

# -The Wanderer-



Marion Island Newsletter, Issue 3, June 2001

## MID WINTER CELEBRATION!

### Mid-Winter

Mid-winter, 21 June, a very important day for any sub-Antarctic station, when the sun starts to return from its northernmost point. Preparations started a week in advance. Wilna was truly in her element with the painting of a flag. The Wednesday was a very quiet day in base with a few 'no-go' areas. Sandton and the brown store were out of bounds due to 'certain preparations'. Thursday finally arrived and when I got to the kitchen at eight, (it was my duty for the day – to be assistant for our own chef-Pieter), he already had a leg of pork in the oven and the buns were kneaded and ready to bake. I ended up doing all the dishes.

The first thing on the agenda was the seafarers' breakfast that later turned out to be a pirate party. Suddenly everyone developed tooth problems and scars, not to mention the leather eye-patches.



Promptly at 01:00 Zulu drill-sergeant Erika marched us around base (left, right, etc.) Good thing nobody from SA was here to see how ridiculous we looked. MI-58s flag was raised and we stood on attention for our own anthem, "Simply the best".

At 12 o'clock we held our Olympics in the mires. It sure was a lot of fun. You spin around ten times with your head held against a broom and then try to run in a straight line. Impossible unless you cheat! Sam was the overall winner with Tambu in second place.



Daarna het die groot voorbereiding vir die formele funksie begin (groot ontugterings het gevolg oor kleres wat blykbaar in die droogkamer gekrimp het?). Almal het darem uiteindelik iets formeel gekry, al was dit ook net 'n das wat êrens geleen, gesteel of gemaak is. Pieter het uitgehang met 'n sewe-gang maaltyd en Erika, Sam, SQ1 en Bheki het ons verras met ons eie vyf ster Southern Jewel Restaurant, opgemaak met kerse, rotse, foto's van die span en vonkelende liggies teen die plafon.

Om nege uur het die Weer-party begin. Almal het heeltemal anders uit hul kamers gekom. Daar is uitgewaai, geskitter, geskyn, gesneeu, gebliksem, of gesweef. Wilna, Sarette en Beneke was in beheer van Zone 5 (die Bruinstoor). Ons eie DJ, Phaf, het gesorg vir uitstekende musiek. Uitgeput het almal baie later met 'n glimlag gaan slaap met die besef dat die son teruggedraai het.

SQ 2

### Time and wind

To any Marionite the wind is one force to keep in mind. The wind can blow you off your feet, numb your limbs with its chill factor and even disturb your sleep by literally rocking and rattling Base on its foundations.

Windy days with sunshine are special though. On days like that I like to lie down in the field and stare up at the sky. Against the blue I see white clouds racing ahead of the wind. This fast moving cloud

image gives me the idea of a different time frame. It is as if the clouds are moving too fast and time itself is somehow sped up. At such a time I can imagine myself in a different time frame altogether.

Lying on a blechnum slope, staring at the sky, I can imagine myself hovering above the island looking down and seeing how events shaped the island to what we know it as today. I see smoke bubbling from under the sea surface. Black rocks emerge from steam and smoke and slowly continue to grow. I see the red and black veins of lava flows moving across the land shaping and expanding the island, building on its bulk. The gradual change over centuries from white to green as annual snowfall decreases and green plants spread from the coast to cover more of the island. The sudden change as humans discover the island and introduce a vast array of new and foreign animals and plants to the island. I see the spread of mice and their influence from small sealer outposts along the coast to most of the island. The fast spread of alien grass to change the island's green to yellow seasons. I see the first cats running around base to where they left the island covered in feathers as they preyed on thousands of night birds per annum. I see how their numbers are reduced again, first by disease and then by night hunting. I see bird populations increase again, the amazing abundance of burrowing petrels slowly returning to their former multitude. I see many teams arriving on the island and many teams leaving the island to be influenced forever by the magic that is Marion.

But most of all I see brilliant white clouds racing across blue skies.

*Beneke*

### **Loeto go ya Tripot**

E ne e le sebaka motho sa tswe mme go bontsha fa bangwe-leloko ba ne ba simolola go tshwenyega ka nna. Lwa bofelo fa motho a ne a tswa e ne e le ka nako ya tseeletso go tswa setlhopheng se se tsamaileng.

Sarette, yo e leng mongwe wa basetsana ba re n nang le bone o ne a nkopa gore ke tsamae le ene.

Ke ne ke le mo magareng a go baakanya dijo tsa motshegare fa Pieter, Lizel le Beneke ba kaya fa ba na le kgatlhego ya go tsamaya mmogo le rona.

E ne e le lengwe la malatsi a mantle a re tsayang nako re sa a bone. Bontsi jwa malatsi, go diphefo tse dikgolo gape le pula e na tekanyetso ya malatsi a matlhano mo bekeng.

Ka maemo a a bosa, re dumela mo go reng fa o bone letsatsi le lentle o le dirise go bonagala gonne e ka nna lone fela o le bonang mo kgwedeng. Le, e ne e le lengwe la malatsi a o.

Re tlogile fa go fetswa go jewa mme ra bowa morago fela ga ura ya bone ka go ne go setse go simolola go fifala. Go fitlheng ga rona, re ne ra tsaya nakwana go boga bontle jwa lebopo, naga, diphologolo le dinonyane. Go ne go le diphologolo tse dintsinzana. Magareng go ne go le di-King Penguins, Fur seals le dinonyane di le mmalwa. Mo tseleng ya go ya, motho a ka bona nonyane e e ratiwang go feta tsotlhe, e leng Wandaring Albetross.

Re weditse letsatsi ka go tsaya dinepe re le setlhophla.



*Our cool metkassie shares his third outing on the island – his second visit to Trypot Beach. It was a beautiful sunset and some members of the team felt it was necessary to appreciate this by enjoying sundowners on one of our most favourite beaches. Yet another unforgettable sunset on Marion!*

*Segale*

### **Marion Weekends**

How do you spend your weekends? Well, time on Marion is different, and weekends are no different to normal weekdays. At least this means no Sunday blues!

For the past two Sundays things were different. I decided to spend this time outside, sitting perched on the Crane Point, close to Base. This is where so many people have sat, staring into nothingness, staring into muchness. The greatness of creation has only captured me in a similar way in one other place, in the deserts of Israel.

What makes the crane Point special is that it is one of the best vantage points to see killer whales. They, I can honestly say, have stolen my heart. The first time I saw killers was the day we came onto the island (we saw eight whales in the distance). That did not, however, prepare me for my first close encounter with them! Standing in the kitchen looking out over the sea I saw the dorsal fin of a killer protruding from the water some distance offshore.

We went out to call them closer (by beating a metal pole against a rock). We could see them altering

their course, coming towards us. Not long after that, a very large killer whale passed not more than two metres from the base of the rock. It is unbelievable to see such a magnificent animal coming so close. The killer moved gracefully under the water, surfacing only to breathe. That moment will always be a vivid memory to me.

During Tambu's seal weighing outing the rest of us sighted killers at the point. Sam felt disappointed



that she did not see the killers, so I suggested that we spend some time on the point looking for them. The weather was not good but with determination we sat through rain and snow. Nothing happened. No sign of whales in the bay. We took photographs of albatrosses, giant petrels and cormorants and had very interesting (sometimes deep) conversations. We were about to leave when Sam scanned the ocean once more. She then spotted them close to Duikers. I saw them too. As graceful and quick as they are, it was the most beautiful sight of killers I have ever seen, two of them coming out of the water, side by side, taking a breath, diving again. Their white-grey saddles almost hypnotises one as they blade through the water.

We know that killers are certainly present in winter, as we have spotted them four times already in June (thirteen sightings in seven days). About a week later, Sam and I decided to once again brave the elements and sit at the point. We waited and saw no sign of them. We were about to go inside, when I looked down, there was a medium-sized individual passing the point, hugging the coastline, past Boulders, only surfacing at Paddy Rocks. We saw four that day, of which one was a sub-adult. Yesterday Sam and I saw killers for the sixth time in eleven days. What an amazing privilege! I do not walk past a window without looking at the sea, forever searching for the welcome presence of these magnificent hunters.

*Sarette*

### **An introduction to seal pup weighing**

Off we set armed with a scale, cameras and plenty of warm clothing for Cape Davis to weigh 100, yes one hundred *Arctocephalus tropicalis tropicalis* pups, better known as troppy pups. They are one of two species of fur seal breeding on Marion.

Cape Davis is a beautiful spot. It's a small beach consisting of boulders of varying sizes becoming smaller the closer you get to the water's edge. The beach is freckled with fluffy fur seals, enormous elephant seals and of course the mandatory paddies. Two massive black lava rocks narrowing the entrance into the ocean protect the bay. There is the constant rhythmic sound of breaking waves only interrupted occasionally by the sound of a bird overhead or a seal pup calling. Long strands of golden kelp line the boundary between the rocks and the water. As they sway gently back and forth they sparkle in the sunlight before disappearing into the depths of the icy blue water. The water in turn is crystal clear with each boulder perfectly seen below the surface. Pups play to their hearts content safely protected from their predators.

Weighing the pups was a lot of fun – hard work, but a lot of fun. Previously I had been quite scared of these little guys, but working with them you realize that they are just scared and reacting the only way they know how – aggressively. It's now your challenge to be faster than they are. Picture the scene: Cute (ugly, but lovable), grey fluffy flippered lumps completely accustomed to slippery rocks and ice cold water vs. completely unadapted *Homo field assistanticus*, with so many layers of clothing on that nimble movements over wet, slippery rocks is out of the question - not to mention two pairs of gloves – rendering your hand nothing short of useless! Anyhow, the two of us were about to become acquainted. With pups scattering into every available rock crevice letting out a series of what can only be described as “hoarse blares”, you attempt to hold their attention with your one hand while you reach for tail flippers with the other. On the rare occasion that you manage to fox them, you attempt to attach a rope and then proceed to hang them upside down from the scale with the biting end towards the ground. Now the real fun and games start! You have an irate fur seal pup snapping at your shins and wriggling like there is no tomorrow. While you, dodge their determined attempts to sink their teeth into you AND read the scale. Our saving grace in the end was the amount of clothing we had on, as each time they attempted (what I thought was inevitable) to grab a piece out of your leg, they grabbed our clothing instead. There were many close shaves and our gortex is evidence. Before you release them you

make a quick check as to whether they are male or female (one hole = male and two holes = female – very technical!!) On one occasion the little chappie was so pleased that we let him go after his ordeal of being hung upside down by these so called civilized human beings, that he careered off down the slope as fast as he could, to get away from us. But what I am sure he didn't bargain on was the mud pool at the bottom of the slope that he landed face first in. From where we were standing all you could see was this little brown heap in the mud and these two, big round brown eyes blinking at us. He let out this pathetic blare of frustration and slunk away. The poor little guy, he looked so humiliated.

What a privilege to work so closely with these amazing animals. I am living such a dream life here on Marion... Today sub-Antarctic fur seals, tomorrow Wandering albatrosses. Life is beautiful!

*Sam*

### **My second trip on the island**

I had a wonderful experience at Repettos, the first hut I visited. I took advantage of my days off and this time we went to Kildalkey. The sealerman (Tambu) and I took the inland route to arrive at the hut. We slept peacefully there.

The next day we took the coastal route back to base, since the sealer man had work to do.

On Kildalkey beach we saw a horrible thing, a paddy having lunch from a elephant seal's wound, we had to pass the elephant seal and the poor animal was very angry with us. That was the highlight of my trip. After the sealerman completed his work we went straight back to base. This was a trip to remember.

*Phaf*

### **Lo sina midzi.**

Ramafhungo: Ndaa, Vho-Mulaudzi, naa hu ri ni naa?

Vho-Mulaudzi: Nne ndi hone ndi tou vhudzisa vhone.

Ramafhungo: Hai, na nne ndi hone. Kha vha ri vhudze uri vho swikisa hani hafha, vha toda ni zwavhudi-vhudi?

Vho-Mulaudzi: (MRI) Mammal Research Institute u bva University ya Pretoria vha tshi khou thusana na DEAT (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism) ndi vhone vho ntholaho u da u shuma na phukha dza lwanzhe dzino mamisa nga maanda maanda hedzi dzino pfi *seal*.

Ramafhungo: Zwi no ho ra li vhatu vhe vha fumi na vhavhili fhedzi, vhutshilo ha hone vhu tou vha hani?

Vho-Mulaudzi: Ngoho hafho ndi hone lo tou sina midzi. Vhutshilo ho leluwesa. Ro digeda rine, muthu u vuwa a ita zwine tsumbamushumo yawe ya mu vhudza zwone. Hune muthu a toda thuso kha

mushumo wawe u i wana hu si na u kolonwa kha havha vhanwe vha fumi na muthihi. Nne sa muthu a no dzula o di takalela, duvha line ndi sa adele na vhanwe afha mudini washu, vhaambi vha ri zwi a pfala uri a thiho. Kha vha tou vhudzisa Wilna uri mafhungo aya a bva ngafhi (Unwritten protocols).

Ramafhungo: Kha vha ri vhudzisa nga u tandavhudza uri mushumo u khou tshimbila hani.

Vho-Mulaudzi: U thomani zwo vha zwi tshi konda phukha hedzi dzi tshi ri u mbona dza shavhela lwanzheni kana dzanga u toda u lwa na nne zwe zwa vha zwi tshi ita uri mushumo wanga u lemele vhukuma. Fhedzi zwino hu na vhushaka ha vhu pfadzaho. Phukha idzi dzinga dzi vho zwi divha u ri a tho ngo dela u dzi lwisa na u dzi huvhadza. Dzi a kona na u tou tibula mitshila uri nne ndi kone u vhala nomboro dzi ne dza vha kha thikhithi dzadzo.

Ramafhungo: Zwino hayani ri ya lini?

Vho-Mulaudzi: Shundunthule nwaha u daho.

Ramafhungo: He vhanna! Zwino a huna tshine vha nga tou ri vhudzavho uri vha do tshi tuvha hayani?

Vho-Mulaudzi: Hu na vhatu vhararu vha vthuhogwesa kha nne, Ndi mme anga, nyanenge dinga la mbilu yanga, futhi wa vthuhogwesa ndi nwana a ne thi a thu mu vhona. Holwu ndi lupedzi lwa matanzhe a vhana vha khotsi anga.

Ramafhungo: Vho ne vha tou vhona u nga uyu nyanenge wa hone a nga vha lindela u swika Shundunthule?

Vho-Mulaudzi: Vhone vho vha vha tshi do vha vha songo vha ramafhungo ngavhe vha songo tenda uri Mudzimu u a zwi funa vhone vha tshi vha ramafhungo. Ndi ralo ngauri vho vha vha tshi do vha vha songo tenda uri vha do tshila u swika vha tshi vha ramafhungo, zwino vha songo vha tshidahela tsha u sa divha uri Mudzimu u a kona.

Ramafhungo: ``Lupedzi lwa matanzhe a vhana vha khotsi anga``, vha khou tou toda uri mini zwavhudi-vhudi, kha vha do tandavhudza.

Vho-Mulaudzi: Ee! Arali vha si muvenda ndi zwavho kha vha ntutshela, nahone ri do amba nwedzi u daho.

Chawaaaaa! I'm outa here.

*Our sealerman sharing very deep feelings that would take five days to translate to English. (Newi, be our guest!)*

*Tambudzani (Sickman of Africa) Mulaudzi*

### **Mire rugby**

It was a quiet Sunday morning, everybody still snug in bed, except for Beneke. He was running around trying to get some teammates for rugby in the mires. Didn't his mom teach him Sunday mornings are there to be spent appropriately? After some effort there was enough to make up two sides, and the battle started. In no time things got wet and dirty and all

ended in mire mud fights. All had a good wet cold time!



### Liewe Ma

Hoe gaan dit met Ma. Met my gaan dit goed. Ai Ma die e-myl is nogal 'n moeilike storie want die lyer het beslyt dat ons nou pegasus myl moet gibryk. Toe het die mense begin om op te hou om ons myl te antwoord. Maar na drie dae het ek gesien die briewe wat ons gestier het staan nog in die tou want as mens nou sent myl drik dan gaan dit eers na kiewd myl toe. Ma ons het ok 'n boodskap gekry met 'n wieris op en toe sit die lyer dit ondir kwintyn. Mens kan dit rerig doen Ma so sê vir Oom Koos om vir sy bierman te sê dat as hy weer 'n bees het wat siek is moet hy dit met die bees doen sodat die andir beeste nie ook siek word nie. Ek is seekir daarvan as mens dit met 'n kompietir kan doen sal dit met diere ook werk. Ek dink dis ok omdat party mense bang is vir wierisse dat hulle vra hulle soek nie djank myl van ons af nie. Mense kan darim onnodige werk doen Ma. Hier is iemand wat die heeltyt yskas water maak en dit kom sommer by die kraan yt so sy tegnoeloegie moet nogal goet wees. As ek hom sien sal ek sê hy moet dit liewer daar by jille gaan doen. Dalk word hy meer betaal ok want daar is die aanvraag 'n biekie grotir vir yskaswatir. Ma daar is nou iets wat ek vir Ma kan leer. Dis nie altyt dik baaikies wat mens die warmste maak nie want ons het sikke annir klere wat rerig help dat die koue nie te erg is nie. Mens noem dit fhimil andirwher maar ons praat sommir van fhimils. Dis wit of blou langmou klere wat ampir soos tronk klere lyk en jy voel ampir kaal as jy dit nie aan het nie.

Ma weet mos wat is kamasoetra. Ons het stomstreke gespeel en toe moet die een mysie dit virdyklik. Sy het begin skop en slaan in die lig en die andir het gedink dis darim snaakse poesiesies vir kamasoetra maar al die tyt het sy gedink dis dieselfde as koengfoe. Ons doen darim sport ok hier Ma. Tatsh rakbie.

Dis nogal lekkir maar eers was ek kwaad want hoe kan mens die bal op die annir lyn gaan sit as jy die heeltyt agtirtoe moet gooi. Toe virdyklik die annir vir my dat mens met die bal mag harkloop en toe het ek een gedrik. Hille sê ek het drie gedrik maar ek het net een gedrik en ek hou nie daarvan om so openlik te kroek nie. Onthou Ma nog vir Frie Whilie. Ons het hom gesien en van die annir ok. Mens noem hille yntlik kielir whyls. Hille is ongilooflik Ma want al is hille groot swart en wit visse kry hille ok klynkies wat melk drink. En die beste van als is hille is baie gaaf want hille slik watir in en dan spyt hille dit yt by 'n gat bo op hille koppe sodat ons hille kan raak sien as hille nog ver is.

Ma ons het annir aand 'n geheime Dead Pouhit sosaihitie sterre kyk mietieng gehad want ons het met flitse gelees oor Auroras en na die sterre gekyk. Ek het mos vir Ma gesê die mysie wat saam met my werk is slim want sy het sommir twee vals skerpiejoene ontdek terwyl ons na die sterre gekyk het. Ek hoor Ma hille het 'n sonsvirdysterring gehad. Ek verstaan dis as die koeie vror wil hystoe kom en die seekoeie yt die watir wil kom om te wy dat die son vir 'n rikkie dood gaan. Dis hoekom dit nie hier gebeur het nie want ons het nie koeie of seekoeie nie. Party mense sê dit het iets te doen met as die maan tussen die aarde en die son in kom maar Ma moet liewer nie sikke dinge glo nie. Jissie Ma sê vir boetie dat sneeu rerig so sag is soos op die kersfees flieks behalwe as die wind waai. Dan is dit sikke strepe maar dit het ek nog nie eers op die teevee gesien nie. Ek hoop Ma kry die brief want soms sikkil ons om te koenekt en dan kan ons nie myl stier nie. Ma weet mos. En as die boodskap sê 1MB of meer dan sikkil dit nog meer. Ek dink MB staan vir moerse boodskap Ma. Tot later dan.

Groetnis Kleinsus (*Erika*)

### Quote of the month

*"The world you create is the world you live in."*  
Gideon, one of our Sunday evening movies.

### The weather wizard:

June 2001, a month with less wind, snow and sunshine than May 2001. Sunshine was almost 40% less, only two sunny days and 12 days with none. Despite the absence of sunshine we only recorded seven millimetres more rain than May.

Looking at a long-term average of rain (204 mm) for Marion June, June 2001 was drier than normal, but wetter than June 2000. The average temperature for this month was 5.2 °C, this was slightly warmer than the long term average.

## Climate statistics for the month

Average Pressure	1010.9 hPa
Highest Pressure	1032.3 hPa
Lowest Pressure	986.1 hPa
Average Temperature	5.2 °C
Highest Temperature	13.1 °C
Lowest Temperature	-1.7 °C
Strongest Wind	30.7 m/s or 119.7 km/h
Numbers of days with rain or snow	27
Days with more than 1.0 mm of rain	19
Amount of sunshine hours for the month:	58.8 h

## Educational tip of the month

*Photometeors* are phenomena produced by reflection, refraction and diffraction of light by the sun or moon. Did you know that there are 12 different types of *Photometeors*.

In this issue I will only explain *halos* and *rainbows*.

1. Halo phenomena: this group consists of *rings, pillars, bright spots and arcs* formed by refraction and reflection of light by ice crystals. If it is produced by sunlight they may be colourful but those formed by the moon are always white. Halo phenomena get sub-divided in to eight types.
  - The *small halo* appears as a luminous ring around the sun or moon. The ring is white and the inside of the ring is less bright than the outside. However when the phenomenon is more strongly developed the inside of the ring (closest to the sun) is red, then yellow and if you are very lucky you will see green or violet on the outside.
  - *Arcs of contact to the small halo* are white tangent (curved) lines on the outside of the *small halo* (on the highest and lowest points).
  - The *large halo* is less common than the small halo and less bright.
  - The *parhelic circle (mock-sun ring)* occurs when a white ring passes horizontally through the sun. Bright spots may be observed at certain points of the *mock-sun*. These phenomena, when formed by the moon, are called *paraselenae* and when bright are called *mock-moons*.
  - *Halo of 90°* is a fourth type of ring around the sun and is extremely rare. The full halo can't be seen unless the sun is high in the sky.
  - *Circumzenithal arc, the Undersun and Sun pillars*. For more information on this contact the Weather Wizard.
2. Rainbows: This is a group of concentric arcs produced on a screen of water droplets by the sun or the moon. It ranges in colour from violet to red.

When produced by the sun the colours are bright, but the colour is much weaker, sometimes absent, when produced by the moon. Rainbows are formed by refraction and reflection of light. There are primary and secondary rainbows. The primary or main bow appears on a "screen" of water drops with the light source on the opposite side, keeping this in mind it is possible to see a rainbow forming a complete ring from an aircraft. Sometimes on the inside of the rainbow you see one or more bows with the same colours as the main rainbow. These bows are called supernumerary bows. A bow on the outside of the main bow is called a secondary rainbow. The colours are the opposite from the main bow (red on the inside and violet on the outside) and the secondary bow is about twice as wide as the primary bow and less bright.

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