

The Wanderer

June 2008

Marion 65



Hail O King!

By Linda Clokie

Now who ever said that being born to be a King means that life is easy!!

It was during take-over, 12th April 2008, whilst walking over Boulders beach just below base, that Rod Penhall, captain of the Titan helicopter team and myself came across a newly hatched king penguin chick. As far as I understand there has never been a king chick hatched on Boulders before and everyone was amazed.

At certain times of the year a small number of adult king penguins, haul out on Boulders beach. These are referred to as "loafers" in between breeding and moulting seasons.

From the start "Kamov", as the chick was later called, did not stand much chance in life, mainly because chicks form creches, until they reach fledging age.

A chick on Boulders was definitely not normal, but needless to say it gave us the opportunity to watch Kamov on a daily basis.



Kamov spotted on Boulders beach – 12th April



Creched chicks guarded by an adult

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Humidity on Marion in June	
Average	88%
Maximum	100%
Minimum	16%

During take over there is so much activity around base. The new "Fat Lady" or rather Kamov helicopter used for offloading containers from the Agulhas to the Island is a huge machine capable of carrying a capacity of 5000kg. With hundreds of containers and personnel being flown all over the Island on a regular basis the disturbance to the few King penguins on Boulders beach is high. The birds normally move to another area or go back to sea.

On the 27th April during a "slinging session" (i.e. moving containers back to the Agulhas), close to base, the 3 King penguins on the beach were disturbed and ran off to a safer area leaving Kamov behind. The sealers were down on the beach at the time trying to immobilise an elephant seal, and saw what happened. I could not resist and although one should never interfere, I picked up Kamov and held it under my jacket until loading was finished. Once the flying operation stopped, I crept closer to the 3 adults remaining on the beach and pushed the chick in their direction, hoping that one of them would pick it up. After what seemed like hours, but it was only 5 minutes, one of the adults moved the chick back onto its feet and covered it with the pouch. What a relief!!

Sadly there came less hope for the chick as the other 2 adults left the area over the next 2 days, leaving Kamov and its parent alone with the seals on the beach. The adult found a little hollow and together these 2 stood alone for the next week.



Sadly this was all that was left of Kamov - 4 April 2008



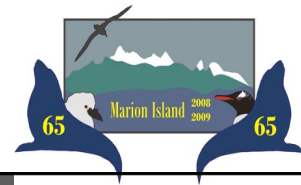
Kamov was fed regularly during this time and was growing fast. The day before "the end", I went to check how things were going and was disappointed to see how thin the adult was. Normally hunger would drive the adult to sea leaving the chick to die.

It takes a long time to become a "King", longer than any other penguin species, but as this story proves it is only the strongest and the fittest that will survive. However: On the 4th May, we woke early to find 6 giant petrels in a frenzy in the place where Kamov and his parent had been living. Both had been eaten in a very short space of time, leaving just the little bones behind.

This is some of the saddest things we have to deal with on the Island. It happens daily to all sorts of animals - everyone needs to eat. This may seem cruel but this is real nature, just one of the hardships the animals have to endure. Nothing is spared, everyone joins in for the feast and once its over, life just carries on. All that is left are feet, flippers and heads and bones (which incidentally are used by others for nesting material to raise their chicks), scattered around the Island. A full life cycle - what a privilege for us to experience this first hand!!

Long live the Kings!!!

Interesting facts about king penguins
The king penguin's scientific name is <i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>
King penguins live on Antarctic and sub-Antarctic Islands between 45 and 55°S
The total population is estimated to be 2.23 million pairs. The largest breeding populations are on Crozet Island, with around 455,000 pairs and 228,000 pairs on the Prince Edward Islands, i.e., Prince Edward and Marion Islands.
To keep warm, the penguins have four layers of feathering. The outer layer of feathers are tightly packed, oiled and waterproof, not unlike the feathering of a duck. The inner three layers are down feathers, and is a very effective insulation, so that the skin never gets wet. A chick is born without the oily outer layer, and so cannot fish until maturity.
King penguins swim at speeds of between 6.5 – 10km per hour
Maximum dive for foraging 100 – 300m and they can stay under water for up to 9 minutes



The Breeding of Kings

King penguins lay one egg at a time, and carry it around on their feet covered with a flap of abdominal skin called the brood patch for an average of 55 days. This is called the *incubation period*. Once the chick is hatched, it spends its time balanced on its parents' feet, and is shuffled from one parent to the other every 6-18 days, until they are able to regulate their body temperature themselves. This is called the *guard phase*. Parents alternate duties every 3-7 days. When a parent is relieved of the egg or the chick during the incubation stage, the adult goes off to sea on an extended food foraging trip, leaving its partner to incubate the egg/chick. This period lasts for 30-40 days before the chicks form creches (which is a group of many chicks together). A penguin can leave its chick at a crèche while it forages, as a few adult penguins stay behind to look after the chicks. The king penguin has an unusually prolonged breeding cycle, taking some 14-16 months from laying to offspring fledging, therefore they can only breed every second or third year. The king penguin feeds its chicks by eating a fish, digesting it slightly, and regurgitating the food into the chick's mouth. The diet consists of small fish mainly lanternfish and squid. They don't rely on krill and other crustaceans like most of the other Southern Ocean predators.

Toilet op Kildalkey

Deur Johnnie Heath

Op die 29 ste Mei 2008 het ons, Gen, Johnnie en Shadrack die basis verlaat om die toilet geriewe te gaan verbeter by die hut Kildalkey.

Ons is hier weg met planke en gereedskap en ons het die pad binnelands aangevat. Dit was n lekker loop en die wind het ons af en dan van koers af gewaai, maar ons het op Kildalkey veilig aangekom met alle planke en gereedskap.

Ons het eers goeie hutkoffie geniet en toe het ons met die werk begin. Ek en Shadrack het die planke van die toilet aanmekaar gesit en die sitplek getoets, en gevind dit sal werk en baie mense genot verskaf om dit te gebruik. Ons het die sitbank uitgevat na die gat wat gegrawe was "Long drop" genoem in eiland taal. Daar het ons dit netjies pas gemaak en sien daar, daar is die toilet weer reg vir eilanders.

Ek hoop julle geniet die toilet op Kildalkey terdeë!



Gatgrowers: Johnnie en Shadrack



Die nuwe "Go-cart" vir Kildalkey

Marion June Rain

Total Rainfall	114.4 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	31.0 mm
Total days with rain	18 days
Total days > 1mm	15 days
Total Sunshine	84.6 hours

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A visit to the Ice Plateau

By Edith Mertz

One evening in May the dim candle light flickered lazily inside the Repettos hut. Genevieve and I had just devoured a standard canned food meal, when we began to contemplate the next day's activities. We were smelling heavily of sweat and fishy Kotch since we had just finished a hard days work weighing wandering albatross chicks on Goney Plain. We were both tired and the prospect of a major adventure wasn't foremost in my mind, so I didn't pay much attention when Genevieve suggested: "Perhaps, if the weather is good tomorrow, we should go up to visit the ice plateau." However, we discussed the idea only briefly since the chances of having a good weather day at the top of the Island so late in the season were slim and perhaps we didn't want to get our hopes up,

BUT.....the sun rose brilliantly on the morning of 25th of May to become what may possibly have been the most picture-perfect day I will ever experience on Marion!

So off we went!

On the way up to the top of the Island, the mists of the cold Southern Ocean chased us uphill. It was a thick blanket covering the lower areas of Marion and the sea, yet Prince Edward Island just managed to peak above the fogbank in the background. It was a hot day and the sun convinced us to change into our shorts and t-shirts. Climbing higher into the last spots of vegetation we came across a little snow arch and we took turns posing for pictures under it. Gen almost didn't get her chance though, because I nearly destroyed it with my backpack!



Luckily the arch remained intact so that Genevieve could pose for this photo.

June's Temperature statistics

Average Maximum	7.6°C
Average Minimum	2.1°C
Average	4.8°C
Maximum	13.4°C
Minimum	-2.2°C

We passed impressive lava rock formations high above the Repetto's hut as we walked between Theo and Middelman. As it got a little later in the morning the mist finally stopped rising up below us when only the top peak of Prince Edward Island was still visible in the distance.

After much huffing and puffing we stopped for a quick snack of Provitas and sardines at a thousand meters above sea level, still enjoying the view below a clear blue sky. Snacking done, we turned into the entrance to the ice plateau that lies between Bob Rand and Bald Peak. We came down from a gravelly graye slope to walk along the bottom of the valley.

There wasn't much snow around and the valley was perforated by fjords in the sand swallowing litres of melt water from streams.

And then, turning one corner, we came upon the entrance of the Ice Cave. The front entrance gaped low at us like the mouth of a colossal barbel. From outside we could see sunlight in the back of its throat beaming through a second, arched entrance.

Genevieve was especially happy to be there. During her previous years on Marion she had tried at least three times before to climb up to the plateau, but had always previously been thwarted by bad misty weather. Well, we had

now made it and we certainly didn't remain outside the cave for long. Within moments the exploring commenced in earnest.

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The front entrance of the Ice Cave

Inside, the ice walls were the most beautiful shade of frozen blue. Staring into them I could see thousands of bubbles locked within the ice and I recall that I spent a moment wondering how long those little pockets of air have been there. A little exploration uncovered a side chamber with shards of glasslike ice covering red gravel floor. We also spent time under the curtain of water droplets from the melting ice

June's Meditation

*"Here is
a test to find
whether your mission on earth
is finished:
If you're alive,
it isn't."*

Richard Bach: Illusions

My different feelings of Marion Island

By Mashudu Mashau

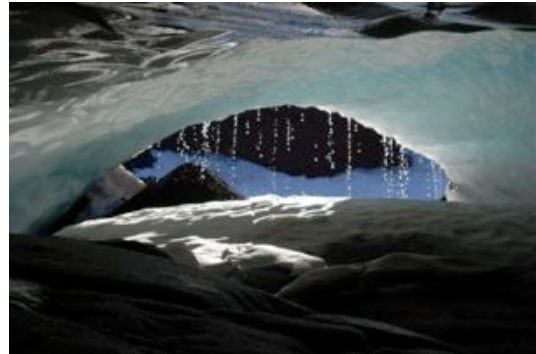
Tshifhinga tshinzhi musu ndi hafha hayani hanga (MARION Island), ndi vha ndi tshi khou ya hunwe ha fhethu lwa vhusuku vhu fhiraho vhuthihi nda kona u vhuya. Ndi a zwi divha uri ndi fhanu ndo da u guda zwinzhi. Nga nnda ha u guda na u ita mushumo we nda vhidzwelwa wone, ndi di wana ndi tshi guda zwinzhi ngaha hetshi tshitangadzime tshine nne nda khou tshiendela ngauri vhaambi vhari uguda a hu fheli.

A thi a thu tou zwi divha arali vhanwe vha tshi zwidzhiisa nga ndila ine nne nda zwiwanisa zwone u bva tshe nda tou thoma u vha hafha.



along the rim of the arched entrance. Understandably, we both got a bit wet in that freezing shower.

The entire adventure was a truly fantastic experience! That afternoon in May we wandered along to Katedraal hut, still mesmerised by a day of wonder and lucky weather....



I think this picture speaks for itself

Fhedzi ndi pfa uri tshitangadzime itshi tshi na zwipida zwiraru zwo fhambanaho nga mitsho wazwo. Kha tshigwada tsha vathu vhare hone hafha tshitangadzimeni namusi, ndi vhatuku-sa vhane vha shuma nga nthu ha "five hundred metres above sea level". Mishumo yashu yo tou ralo u ya nga u fhambana hayo. Fhedzi nne ndi na mashudu (li dzina langa) ngauri hu na zwine zwa ntoda "inland & coastal".

Hezwo zwiita uri nne ndivhe munwe wa vathu vhane vha tshenzhema hafha fhethu khwine. Kha nwedzi munwe na munwe ndi tea uya Mixed Pickle, tshifhinga tshinzhi lu si luthihi. Zwino hu na maduvha manwe ane ri takuwa Base u livha Mixed Pickle kana u takuwa Mixed Pickle ro livha Base.

Kha nyendo dzi ngaho idzi ndi dzulela u vhona u fhambana ha mitsho u bva hune nda vuwa hone. Hune nda tshimbila hone kha lwendo lwa duvha na hune ndaya u edela hone musu li tshi tota tombo. Zwa mbo nthumeledza kha u amba uri huna zwipida zwiraru. Fhedzi tshinwe tshi do vha tsha vha uri ndi dovha nda vhona fhethu hune havha na mutsho u ambelwaho afha tshitangadzimeni itshi hu ngei Katedraal.

Ndo no diwana ndi khou vuwa nda balelwa u vula vothi ngauri lo "freezer". Zwothe hezwi zwine ufhambana ha mitsho havha zwone, zwi di dzula u vha hone, ndi tenda zwi do di dzulela u vha hone.

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Mashudu and Anne braving the crest of Bald Peak



Zwine nda ita fhedzi ndi u di
vhudza uri ndi do zwi kona
naho zwi tshi vhone zwi tshi
konda zwinwe zwa zwifhinga.
Ndi tou tenda urio izwi ndi zwo
lilanaho na ene nne. Musi zwi
tshi ralo, zwi ita uri ndi di vhone
vhuhulu ha MUDZIMU.

"Ri vhone YESU".

Sponsor of the month:

EXCLUS¹VE BOOKS

The M65 team would like to
send out a special "Thank
you" to Exclusive Books for
the many great reads they
have provided for us and
future Marionites.



Gyming has begun on Marion.....

By Jared Harding

So, yeah we have started our gym classes, one session in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Edith, Mashudu and I have started together in order to motivate each other because most mornings, when our alarm clocks might have gone off we would normally just ignore them but now we have to get up... but to wake up Edith is totally a hectic mission alone, now I wake her up by knocking on her bedroom door and then her lights go on, bright and early. If that doesn't work in the future I will have to start the cold water treatment, ouch.... So my conclusion is that she will carry on waking up, I hope or else!!!! Ryan pitched up once and never again, he chickened out and some mornings Linda comes in for a ten minute cycle. Other than that it's just us three having fun and working out together.... This is really something new for me because I really hate exercising, but I

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have to because of the amount of food that we happen to eat on the Island. We eat like kings and queens actually.

In all honesty the morning session is the best because it wakes you up and motivates you to start work that day, even though sometimes you just want to crawl up and climb back into a nice warm bed...

One evening we had gym and Mashudu left earlier than usual and he wasn't concentrating and he happened to lock the bolt from the outside! Luckily the gym has windows because if it happened not to, Edith and I would still be in there freezing our butts off...

So by next year we will all be nice and fit... hopefully.



Edith, Jared and Mashudu pumping iron

Erratum

Thanks to all our readers who noticed and notified us about the mistake in last month's issue. The cathunters graffiti was in the old Kildalkey hut and not in Watertunnel as published in the May edition of the Wanderer.



Marion's maximum	29.7 m/s or
wind Gust in June	109.9 km/h

June's tribute to Marion history

It may not be common knowledge, but in the olden days the Island used to be inhabited by some sheep. They are just one example of a selection of domestic stock that humans introduced to the Island over its history. Luckily, these days the only woolly white animals you are likely to see in the Marion landscapes are wondering albatross chicks.



The old jawbone of a sheep found at Boulder on Marion

...and now, a final challenge to our readers!

At the bottom of our sponsorship page is a strip of photos of unusual rock formations that can be found scattered across the landscape of Marion Island. Some of them are well known, but others may be a little less familiar to the usual Island hiker. Do your best and try to identify them from left to right. The answers will appear in next month's issue of the Wanderer.





Marion 65th Expedition Sponsors



generously donated large torches and batteries which mean team members can brave the catwalks outside of the warm base after dark (after 5pm, Marion Time GMT +3).

EXCLUS¹VE BOOKS

have kept the intellectual brains among us occupied with the shelves of varied reading they have supplied.



have been our guiding light by generously sending headlights for each team member.



WORLD SPACE Although we are neatly tucked away from civilization, our satellite radio connects us to the 'real' world and keeps us informed. Many thanks to Worldspace for this sponsorship.

Colgate Palmolive ensured we will go back with all our teeth and that the field assistants smell a little less unsavoury when they return to base by sponsoring toothpaste, palmolive soaps and shampoos.

STATE THEATRE have revealed the characters amongst us by supplying stage costumes.

SAB sent down more than a little extra to help us build castles in the skies on the few days it's warm enough to have an outdoor braai.

Oleg Neruchev of The Russian House gave the team DVDs for our long winter nights.



Foster Brothers

sent documentaries that tweak the interest of camera fundies and environment carers alike.

Japie de Klerk of FOTOLENS, Durbanville

gave team members special Islander prices on camera equipment and bent double with our team training schedule to ensure that the desired pieces were delivered at crazy times of the day.

Shiraan Watson must be thanked for the books and DVDs he has given the Islanders.



There are many unique rock formations littered across Marion Island. Can you identify these?