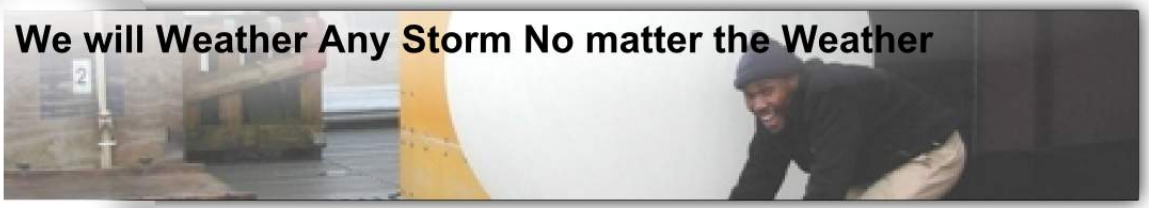
the Wanderer

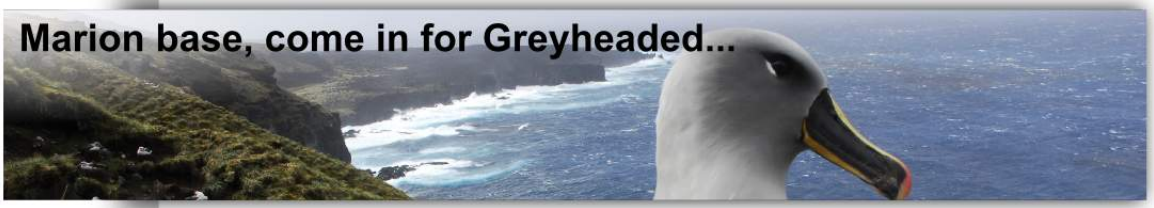
November 2009



We will Weather Any Storm No matter the Weather

Paddies have a breeding season too!!!!

Project Marion



Marion base, come in for Greyheaded...

Frank the Tank…

We will Weather Any Storm No matter the Weather

What is Weather Forecast?
A weather forecast is the application of science and technology to predict the state of the atmosphere for a specific place for some time in the future. These forecasts are distributed via newspapers, radio, television, telephone, fax and the internet.

Who are the key role players?
All forecasts begin with observations of the atmosphere. At fixed times weather observers, stationed all around the country, take readings of rainfall, temperature, humidity, pressure, wind direction, wind speed and sunshine. We observe and estimate the amount of cloud cover, cloud types and heights, visibility and the weather conditions at present, e.g. fog, rain, drizzle, lightning. In order to project a global picture of what the weather is doing at any one time

Time of Obs
Observation times have been standardized all over the world. The main observation hours are 00:00, 06:00, 12:00 and18:00 universal time (UT), this corresponds to 02:00, 08:00, 14:00 and 20:00 South African Standard Time (SAST). All these observations and sensor readings are sent in coded format from regional offices to Bolepi house (saws head office) in Pretoria.

This weather information for each observation location is plotted on a synoptic chart. Internationally agreed upon codes are used and so weather information from neighboring countries can also be received, plotted and understood by meteorologists, even though they may not speak the language of the country from which the report originated. This type of cooperation and sharing of weather information between countries is important in light of the fact that processes affecting weather are not bound by countries.

A number of volunteers stationed on ships at sea also make weather observations which are radioed to the nearest coastal weather station. For example High seas and big swells. Information from floating weather instruments on sea buoys is also relayed via satellite to the weather stations. All these observations and sensor readings are sent in coded format to the regional offices of the South African Weather Service.

The most accurate weather forecast
In order to produce an accurate forecast, weather forecasters need to look at conditions in the upper air as well. An instrument called a radiosonde carried aloft by a big balloon filled with hydrogen takes measurements of the atmosphere in the vertical. The radiosonde transmits information about the atmosphere in the vertical back to the ground station giving information about the pressure, temperature humidity and wind direction and speed.

Together with the information received from the automatic weather stations, is fed into ***supercomputers*** that use mathematical models of the atmosphere to make predictions about how the weather will be like in the future. These models are known as numerical weather prediction models. A number of different models are used in South Africa and the weather forecaster has to evaluate the model outputs to see which is predicting the weather most accurately.

We wish to thank the National Weather Forecasting Personnel for the great job well done One was having doubts on Surviving at Marion Weather station, but through your support and Guidance we are really shielded to weather any storm. We therefore like to wish you and your families back in SA a Joyous Festive Season and a great New year***

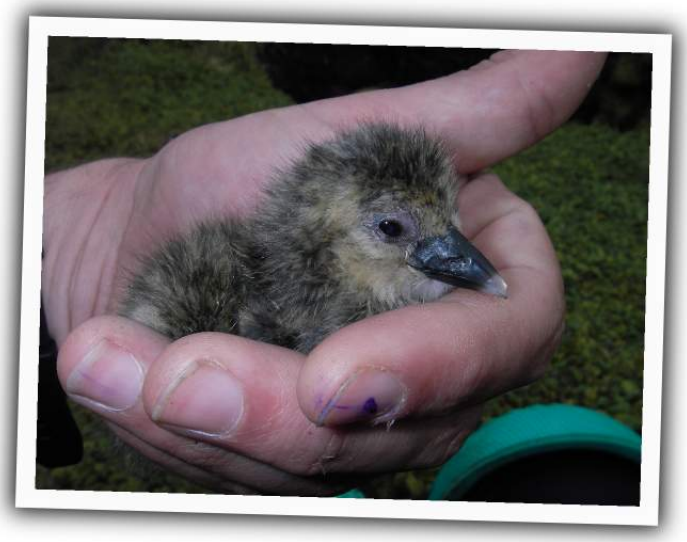
Weather Service is at your Service
Observing the planet for a better future!
Please visit our Website: www.weathersa.co.za
Or call our Weather line: 082 162
Or Cell phone Sms line: *120*555*3#

From the Met-team.

Mpho Koalepe Woza 2010!

Paddies have a breeding season too!!!!

So, as the year has moved on, most of the animals on the island have had their breeding season. Paddies however have yet to start theirs!!



Paddies start their breeding season in mid November, when nests are built and territories defended. The first eggs are layed during the first week of December, with chicks hatching in the second week of January!!

Paddies breed monogamously for the season, rearing between 1 and 3 chicks, depending on which habitat type they nest in. Paddies nesting in King Penguin colonies are more likely to raise 3 chicks, as there is an abundance of food on offer. Outside of King colonies, it is rare these days to see more than 2 chicks being reared.

Chicks that do make it to the end of the season will fledge the nest in late March, with some only leaving the nest in the first week of April.

Lately, I have been given the task of catching, weighing and banding all of the breeding pairs within our 3 sites on the island. This will hopefully give information on how successful this years breeding birds are compared to previous years. Now, it is important to bear in mind that these little white beauties can FLY!!! This has not made my task any easier and although many of the birds in the 3 sites are already banded, there are always a few sneaky birds that have managed to remain unbanded.

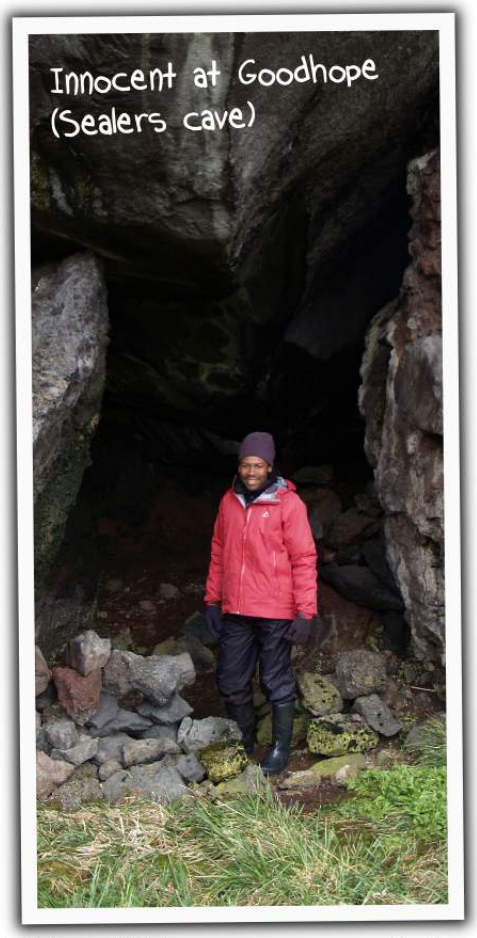
Throughout breeding season weekly nest checks are conducted in each of the three sites around the Island. Chicks are measured on each visit, giving data on growth rates. This data will help provide an overall view of how well paddies are coping for the year, when it comes to foraging and finding food for the chicks! Therefore, in the next few months over 1500km will be walked. Who said that paddies were easy work!!! Not me, thats for sure.

So, as the season progresses, I will keep you all updated.

James Wilshere

Project Marion

Innocent and I went on a ten-day walkabout filming at Good Hope, Watertunnel and Kildalkey Bay. The weather was… Well… The weather was the weather. All I can say is that there was a distinct lack of sunshine, which isn't altogether uncommon in this part of the world. The weather here is never boring. The bouts of overcast weather are excitingly interspersed with rain or snow, and just as you think you can relax, the wind blows you off your feet – literally! One moment I was walking along minding my own business, the next I was doing some amateur geriatric levitation move and then I was scrutinizing lava from a distance microscopes cannot focus at!



We are definitely getting fitter, but no island land speed records are under threat just yet. Some of the really fast boys can walk from Marion Base to Watertunnel in 3hrs 15 mins, but we hammered it out in exactly double that time. In our defence it must be said that we routinely carry packs in excess of 20kgs. But this isn't an excuse… And the fact that I'm the old toppie on the island isn't either…

Our walk from Kildalkey back to Base took us 3½ hours previously, but this time we managed it in 2½. Not too shabby, I reckon.

Nevertheless, the filming went well despite the weather. It's always exciting for me to film species of animals I've never seen before. A bit like a birdwatcher ticking off new birds, I guess. Or, a stamp collector collecting… You get my point. The problem is that there is just so much to do and I hope we can do justice to it all. It will be quite a task, though.

In the previous Wanderer I appealed for feedback and suggestions regarding Project Marion. The response was overwhelming! Yep! A big fat zero! Not one person responded! Very, very depressing indeed! So here I am on my knees begging for somebody… Anybody… To say something… Please? Contact us on projectmarionisland@gmail.com

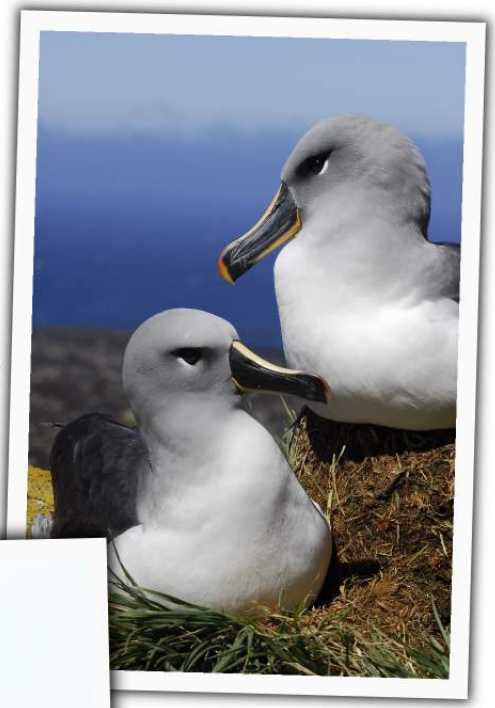
A wonderful holiday season to all. - Riaan Laubscher

Marion base, come in for Greyheaded...

The Greyheaded Albatross are back for another breeding season! Approaching Greyheaded hut through the black lava valley of Santa Rosa, I could hear the Albatross screeching through the fog. The next morning I could not believe how many there are on the ridge extending all the way up the valley - thousands of Albatross sitting on their mollymawk nests incubating their newly laid eggs. And that was only Greyheaded ridge, I was still to explore and count Rooks Peninsula and Goodhope Bay where thousands more are breeding – amazing!

It's a real pleasure to work with these Greyheaded Albatross, they are very attractive birds with such a calm relaxed manner. Every week I return to Greyheaded ridge to monitor the breeding colony. Thanks Jack for your company on my last trip!

Ben



Frank the Tank…

While Killers lurk in the shallow waters of Log beach two sealers creep up to their target, the oldest and largest Elephant seal bull on Marion Island. The aim: to immobilize him. This is easier said than done.

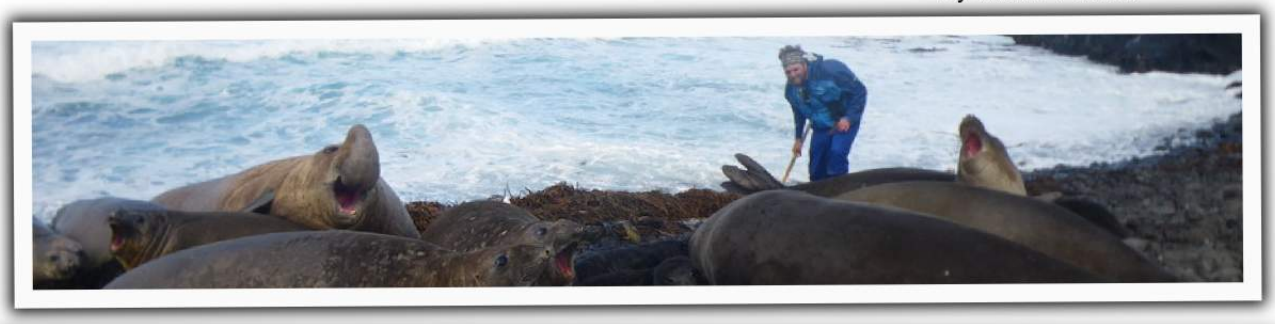
The task lies on the shoulders of one called Derek… His weapon of choice is, Ketamine. This he will apply with the use of a 18 gage needle and a 100ml syringe. With the needle in his hand, he approaches the sleeping beast named "Frankenstein". Slowly he creeps up on the animal while Martin stand guard. Once in striking distance, he picks his spot carefully. With lighting speed he plunges the needle into Frank's side. The bull jumps but I don't think as high as Derek… In a few minutes it is over and frank is well on his way to dreamland.

After the excitement of the immobilization it is time to start deploying the device as this is the reason for all the excitement. The area on the animals head is cleaned and the devices is carefully placed and secured in the middle of Frank's head with epoxy. All the sealers have to do now is wait for the sticky epoxy to dry. This gave ample time for photographs.

Like hunters they pose at the side of the bull, but this is not a trophy picture. These pictures were taken after a long day in the name of science and will bring back great memories in years to come.

In an hour or two Frankenstein awakes from his slumber to the delight of the sealers, as this is always a stressful endeavor. And with lazy eyes Frank inspects his new head gear… we hope he approves…

By Martin Postma



Climate Stats: November 2009

Pressure

Maximum	1029.5 hPa
Average Maximum	1013.4 hPa
Average	1008.4 hPa
Average Minimum	1003.0 hPa
Minimum	985.5 hPa

Temperature

Maximum	14.9 °C
Average Maximum	8.7 °C
Average	5.8 °C
Average Minimum	2.8 °C
Minimum	-1.2 °C

Humidity

Maximum	99 %
Average	87 %
Minimum	49 %

Wind

Maximum Gust	30.4 m/s (109 km/h)

Rainfall

Total	138.4 mm
Highest in 24 hours	27.4 mm
Total days without rain	10 days
Total days >1mm	14 days

Sunshine

Total	140.2 hours

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

Innocent - Conservationist (Camera crew)

Marianne - 2nd Camera

Riaan - 1st Camera

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Raats Family Wines

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