

Gough



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Pure beauty

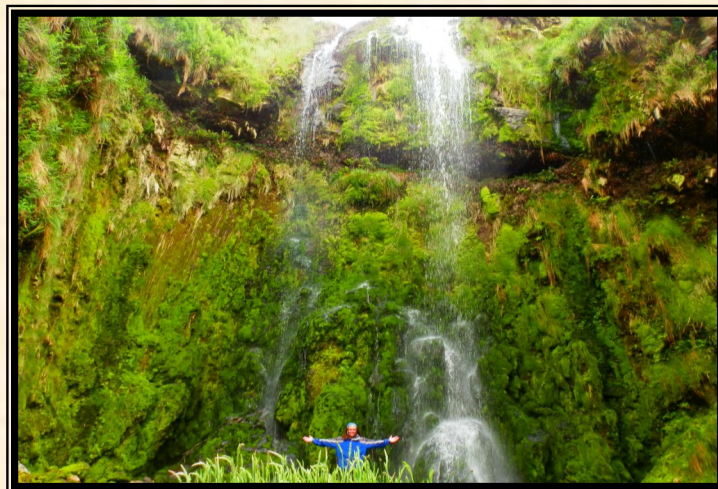
Making a point of going out and enjoying the Island is a must on here. Taking your own paths lets u see so much more. Going up the river u find these beautiful places, water-falls, pools. Taking a swim is not a very good idea the water is freezing. The laughter going with it is rejuvenating. Falls, slips makes it so much more fun. I have learned so much about myself and my team members.



Making a commitment of going for a walk on Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday all in different directions keeps the weigh gain at bay. With the good food from the kitchen the walks are a must.

Hope u all out there had a very good Christmas and a wonderful new year. Best wishes to all.

Sunette



Skua Secrets

Now's the season to be jolly. Lala la la la Laaa. Los daai pram en stoot jou trollie.. Lallala la la la. Of skiet jouself met jou oupa se rolle. La la lla lala laaa laa laaaaaaaa.

No don't worry I am not depressed. Actually I am very happy that I am here on the Island for the festive season and not in a traffic blocked, crime ridden and money guzzling S.A.

So I took a stroll yesterday and passed a lonely old Skua sitting on Phylica tree stump on the way to Seal Beach. Seeing that he looked old and wise, I asked him to share a few island secrets with me.

"Well", he said." If you really want to know what Gough is all about you must look at it from the top". He got this tip from a visiting Chaplain. There is a technique called " Helicoptering". If you feel uncomfortable in any situation like a difficult meeting or confrontation or any life situation that you feel you cannot handle. Your mind should leave your own body and hover over the scenario so that you can get a better perspective of the situation. So he offered me a ride on his back to where we could look down on Gough base and surroundings for a better perspective.



Luckily I had my camera with me that day so I captured a few shots to share with you back home.

While we hovered over base. He told me another secret. He said that some very clever scientist collected some bones and feathers of birds a year or two ago with which he planned to go home and genetically engineer a new type of bird. He would also take some samples of an Ostrich in SA and with this entire DNA collection he would create a cross between a none flying bird and island birds.

This would result in a big and powerful bird with excellent flying capabilities and a longing for the quiet and peaceful Island life. He also decided it should be very pretty so he added a lot of DNA from the Gough Bunting. He then appropriately chose the name Ostrunting for his creation.

According to my friend the Skua. The Ostrunting could not handle the situations in S.A and is now well on his way to the Island and also visiting Tristan and the other Islands to show off his good looks and its flying ability. Apparently it only has one small flaw. It has not been properly potty trained and still need lots of target practice.

The whole G57 team is now in ecstasy as we are anticipating its arrival. Cameras are serviced and cleaned and washing is done, as formal clothing and hard hats will be donned for the occasion. Some are even planning a movie shoot for the occasion.

My friend ensured me that he will be on constant watch to alert us as soon as he spots the Ostrunting so that we can be prepared. He also offered to download a lot more information and aerial views with me if I could download it to the computer. I tried but to no avail. I did not have the right Usb cable and it was like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

So I thanked my friend the old Skua and went back to base to write this happy New Year's tale to you.

May you have a prosperous and peaceful new year.

Leo



A MONTH OF MIXED EMOTIONS

Amazing weather has had me out and about almost every single day, with the highlights being following the rivers upstream and finding yet another waterfall that takes your breath away. With sheer walls on either side one walks in the rivers, and tumbling down into the water is normally followed by a few curses and then laughter. The mountain stream's water can be described with one word, freezing so the "dares" happen every so often, the medic and I have been frozen more than once as we are always up for it. Being able to sit down and enjoy the views, waterfalls, rock pools, fields of ferns, the list goes on and on, what a pleasure. To say it's a honour to be here is a understatement.



With Christmas close by we spent a fair bit of time decorating the dining and bar areas. Our first Christmas on Gough has being a time of mixed emotions, excited to have the festive season in paradise with our team mates, but at the same time feeling a bit down as a result of missing family, loved ones and best friends (dogs & horses for some). The day before Christmas had the team cooking up a storm in the kitchen and the spirits were lifted immediately by the laughter and joking. Christmas dinner was a feast of note which we won't forget for years to come and the longing for loved ones was replaced by the enjoyment of good food and togetherness.

New Year's is fast approaching and the emotions once again come into play but being a team nothing will get us down.

Happy New Year to one and all.

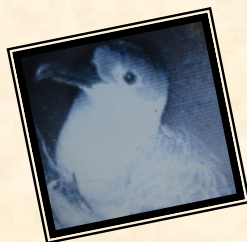
Marius

From the lab – by K. Bourgeois and S. Dromzée

In December, we were pleased to receive some help and support from other G57 team members. Brendan came with us to the giant petrel colony helping with monitoring and chick banding, at Gonydale helping with Tristan albatross nest-marking pole removal and to Seal Beach supporting us when we waited for penguin females equipped with GPS. Marius has helped us to re-catch skuas equipped with GPS. These were occasions to share nice moments and allowed us to perform some monitoring much quicker. So we sincerely thank Brendan and Marius for their valuable assistance.



We have pursued the monitoring of yellow-nosed albatrosses on the study colony and on three further areas to assess the impact of the monitoring on the breeding success and to monitor chick mortality. While the hatching success was in the average values for the species on the study colony, we observed several less than 2-weeks old chick disappearances, leading to a quite bad predictive breeding success for this year. It is quite difficult to know what happened to those chicks but they may have been preyed upon by mice and/or skuas. On the control area, the hatching success was similar as the one on the study colony but chick disappearance did not occur. However, we need to wait for the end of the breeding season for a better comparison.



We went to the giant petrel study colony to band chicks and evaluate hatching success. Chicks greeted us with squirts of fish (and other...) oil onto our clothes, perfuming us with a strong and lingering odour. We banded 121 chicks and estimate the hatching success at 85.2 % which is quite good for the species. We will visit the colony for the last time at the end of December.

We have scoped all marked great shearwater burrows in the study colony and counted burrows within quadrates along monitoring transects. Great shearwaters breed in dense colonies (> 0.5 burrows per square metre) mainly located in the coastal tussock. We also recovered further geolocators and banded some individuals on the study colony.



In total 14 penguin females were equipped with GPS and we recorded about 12 foraging trips. Surviving chicks started to form crèches: they gather in groups to protect themselves while parents go to sea for fishing. Feathers began to push out and they should be ready to swim and leave the colony from mid-January. So, we will count them during early January to estimate the breeding success on some colonies.

Precipitation on Gough Island and the clouds associated with them



(Altocumulus Lenticularis)
(Occur in strong winds)

Precipitation can be explained as any type of downpour from a cloud, being it solid or liquid. Over the past three months we have been here on the island we have experienced lots of rainy days, usually in combination with a cold front moving over the island. Most of the times we experience shower which are recognised by the sudden start of the rain and also the sudden stop. When we refer to showers we talk of rain that is falling from a convective cloud. These are clouds that have formed through the rapid ascent of air and usually tower high into the sky.

With these showers we have experienced lots of rain in very short periods, as well as small hail on a couple of occasions. Early in the mornings we see stratus cloud cover, which is the low, continuous shapeless cloud floating low above the ground and depositing very fine drops of water that do not flow off your clothes. Instead they form small beads of water that make you look like you rolled in a heap of sugar.

For a couple of days we experienced nonstop rain, which is usually linked to a cloud called, nimbostratus. The mass of this cloud in the vertical range can be very deep. Whilst on duty one day, after sending up a weather balloon for the upper air ascent, the data obtained showed the cloud being 19000 ft (5790 m) deep. On this occasion we recorded 98mm of rain in just one day. Later in the month, from the same cloud type, we experienced a continuous rainfall for a period close on 24 hours.

Also associated with this cloud type is snow. Which fell in October, shortly after the old team departed. This was real treat for our first month here on the island. It was however a very light snowfall, but did cover the mountain peaks where surface temperatures dropped to below freezing. It has not snowed since then, which is not surprising with it being summer. But now we are all looking forward to winter and a little bit more snow.

Gerard

Everyday day to day

I keep thinking of what my next adventure can be so I can have a great story to tell. But I was reminded that just being here is the biggest adventure and every part of this experience is special and unique. So what follows is a brief insight into my big adventure. This is an exciting adventure that has been most special and unique so far and still continues. One of the greatest aspects of the island experience, and sadly so often overlooked.

It's not often that I am left at a loss for words. But this seems to be changing as of late. As time wears on for us here on Gough, I am finding myself quieten down as a natural response to my surrounds. The stillness around me has seen me come into tune with it. I am growing more and more in my appreciation for life thanks to the opportunity to really LIVE it.

I have found in life, too often we are always left discussing the superficial and mundane and never challenging and engaging ourselves and others in a fear of what we might discover in the truth of who we actually are. But the greatest realisation I have had is that it will always be fear which holds us back from us seeing our true potential.

This may seem extremely abstract and very much out of left field for what one would expect from the newsletter. But that is fundamentally the Island. Something totally abstract and farfetched. Undiscovered and unexplored in so many ways. Unexpected!

This would mean an islander and his family and friends are not so different to the Island in our desiring the experience. The idea of venturing to such a place and following through with it or being a friend or family member with such an individual makes all of us here and you reading this just as adventurous and farfetched. None of us are dull and each of us truly unique and abstract. We are all undiscovered and unexplored in so many ways.

The path may have been walked a thousand times, but has it really been explored and discovered! All that it holds. All of its uniqueness! We will never truly expect what we may find!

Now what is the point of all this? Time in isolation truly allows you to engage with yourself and think deeply and methodically about life and your role in it. You reflect and ponder, you look deep within yourself. You start to notice things the good and the bad. You begin to criticize. But the criticism allows you to look so much deeper into yourself and opens you up like the surgeons blade. Revealing every organ of your emotion and mindset that keeps you alive. This time away has allowed me to become the surgeon in this operation on my thinking. I have been blessed with opportunity to have my very core exposed and my true make up made known to myself. I have been able to confront the fear of who I am and all those things that have shaped me. I have been able to dive deep down into my own self and wrestle with the things that have created the negative and free up room for growth in the positive. The way I have seen this is an excision of the cancer of negativity that surrounds the very organs that keep me alive. This leads to greater health and vitality and this is the cause for the increasing appreciation of life and particularly those that are in my life. It fuels a desire to be better for them so my impact can reach out and allow them to be better for the rest of the world.

It's the stage of recovery that we are at our weakest and we need to build up our strength again to tackle the challenges and live this life with the new mindset and appreciation. Become stronger than before and more aware of our emotional health. This is my experience of Gough Island. My adventure and an insight into my life. Thank you to everyone for helping me as I walk through this life, and though I may have walked a path so many times, so much of it remained undiscovered. There is so much "new life" if we only open our eyes and look.

Gough is teaching me, and I want to learn.

That is part of my everyday day to day.

Until next month. Love to all and God bless

Brendan

Medical analogy inspired by to many late night episodes of the series "House"

What is it that we really want?

I guess it's human nature to complain. I mean, when it's cold we complain but so we do when it's hot as well. Or maybe what we really want is for things to go our way all the time but forgetting that we can't all want the same things. Some like winter whereas some like summer, some prefer rain while some bright skies. Let's take Gough Island for example, the climate here is the way it has always been, it rains all year round but with more rain during winter and less during summer. We knew that before we came here but less rain or none whatsoever for a week or so, we complain. We should be coming up with ideas on how to survive without rain for two weeks for example knowing very well that it will definitely rain within two weeks. Get more or bigger tanks since once those we have here are full, the water just pass through to the ocean and a week without rain they are empty again.



Having learned from the previous month's experience, Marius came up with a plan. I'm not going to go into detail, what I can tell you is that when the red light went on again signifying that we will be running out of water soon, we didn't feel so much pressure like we did the last time the same thing happened. There was at least one full tank left, however small but at least much better than the last time. Then it rained and rained as we didn't have those enormous high pressure systems coming our way. The cold fronts brought us "good weather" so to speak, good weather because we have water but of course bad weather as they bring along strong winds and rain making it difficult to work outside or to go out just to explore the island. I don't think there's anyone who would like to be out in the field for fun when they can't take nice pictures to relive those memories some day.

To take nice pictures we would need at least partly cloudy conditions and it should be warm enough to make it easy to stop and take a picture without having to take off gloves and wanting to put them back on as soon as possible. But I've got to tell you something, having walked in the rain, not by choice though, you might find yourself enjoying it. After all you wouldn't have a choice as there are no shelters out there, just like Johnnie, you keep on walking.



This month was much better than the last one as far as our most important resource is concerned. We've had about 70mm of rain in 24 hours and it actually rained from the night before until the evening. Summer on the other hand has brought with it new life on the island. The Yellow Nose Albatross chicks, seal pups to add to the Moorhens, Skuas and others mentioned in the previous month. I am sure the Sooties and the Shearwaters will follow suit soon. The Shearwaters lay their eggs in burrows and therefore Karen and Sylvain will be the first to know when their eggs have hatched.

I've also seen Noddies, by chance, flying pass where we take sea surface temperature towards Seal Beach. I've thought it is quiet rare to see them as I've seen only one, once at Swemgat the last time I was here. We actually went looking for them but with no luck and I've now been told that they can be found at Snoekgat. Only if we knew back then. I guess this tells how every expedition is a unique experience. Take the seals at Seal beach for example, I've never seen so many of them and thought maybe I didn't go there at the right time four years ago but Leonard confirmed it. Maybe the population is growing and being a metkaside I wouldn't know for sure at this point but it's fascinating.

Maybe what we need is to do ourselves a favor by going easy on what we want and appreciating what we have.

Nkoane Mathabatha

X-mas

We all decided that we going to do Christmas on the 24th so we don't have to do anything on Christmas day. So we all started early in the day preparing dinner. With three courses we had to start early. For starters we had kreef, fish and chicken with a apricot basting.

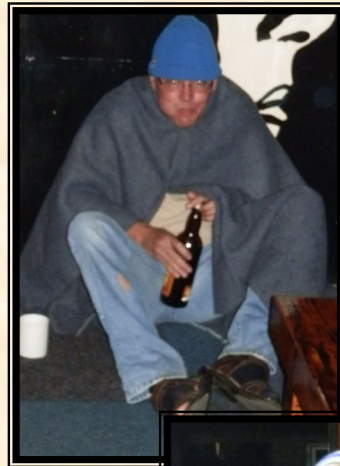
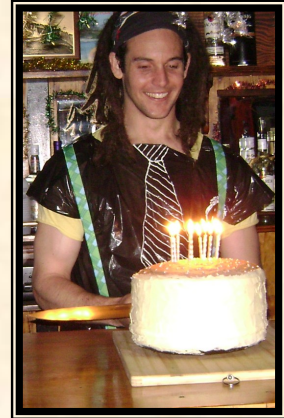
Mains mutton leg, pork leg and some veggies. Bread and cookies were baked. Pudding was a wide range of sweet stuff. We had our own Father Christmas that came with loads of presents for the team.



Sunette

Brendan B-day

Lovely sunshine outside the day is beautiful . Jack baked a monster of a cake for us all to enjoy. The theme of the day was hobo. We had lots of fun, playing pool and table tennis .The cake was wonderful. Some even brought their own blankets.



Sunette

CLIMATE STATS: December 2011

Ave. Max Pressure	1014.4hPa
Ave. Min Pressure	1007.2hPa
Ave. Pressure	1010.5hPa
Max Pressure	1025.4hPa
Min Pressure	996.2hPa
Ave. Max Temp	17.3°C
Ave. Min Temp	10.9°C
Ave. Temp	14.1°C
Max Temp	22.4°C
Min Temp	6.5°C
Ave Humidity	76%
Max Humidity	95%
Min Humidity	12%
Max Wind Gust	34.2 m/s or 123.1 km/h
Total Rainfall	136.2 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	61.8 mm
Total days with rain	19 days
Total days >1mm	11 days
Total Sunshine	198.3 hours

Sponsors



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