



The Eagles have landed

The strange neighbours of the Wandering Albatross.



A Birders eye view

Flying lessons will be conducted by Ben Dilley.



GPS (Geographically programmed sealers)

No Sealers were harmed during the making of this newsletter...to the best of our knowledge.



Iceberg!

There the Titanic goes...again.



Mix Pickling with paddy and gogga ninjas

Two nuts in parkas...fantastic!



FREEDOM

Saying goodbye to old friends.

The Eagles have landed

By the eagles I refer to the 3 mighty Metkassies as we call ourselves around here. Sailing down to Marion was the 1st lifetime experience in “the Red taxi”, as we call it, although for some it was not. I wish I can sing the song that says “If you think God is dead you better look around”

It was 1st time for me and the Senior Met, Dianah Mabizela to land on the grounds of this special place .Well for Nkoane it's not a new experience as he has been to Gough Island. Marion 65 team gave us a warm welcome especially the Met team.

As Marion Island is known for its special birthday celebrations, we celebrated five birthdays in two months.

We celebrated Noma (from DEAT), the three Metkassies: Dineo, Dianah, and my and Mia's Birthdays.



Fortunately for Dianah, she managed to get a field trip to Junior's kop, after working night shift. The weather seemed to be on their side, with clear sky the whole day; in meteorological terms we would say it was “Cavok” Even though she was unsure that she would make it to the top, as she was falling in the mire and resting every now and again, the encouragement from the others made her strong. She describes the trip as a fruitful exercise for the mind, body and soul.

During Takeover we had the privilege to have Pastor Williams from National Department of Public Works conducting church services. Most of us were spiritually uplifted with his soul food.

Killer whale watching has become a hobby for most of us to whom it is not part of our work. If an announcement is made that the whales are passing, everyone in the base comes out running to see these incredible creatures. Some of us got to see them live for the first time on this island. We were also one of the few teams to see icebergs. It is so unbelievable realizing how far they have traveled or should I say floated in order to reach here. It was just so amazing to see such a massive chunk of ice. When we saw the first one, some of us thought it was a ship but were even more excited that it was an iceberg. When after two days we woke to see a big one less than a kilometer from the base, we came out running with cameras and binoculars as if it was passing by quickly or was going to melt before we could take pictures.

We have also had our first snow, the whole day of bad weather. The wind here can be so strong that when it happens we start to worry about those working outside or ourselves if the time for upper air is approaching. Chances are you will be swaying and falling when going to the new base where we release the balloon. Most of all we will be asking ourselves if we will succeed in releasing the balloon.

Before signing out, we would like to thank God, the role players contributing to the success of this worthy course, all who support us and last but not least, the Marion 65 Team for their warm welcome and showing us the ropes to continue from where they left off.

Till next time!

- Mpho



A Birders eye view

As the red taxi sails away
The fifteen team M66 go hooray
Now the islands ours for a year
Bring it on, we have no fear

Three Birders, our Medic and Radio Tech take a hike for fun

An 8 day round island mission energetically filmed by Johan

Kholekile discovers he loves breyani dinners

The rest of us try all sorts of hut combo winners

From Kildalkey we see our first icebergs just off green hill

An inspiring sight as we have the accent up Karookop still

Marlene says not another up, I won't do another up
And then yes I did it, Karookop gaan ...

Black lava underfoot is really tricky

Just think if it was hot toffee lava it would be sticky

But its not hot, its really cold at this time of year

Snow and ice pellets tested our gear

Swartkops is beautiful, especially in the snow,

The flying winds gave Ben a dodgy toe

We meet the sealers and ninjas at their mixed pickle homestead

Where they graciously allow us to stay if we make hut-bread

The ominous Azorella Mountain lay ahead in the snow

A beautiful day and from the top its not far to go

We get to Cape Davis and the Mia and what a surprise -

Another huge iceberg behind boot rock at sunrise

The mires are even more squidgy after all the rain

Goney claims another victim as Delia sinks again

We have to cross the three raging rivers after long ridge

Now it's just through Hoppie's Hell and over Van den Boogaard Bridge

Back in base Sandton seems so plush

Hot showers and toilets that flush

All that's left is Katedraal in the centre

Who's keen for another venture?

-Ben, Delia & Marlene



GPS (Geographically programmed sealers)

“GPS” What’s a GPS? Normal response for any sealer....

Follow your memory or your gut, that’s the name of the game when you’re a sealer.

One quick orientation in take-over from Marthan, Nico, Ryan and Tom was all that was needed to show us greenhorns where to go. No track line on a small digital screen that is dependent on batteries was necessary. The only route markers that were used was rocks and mountains that looks like animals or human body parts. This brought some hilarious moments along the way as Mia commented on a rock next to Boot rock that looked like human hands. After the round islands our memory was overloaded with pictures and information of Paradise, now we just need tom put this into practice.

As you know everybody walks everywhere. This means that the four of us needed to get our fitness levels up to island standards. Nefhere “Doc” seems to be a natural, walking to Watertunnel in just over 3 hours without getting lost. For the rest of us it came slower. Derek seems to be the new Ryk Neetling of Marion island swimming through the same river twice, seems like he’s practicing his lap time for the upcoming summer. Martin on the other hand won the polka dot jersey for crossing Long Ridge at its highest point through the snowy mountains.

Another part of the sealers training course is the solitary confinement at Mixed Pickle, this allows the sealers to hone their animal communication skills as the only friend that they have there is a few *Tropicalis* pups. This part of the training goes on for three months as each sealer gets a turn to learn their seal calls.

These skills will be mastered through the year so that we can earn our place on the list of legends that still hangs in the Mammal Lab.



Photo: a rare site for sealers, a trip through the snow covered mountains.

Iceberg!

On Friday 15 May the island had a glorious surprise. An iceberg came drifting past the island. At first there was some disagreement between Jack and Asanda as to what the white thing on the horizon is. Jack thought it was a ship and the experienced Marion eye of Asanda said it was an iceberg. Of course experience trumped Jack's keen eye after confirmation with the aid of a pair of binoculars. In Jack's defence, it was conveniently shaped like a ship.



Very excited, the 7 of us here at the base took photos from crane point, hoping that it would come closer for better photos (a.k.a. proof). The next day we lost sight of the iceberg due to the heavy mist blanket that was pulled tightly over the island. However, the following day (Sunday 17 May) the mist lifted and we could see that the iceberg was stranded somewhere in the vicinity of Archway. Mark was excited like a teenager before his first mixed party and convinced me to take him to Archway to take some photographs. Sometime during our journey there the iceberg had collapsed and was now breaking up. It was stranded approximately 100 meters from the cliffs just to the right of Archway's main beach. A tumultuous crack echoed from the iceberg when it started breaking up further. It sounded like lightning had struck right next to us. Crystal clear light blue water started collecting between the two main pieces of the iceberg. Smaller pieces broke off and were now either drifting with the currents or were being punished by the waves against the cliffs. The two of us spent an hour filling our memory card's with photos of the majestic visitor. Upon arrival back at base the two of us started sharing our unforgettable experience with the other four at base. Jack and Diannah walked to Trypot to take some photographs and Jack actually managed to capture the breaking up with his camera. Mpho said that it is one of the best birthday presents ever.

The following morning we woke up to a second iceberg right here at base. Like a thief in the night it crept up on the island and anchored itself just offshore of Rockhopper Bay. It lingered there for a day and a half from where it started moving in the direction of Cape Davis. Derek arrived back from Repetto's the next day and was very excited about the iceberg he saw just past Ship's Cove and could not wait to tell us at base about it. To his dismay he found out that we had already seen two of them and had a much better view



of it the previous day. Once the round island crew (Kholekile, Johan, Delia, Marlene and Ben) arrived back at base they started telling us their iceberg stories. They saw 3 at Kildalkey and then found the base-berg at Bootrock. Everyone swapped stories and their hundreds of photos. Only Martin, who had been confined to Mixed Pickle for 10 days had not seen a single one. Luckily, he caught the remnants of the one at Bootrock and could also later share in the stories. Marion 66 has been blessed with two (possibly three) icebergs in the process of a week. Apparently, the last time an iceberg was seen at the island was during the stay of M61. No-one has been able to confirm that rumour but even if it is untrue, it does not take away the magic that the icebergs brought with it. The only thing that could have made it more special, for me as a sealer, is if there was a leopard seal on the ice that decided to hitchhike across the Southern Ocean here to Paradise Island.

-Mia

Mix Pickling with paddy and gogga ninjas

Well, what can I say.... Asanda and I have managed to survive our first solo trip to Mix Pickle to do our mousing occasion (5 consecutive nights of mouse captures), as well as a paddy resight thrown in just for good measure. It was a great time! Our walk to Mix Pickle was shrouded in fog that was so thick that we could hardly see more than 15 meters in any direction!!! Not great weather to run solo but hey we survived. We were out of base for a total of 9 days which is quite a long time without a bath!!!! The weather at Mix Pickle was bleak for our entire stay, which made doing our night work ugly, but we handled ourselves with the grace of ninjas in the night, haha. Finally though we had to return to the main base which meant another long walk in what was looking like similar weather to our initial trip. However after Asanda talked to the heavens, the skies miraculously cleared showing us the entire West and North side of the island. So with such an awesome opportunity having presented itself to us, we managed to snap some pictures. Hope you enjoy them.

So all that is left to do is sign out for now until the next time that we have some good news....hopefully



Asanda & James
Gogga lab
Marion Island
Team 66



FREEDOM

There is a saying that states that "time flies" especially when you are having fun. This is always the time that reminds oneself that it is the end of the month. M65 left us almost a month ago, and M66 has picked up what has been left off. There was some sadness and a lot of excitement when takeover personnel left, as we were very much over crowded at the base (Sorry, I hope it won't happen again).

Everyone has settled in as we are approaching our second month being at the Island. I'll take it

everyone has acclimatised, as there are no more complaints of cold, everybody is just admiring the beauty of the Island.

Chat to you next month!!!

Kholekile



Climate Stats: May 2009



Sea Temperature

Date	Temp	Date	Temp	Date	Temp
1	6.4	11	5.0	21	6.1
2	6.3	12	5.2	22	6.4
3	6.5	13	6.5	23	6.5
4	6.8	14	6.6	24	5.7
5	6.5	15	6.2	25	6.5
6	6.7	16	(swell)	26	6.5
7	6.7	17	6.5	27	6.4
8	6.8	18	6.6	28	6.5
9	6.2	19	4.2	29	6.2
10	6.0	20	5.7	30	6.5
				31	6.5



Pressure

Maximum	1034.3 hPa
Average Maximum	1016.6 hPa
Average	1011.4 hPa
Average Minimum	1005.3 hPa
Minimum	955.6 hPa



Temperature

Maximum	15.7°C
Average Maximum	8.2°C
Average	5.3°C
Average Minimum	2.5°C
Minimum	-1.9°C



Humidity

Maximum	99%
Average	85%
Minimum	20%



Wind

Maximum Gust	43.2 m/s (155.0 km/h)
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Rainfall

Total	135.2mm
Highest in 24 hours	33.0mm
Total days without rain	14 days
Total days >1mm	12 days



Sunshine

Total	80.4 hours
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Marion 66 team members:

Asanda Phiri – Field Assistant (Gogga)

Ben Dilley – Field Assistant (Birder)

Delia Davies – Field Assistant (Birder)

Derek van der Merwe – Field Assistant (Sealer)

Dianah Mabizela – Meteorologist (snr)

James Wilshire – Field Assistant (Gogga)

Johan Hoffman – Radio Tech (deputy leader)

Kholekile Cita – Medic (team leader)

Mark White – Diesel Mechanic

Marlene van Onselen – Field Assistant (Birder)

Martin Postma – Field Assistant (Sealer)

Mia Wege – Field Assistant (Sealer)

Mpho Koalepe – Meteorologist

Nangaadzishumi Nefehere – Field Assistant (Sealer)

Nkoane Mathabatha – Meteorologist

Sponsors:



Thank you guys for giving us a little bit of home to take along to the unknown.