

ZCZC 826
AAZA16 FAME 230705
MF 906

M49-166

1992 -09-24

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OFFICIAL : MARION TO D.E.A AND W.B

ATTENTION: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER.

SPRING HAS COME TO MARION. SNOW AND SLEET SELDOM COME DOWN TO THE BASE NOW, ALTHOUGH THE MOUNTAINS OF THE INTERIOR ARE STILL COVERED IN WHITE. THE HUNTERS, KEVIN, COLIN, ANDREW AND SEAN, ABLY LED BY HEIN, ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THESE LAST HIGHLAND SNOWS TO SEARCH FOR THE TRACKS OF THAT ELUSIVE ANIMAL, MARIONS LAST CAT.

THE LOWER SLOPES OF THE ISLAND HAVE BECOME MUCH GREENER AND THE VARIOUS SPECIES OF GRASSES ARE FLOWERING. THE CLUMPS OF AZORELLA, BROWN THROUGHOUT WINTER HAVE NOW BECOME EMERALD STARRED DOMES OF LIFE. OF ALL OF US, PERHAPS THE MOST APPRECIATIVE OF THE NEW PLANT LIFE IS OUR BOTANIST, BRUCE B. HE SPENDS MANY HOURS SEARCHING FOR SEEDLINGS ON WHICH TO CONDUCT HIS EXPERIMENTS. AN AVID FOLLOWER OF THE THEORY IF YOU TALK TO YOUR PLANTS THEY'LL GROW, BRUCE IS OFTEN HEARD MUMBLING TO HIS CHARGES. HE IS ALSO IN CONSTANT COMMUNICATION WITH HIS MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT. BRUCE, I DOUBT IF IT WILL HELP THEM TO PERFORM BETTER.

SPRING HAS ALSO BROUGHT GREAT CHANGES IN THE BIRD LIFE OF THE ISLAND. OUR WANDERING ALBATROSS CHICKS, ON THEIR NESTS SINCE HATCHING IN MARCH, ARE NOW AS BIG AND FAT AS TURKEYS. THE BIRDMAN, PETE, HAS SPENT THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS RINGING THOSE NEAR BASE, AND GETTING HIMSELF COVERED IN THE CONTENTS OF THEIR STOMACHS. THEY ARE NOW VERY WARY OF HIS APPROACHES AND EYE ALL HUMANS WITH GREAT SUSPICION. THE CHICKS WILL SOON BE FLEDGING AND WE WISH THEM THE BEST OF LUCK IN EARNING THEIR WINGS.

THE SOUTHERN GIANT PETRELS HAVE ALSO KEPT PETE BUSY. ASSISTED BY ANDRE AND ANDREW HE HAS BEEN SEARCHING THE ISLAND FOR, AND MARKING THE SITES OF NESTING PAIRS. NOW FOR THE NORTHERN GIANT PETRELS PETE...

MANY BIRDS HAVE ALSO RETURNED FROM THEIR WINTER MIGRATION. THE CLIFFS ARE NOW POPULATED WITH NESTING SOOTY AND GREYHEADED ALBATROSSES. ALSO AMONGST THOSE THAT HAVE RETURNED IS THE SKUA. THIS BIRD IS MARION'S OWN JAKKALS, AND HAS CRAFTILY BEEN HUNTING GENTOO PENGUIN CHICKS. THE GENTOO CHICKS, WHO HATCHED SHORTLY AFTER MIDWINTER, ARE NOW ALMOST AS BIG AS THEIR PARENTS AND WILL SOON BE ABLE TO FEND OF THE SKUA'S ATTACKS.

THE ALBIE AND PENGUIN CHICKS ARE NOT THE ONLY YOUNSTERS ON THE ISLAND. THE FIRST ELEPHANT SEAL PUPS HAVE BEEN BORN. THE ADULTS HAVE BEEN HAULING OUT ON THE BEACHES IN EVER INCREASING NUMBERS. SOME OF THE ENOURMOUS BULLS ALREADY WEAR WOUNDS GAINED IN CLASHES OVER THE HAREMS. THE SEALERS, ANDRE AND I, ARE HAVING A HARD TIME

READING THE TAGS OF THESE AGGRESSIVE SEA-MONSTERS. THERE ARE THE REWARDS, HOWEVER AS ANDRE DISCOVERED WHEN HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS THE BIRTH OF A SEAL PUP.

AND COMING TO THE ISLAND TO PREY ON THE INCREASING NUMBERS OF SEALS AND PENGUINS ARE THE KILLER WHALES. HARDLY A DAY GOES BY WITHOUT THE SHOUT OF KILLERS SENDING US ALL RUSHING TO THE SHORE TO OBSERVE THEIR SLEEK AND SINISTER FORMS CUTTING THROUGH THE SEA-WAVES.

MARION'S PESTS ARE ALSO ON THE INCREASE THE ISLANDS MICE ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE WARMER WEATHER AND INCREASING NUMBER OF INSECTS TO START BREEDING. THIS HAS MADE AT LEAST ONE PERSON HAPPY: NICO, OUR ZOOLOGIST, IS NOW MORE EASILY ABLE TO CAPTURE ENOUGH MICE FOR HIS STUDIES.

THE MOST IMPORTANT OCCURENCE IN BASE HAS BEEN THE COLLAPSE OF OUR MAJOR RADIO. MUCH CURSING COULD BE HEARD AS MIKE DELVED IN ITS INNARDS FOR THE CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM. HIS VERDICT A BROKEN PART, THE REPLACEMENT FOR WHICH WE DO NOT HAVE ON THE ISLAND, THUS NECCESSITATING AN AIRDROP. THAT SENT OUR RADIO COMMUNICATOR, GERALD, OFF TO ONE OF THE HUTS TO HAUL BACK A HEAVY RADIO AS INSURANCE AGAINST THE BREAKDOWN OF OUR BACKUP.

IN ADDITION TO DISCOVERING WHAT DOESN'T WORK MIKE HAS BEEN REDDOING HIS WORKSHOP. ASSISTED BY KEVIN, HE HAS RIPPED OUT ALL ITS INNARDS, REFLDORED AND REPAINTED IT, AND IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF REPLACING ALL HIS TOOLS AND SPARES IN AN ORDERLY FASHION.

REPAIRS TO THE BASE AND HUTS HAVE BEEN DONE BY COLIN WHO PAINTS EVERYTHING IN SIGHT. ALREADY TWO HUTS HAVE FALLEN TO HIS BRUSH. THE INTERIOR OF LAEKOP HUT, PAINTED BY HIM AND SEAN, IS NOW A TASTELESS SHADE OF PINK. DOORS IN BASE HAVE ALSO BEEN COVERED IN PAINT, AS HAVE THE HANDS OF THOSE TRYING TO OPEN THEM.

FURTHER REPAIRS HAVE ALSO BEEN DONE TO THE HUTS BY OUR ABLE DIESEL MECHANIC, TEWIS. HE HAS BEEN SEEN, HEAVILY LADEN WITH TOOLS AND OTHER GOODS, TRAMPING OUT TO REPAIR DAMAGED GAS STOVES AND GENERATORS. TO SATISFY TEWIS, WHO INSISTS THAT HIS GREETINGS ACCOMPANY EVERY LETTER WE WRITE AND PHONE CALL WE MAKE HI FOLKS, TEWIS SAYS HELLO.

NOT TO BE OUTDONE BY ALL THE ACTIVITY, SENIOR MET. BRUCE L., HAS CAMO-PAINTED HIS RADIO AND HELMET. UNFORTUNATELY HE DID THE JOB SO WELL THAT HE CANNOT FIND THEM IN HIS GENERALLY CAMOFLAGUED ROOM. BY THE WAY, BRUCE, HAVE YOU FOUND YOUR ROOM YET?

ONE OF OUR OTHER METEOROLOGISTS, TOJAN, HAS BEEN SPENDING MOST OF HIS TIME IN THE GYM. HE IS NOW MUSCULAR ENOUGH TO BEND THE BARS TO WHICHEVER SHAPE HE PREFERS MOST. HE HAS ALSO BECOME A PHOTOGRAPHIC MANIAC, TAKING PICTURES OF EVERYTHING IN SIGHT.

C.T., THE MEDIC, HAS HAD HIS HANDS FULL REPAIRING THE HANDS OF OTHERS AS THE SLIPPERY CATWALKS CONTINUE TO TAKE THEIR TOLL OF HUMAN FLESH. HE IS ALSO ENSURING THAT WE STAY HEALTHY BY GIVING US REGULAR CHECK-UPS, DISHING OUT VITAMIN TABLETS AND ENSURING A GOOD SUPPLY OF FOOD FROM THE STORE. AS TESTIMONY TO THE SUCCESS OF HIS EFFORTS, HE HAS HAD HARDLY ANY, EVEN MINOR, WOUNDS AND ILLNESSES TO DEAL WITH.

- 3 -

ALSO ENSURING THAT OUR STOMACHS ARE FULL IS KEVIN, WHO HAS PERFECTED THE ART OF BREAD BAKING. NO MATTER WHERE HE IS, HUT OR BASE, HE CAN USE THE MOST RUDIMENTARY MATERIALS TO TURN OUT A LOAF OF ADDICTIVE QUALITIES. ALSO BAKING DELICIOUS BREAD IS OUR LEADER, RUPERT. WE HAVE DISCOVERED HIS SECRET INGREDIENT BEER. RUPERT LIKES TO BAKE HIS LOAVES BETWEEN MIDNIGHT AND FIVE A.M. SO AS TO HAVE THEM READY FOR BREAKFAST.

HOWEVER, HEIN REFUSES BREAD AND MOST OTHER FOODS IN HIS BATTLE WITH THE UNNECESSARY KILOGRAM. ALTHOUGH HE IS THINNER THAN THE REST OF US HE CONTINUES ON A SPARTAN DIET OF PROVITA, PILCHARD'S AND POPCORN. HEIN HAS ALSO TAKEN TO STAYING A DAY LATER IN THE VELD AND GOING OUT A DAY EARLIER, IN THE BELIEF THAT THE EARLY HUNTER CATCHES THE CAT.

NOT TO BE OUTDONE IN THE TOUGHNESS STAKES, ANDREW HAS TAKEN TO TRAMPING AROUND THE ISLAND IN WELL VENTILATED GUMBOOTS. THESE ANCIENT FOOTWEAR LET IN LARGE QUANTITIES OF SNOW, RAIN AND MIRE. ANDREW IS MORE LIKELY TO SCARE CATS OFF THE ISLAND THAN TO CATCH THEM. OUR VERY OWN YETI IS NOW VERY NEARLY UNRECOGNISABLE UNDER A MASS OF HAIR AND BEARD.

AND SEAN ? WELL, HE'S IN FOR A SURPRISE WE ARE SOON TO CELEBRATE HIS 20TH BIRTHDAY IN APPROPRIATE STYLE.

OUR GREETINGS TO THOSE BEYOND THE WAVES, WE ARE THINKING OF YOU.

GREG HOFMEYR, SEALER.

8/19/24