashed into us or close to our feet. We looked for and followed the specific whistle that these small seabirds produce in order to locate them. The nearer we drew, the further the whistle seemed to go.... Until, at last, we found the small black and white body.

For the New Year, we decided to reach The Glen which is a very famous place on Gough as it is where the weather station was first settled. Marius and Nkoane joined us for this long and expected hard walk through the inland even if this coastal place is close to the base for an albatross, for a rockhopper or for a fur-seal as well: a few seconds of flight or several minutes of swimming. Unfortunately, we did not find the right way this time, spending a night at an uncomfortable place for camping but with an unbeatable view of Hag's Tooth. We tried again to reach The Glen on the 20<sup>th</sup> with Nkoane and Brendan, and this time we got it! We walked on a thin ridge, battled into the dense vegetation, hopped rocks in the river, went up and down to skirt round waterfalls and pools, slipped, felt... But what a pleasure to see magnificent scenery with narrow gorges, rocky walls, various shaped rocks, impressive waterfalls and attractive pools!

Sooty Albatross Chick



Tristan Albatross



## Gough after four months

It has been four months since we came to Gough Island and we have firmly settled into our now home away from home. By now we are quite use to our fellow members and each ones little rituals and behaviours.

The greatest thing about being here is the closeness to nature and its beauty giving you the feeling of freedom, being surrounded by this splendour. To calm your mind an break away from the day to day rituals of the base just venture a small distance to either Seal beach, skua ridge or swemgat just to get caught in the true feel of nature. It can settle your mind and at the same time give you a great workout, because the routes around here are not as smooth as one would hope, falling is the most common thing to do while walking, old or new it will happen. The key is to just laugh a bit get back up and go further.



We have also experienced some great cooking here at the base; we have master chefs and bakers. From my favourite ribs and chips to chocolate cakes and fudge, I can see the pounds packing on as the year pass. Our dinners are mostly by candle light and if you are too lazy to make pudding there is always ice cream as a backup. To occupy the time there are things to do in the base in the form of repairs and restoring what has worn out. It mostly includes sanding down and repainting because the moist air causes most of the metal to rust here. We are also trying to add some decreteive items to make more homely.

Still enjoying myself here and ready for what lies ahead for the next couple of months.

Gerard

## A New Year's venture into the unknown

While people were planning New Year's Eve parties and holiday destinations or just chilling with family and friends, other members of the Gough 57 team were planning a venture into the unknown. Not unknown because no one else had ever been there but unknown to all of Gough 57 team members. The plan was already underway and I happened to be off for those few days and saw that as an opportunity to do what I so wished for the last time I was here.

I was fortunate enough to have made the cut, being part of this expedition and when I heard about the plan to go to the Glen to end 2011 and enter into 2012, I was happy that I could join.

So, the adventure began on the morning of 31st December 2011 when we left the base to attempt to spend New Year's Eve at the Glen, which is where the original base was established in the 1950s.



It had started raining the night before our departure, was still raining in the morning but we were convinced by the forecast from the web that it should clear and we would have a window of good weather. It stopped raining just before we left and off we went. We got to Tafelkoppie and had to say good bye to Sunette and Brendan whose intention was to walk with us until Southpeak. They had to cut their trip short because the weather wasn't playing along. Being at a higher altitude I'd say we were actually inside a cloud and it started drizzling as well. We wished one another a happy new year and went our separate ways. Visibility was greatly reduced but we had the help of a GPS and my little knowledge of the island to get us to Southpeak.

Once at Southpeak it would clear every now and again and the scenery was just amazing, seeing Gonydale and part of the ocean on the western side of the island. Moments later it cleared nicely for us to see exactly where we were going and we didn't waste any time. We walked down Disney ridge all the way until I guess about a kilometer or so away from the Glen but since none of us had ever been there and not having any marked route it looked like we won't be able to go down and so we turned back with the hope that we will find a way down the valley to the stream or river that leads to the Glen. Around five hours later that day it seemed impossible for us to go down to the river and we started looking for a place where we could spend the night, New Year's Eve. We then had to climb back up again to where Sylvain said he saw a small area where we could at least spend the night. We found ourselves camping somewhere across the stream opposite Hag's tooth. We got ourselves settled and Sylvain cooked us a tuna pasta meal which we truly enjoyed after walking the whole day.

We soon went into our tents after the meal and that was the last time I saw 2011 with only the sound of birds, wind and a bit of rain during the night. Our tent was at an acute angle and sleeping was so uncomfortable and my knees and toes were complaining as well. I thought to myself, this is going to be the longest New Year's Eve ever. When we woke up in the morning we realized that our tent wasn't where it originally was. We had moved almost a meter down and that was really funny as I thought that Karen and Sylvain's tent would be the one sliding during the night.



Now we were into 2012 and the discussion was whether we proceed to the Glen or head back to base. The decision, which later on proved to be a wise one, was we head back to base. We ate our breakfast, packed our tents and started our journey back. It was a calm morning until we were ready to go. The wind started picking up and as I thought of how difficult it was coming down through ferns and phylica trees, I wished I could just close my eyes and in a few minutes see myself at the top of the ridge but things like that happen only in dreams. We made our way up to the top through the fern, the phylica and the wind. At the top the wind must have been gusting at more than 120km/h as it was dropping us off our feet every now and again. I'd sometimes balance with the walking sticks for a few minutes before succumbing and it was really fun. Well, was fun until we realized that we are not making progress and time was neither still nor moving slow to accommodate us. We came to a point where we just sat down quietly for some time, maybe close to an hour contemplating our next move. We had to choose between finding shelter which was most unlikely or soldiering on until we reach Gonydale and maybe spend the night there. I'm sure some of you may remember that in the last addition I mentioned that once you are in the field you have to keep moving as there is no shelter from rain. I thought about that and when asked what I thought, I said, let's soldier on until we are at Gonydale at least the wind will be better there than it is here. Waiting for the wind to subside was a bit riskier than facing it until we reached Gonydale. After we decided to move on, we came to realize that we were in fact not far from Southpeak and the wind gave us a chance to walk for over hundred meters before picking up again. Later on when we were at Gonydale, the clouds gathered and lowered again and I'm sure we were all thankful that we walked on.

Once at Gonydale we decided to shoot to the base. Well, all I wanted was a warm bath and a good night's sleep.

If you don't succeed first time, pick yourself up and try again.

Nkoane



## It draws you in

Spending time in one place you have to learn to adapt. Survival of the fittest if you will.

And it has been no different here. You quickly learn that you have to take advantage of all that Gough has to offer, and once you throw yourself in you quickly realise that there is a great deal on offer.

It can be overwhelming at times, with it's astounding beauty and yet with that same breath, so sedate and tranquil.

The rich history and the incredible landscapes mesmerize and leave you under it's spell. It is no surprise that people are forever going on and on about Gough Island after being here. This place is magical.

Being a self admitted sufferer of FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) I have never been one to live with regrets. This means taking full advantage of every opportunity presented, and so it is no different here.

This month has seen many opportunities come my way and I have persevered in taking full advantage of them all.

This month we started out with the first round of weighing seal pups and continued collecting scat samples (That doesn't sound very glamorous). This will be done on roughly a monthly basis as part of a monitoring programme. It is quite exciting to watch the pups grow. As it was, and still is, with all the chicks that hatched this past year, so it is no different with the seal pups. It will be very interesting to watch them mature and grow just as all of us here do the same.



The work involved in weighing them will become more intense as they get bigger, but it still does not detract from the wonderful opportunity and experience of monitoring the seals.

We also managed what we have been talking about for ages. After last month's attempt at The Glen, it was decided that it would have to happen again sooner or later. So a couple of us kitted up and successfully made the trip down to the location of the original base and the site of the sealers caves from the 1800's. This undertaking of this trip made us all realise exactly what the previous teams had to endure in getting around the island when they were still stationed at The Glen.

What a privilege it was to basically tour Gough's museum.

Was a real treat, and has pushed us all to try and experience every part of what Gough has to offer.

Not to miss out on this opportunity of a life time.

So who knows, next month you may be reading about our successful trip up to the highest peak on Gough. Edinburgh Peak. Here's hoping for good weather.

Till then, God bless.

Brendan

CLIMATE STATS: January 2012

<b>Ave. Max Pressure</b>	1009.8hPa
<b>Ave. Min Pressure</b>	1002.0hPa
<b>Ave. Pressure</b>	1005.8hPa
<b>Max Pressure</b>	1018.8hPa
<b>Min Pressure</b>	987.7hPa
<b>Ave. Max Temp</b>	18.4°C
<b>Ave. Min Temp</b>	12.6°C
<b>Ave. Temp</b>	15.5°C
<b>Max Temp</b>	22.7°C
<b>Min Temp</b>	7.4°C
<b>Ave Humidity</b>	76%
<b>Max Humidity</b>	95%
<b>Min Humidity</b>	28%
<b>Max Wind Gust</b>	40.2 m/s or 144.7 km/h
<b>Total Rainfall</b>	174.6 mm
<b>Highest in 24 Hours</b>	36.8 mm
<b>Total days with rain</b>	25 days
<b>Total days &gt;1mm</b>	12 days
<b>Total Sunshine</b>	205.5 hours

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