

The Wanderer

July 2008

Marion 65



Another sad day

In last month's Wanderer, Clokes reported the sadly predictable fate of the King Penguin adult and chick on Boulders Beach. There is unfortunately yet another such story to tell - I suppose a continued Marion obituary column and the life and death that is the reality we face on Marion every day.

Those of you who were here for takeover might remember the two Wandering Albatross chicks on top of the small hill to the south of the Gogga Lab. These chicks were the first and last thing I would check on when I opened and closed the lab blinds each day and I had watched their progress with fascination every day since I arrived on the island. My microscope looks right onto their nests, so on those days when my plan was to process and analyse samples, I caught myself spending a large part of my day

gazing out the window, monitoring in my head when the adults last fed the chicks and feeling anxiety if a lot of time passed between feeds. I hoped more than anything that these two would survive and that I would be able to see them fledge and fly away.

It is for these reasons that the happenings of a few days ago were so sad, but taught me once again about the harsh realities of nature. I got to the lab early one morning and noticed quite a few Paddy's and Kelp Gulls lingering around the Alby chick's nest on the left. But it was when the Giant Petrels (GPs) arrived in the late morning that I knew something was definitely wrong. Mashudu and I crept closer for a better look and noticed that the chick was off its nest and had also vomited up its last meal of squid, which the Kelp Gulls were hungrily gulping down. To our distress, we also saw that the chick had a nasty open wound injury on its wing elbow joint,

which explained the presence of the GP's. We knew that there was very little chance that the chick would survive under these conditions and there was also nothing much that we could do. By mid afternoon, the chick was dead and we removed it from its nest and took it to the bird lab for Gen to have a look at to try and establish what had caused the injury. Gen and Edith took charge of the dissection while I videoed and took photos, Jared weighed organs and Petrus scribed. We did find a small piece of a hook in the chick's gut; however, it was very difficult to determine with certainty whether mice or GP's had caused the external injury. Once we had finished the dissection, we put the chick back on the nest for the GP's and I watched the happenings over the next few days with interest as the carcass was quickly picked cleaned by GP's and Paddys.

Interestingly, both of the adults returned the following day. The first adult was already sitting next to the nest at 7.30am when I arrived in the lab. The second adult arrived at 7.45am and walked around the nest in the Wanderer's swooping head fashion. The two adults greeted each other and the adult that had just arrived continued to walk around before sitting down. For the next few hours, the adults sat next to each other and the nest, periodically getting up to walk around and they spent a large amount of time preening each other. The carcass by this stage had been dragged down the hill, so at no point did they actually see the dead chick. All that remained at the nest was a scattering of feathers. At about 13:00, one of the adults moved towards the chick on the right, about 50m away. It sat down about 10m away and



Wandering Albatross chick

watched the chick for awhile, before getting up to walk right up to it. The chick called in what looked like the same way it does when its parents arrive to feed it, but the adult moved away from the chick again and sat down about 10m away. The second adult then left its empty nest and joined the adult at the other chicks nest. They both sat there for about 4 hours, periodically preening each other, but mostly with their heads under their wings. Just before dusk, the adults got up one by one and walked up the hill to take off in the wind. That was the last I have seen of them and all that remains of their failed breeding attempt is an old now abandoned nest and the occasional Paddy which pitches up to look for any last remaining scraps of carcass. Who knows what or if the parents felt when they returned to an empty nest. How much of a sense of loss would there



have been? It is very difficult at these times to remain objective and to not anthropomorphise, but watching their behaviour, I couldn't help but feel that there was at least some degree of such a sense.

The southern view from the Gogga lab has now dramatically changed with only one white blob to watch every day. I only hope that this chick survives to adulthood.

---END---

Anne

Pressures in July

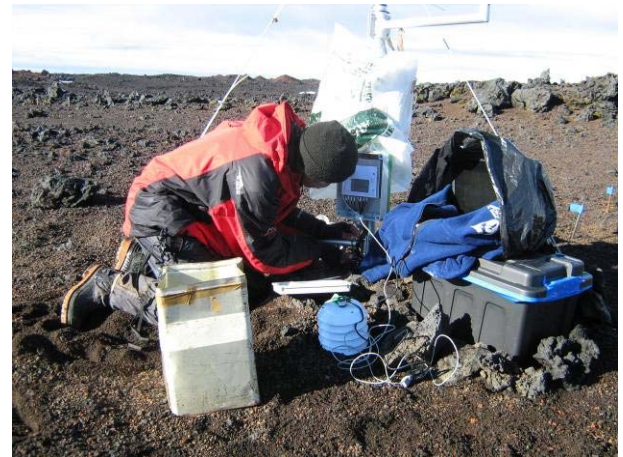
Average maximum	1017.1 hPa
Average Minimum	1004.0 hPa
Average	1010.7 hPa
Maximum	1033.0 hPa
Minimum	969.0 hPa

Kunzima kwesisiqithi madoda

Kunzima kwesisiqithi madoda. Andiyazi ukuba ndilahleke kakangaphi kwesi siqithi. Andiyazi noba amehlo wam amdaka na okanye ndisisikhova. Ngelinye ixesha ndihambe ii-awara ezilithoba ndisuka eMxuba Ntaba (MixedPickle) ndisiya e-Ncochoyini (Katedraalkrans). He madoda ndithi kwakukho inkungu engum-mangaliso wawungakwazi nokubona umnwe lo wakho.

Ngaphandle koko izinto zisahamba kakhle andikhali, phofu ke kuthwa indoda ayikhali kwa-Xhosa yhiyho lento ndisuke ndihambe ndizixelele uba andizolala phandle tu! Xa ndisebenza ndiba ndedwa lonto yenza uba ndimane ndizihlabelela ingoma zam zakwa Xhosa ndizive ndimnandi emphefumleni.

Mandiyijthethe inyani kumnandi kwesisiqithi, ukutya uvele uye emkhenceni ukhuphe inyama noba ngumlenze wegusha uzezenzele wedwa akukh'omntu uzakubuza. Ndiyakwazi ndisuke ndivuke ezinzulwini zobusuku ndizigalele esona sitya sakhe sasikhulu ze krimi ebandayo okanye ndizenzele noba yihagu etyebileyo esitovini.



A geomorphologist amongst the tools of his trade

Kulemali inyukayo yamafutha nokutya emva eMzantsi we Afrika andikhalazi tu ngokuba lapha kuba indinika ixesha lokuba ndicinge ngezinto endifuna ukuzenza ngekamva lam ndifumane nethuba lokwazi abanye abantu bentlanga ngentlanga, nabamazwe ngamazwe. Ubomi balapha baqheleka msinyane kum kuba bonke abantu bayazama ukuba babe moya mnye.

Ndiyabulela ukuba nizinike ixesha lokufunda lencwadana yam.

Ozithobileyo uMgwevu isiduko, uRhudulu, uSkhomo, uBhodlinyama, uTshangisa, uMhlatyana uthi makathi tsi gxada abuye anibone ngelinye ixesha.

Mphumzi ka Zilindile
Indoda yama dodaka.



Mphumzi working on red scoria slopes

Marions	30.1 m/s or
maximum wind	112.2 km/h
Gust in July	

How do you cope . . .?

I hope this is one the questions which a lot of people asks themselves when they see that for the past few years, there has been one or more individuals who over-wintering on Marion Island from Limpopo Province (especially Far North).

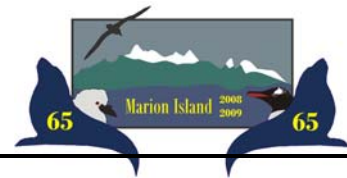
I may not answer that question very well according to the other people who already over-wintered. But I want to put it as a personal perspective on my experiences now, since I am presently on the same Island. It is true that I was based in the warmest place in the whole of South Africa as the country. I can assure you that the very first time I come across snow was in this year April on this Island. I have simply learnt & I believe even my other brothers' felt the same way that my stumbling block enemy is you. I always wished to be in this piece of the earth & I know that even when I am not used to this kind of weather. The first thing to tell myself was that I would make it.

After arriving in the Island, I had to assess the reality which I would meet everyday on this Island. Whenever I am in an unusual place, I always accept the feedback of what is happen around me. Only because I know that there is always the way in which anything can or should be corrected. First, I knew my extremes were difference with my other team members. Even when I know I'm the only one from the north. I believe that, I am always faced with the unique challenges everyday. I know how I can workout my responsibilities without compromises my safety. My safety always came first, that means that I should always carry whatever I can or will need at the times when I am exposed to those extremes of my life.



Mashudu in the field

The other things are that even when I am far away from some (important) beloved people who support me throughout whatever I have gone through my life. More especially because I still believe that I cannot do it by myself without my siblings, my friends & my family in general. I am here to learn, so that I can have my desired destiny. Some peoples really want to see me through the whole of this isolation. That always give me enough strength to cope with what I



have to face through this year on Marion. I would even use this time because I know that they will read this article to thank them. "I couldn't go through what I'm going through without YOU GUYS stand still like this. Let me tell you that the future is so looking bright for me with your support. Allow me to share with you this poem, which a friend wrote to me:

You will survive

In that freezing Island, far from us but very close to your loneliness.

Just close your eyes & know that u need me to survive.

In those chilly weathers during those usual snowy, rainy and in the middle of coldness day.

When it is very windy, always remember, u need me TO SURVIVE! !

Let me live with u & u with me on intimacy in our hearts.

When u sees no light or just dimmed, simply hold on & keep on surviving.

As long as we can still see sunrise & sunset, I know in my heart.

That surely, YOU WILL SURVIVE . . .

(By Thabelo)

This is one of many things that exclusively support me to survive & live my dream. Of all my days in this Island, I always enjoy every moment. Because I know that, I do not think of any reason which denying me joy. Mostly because I since I knew about this place I lived to be in this place and even lucky to accomplish my dream while I am still this young. "Nayo dza muvhuya dzi sumbwa ndila nga Yehova".

Mashudu

To Marion

When Susan Vosloo phoned me, I said, "Sure my back pack is still packed, when is the ship leaving."

She laughed and we finished all the formalities. At the end of the conversation all she said was "alweer jy en jou maatjies". Now that is referring to my team mates from Gough 49 that are also in this team.

At first departure was scheduled for a couple of days, that turned into a couple of couple of days. On the day I took my trommels to the Sarah Baartman the First Officer warned me that this ship is sea sick paradise and that I should really get some tablets. At that point I still thought of myself as a hardy seaman with several voyages on the SA Agulhas and fishing vessels and not to forget endless hours at sea on sail boats. So I brushed his good advise of as one do with good advise.



Martin;s transferal from the Zodiac of the Sarah Bartman to the island's crane

Finally the departure morning arrives, got taken to my cabin and showed around the ship by the very helpful "snowy". Not sure what his job is called in nautical terms, he cleans our rooms and plays waiter in the mess hall. We were still in the channel heading towards Robben Island, not

even past the No. 1 Buoy, I felt I needed sleep. Not asleep yet "snowy" called me for supper. Had some great food, but as I licked clean the final spoon of custard pudding, it hit me like a sack of bricks. I stumbled to my cabin and was bed bound till breakfast the next morning. I only realized I was really sea sick when I declined lunch. Sarah Baartman made another humble sailer.

On arrival I was warmly greeted by the M65ers. A big smile from Mashudu and the infamous Kritzinger grin when myself and a fisheries officer got picked up from the Zodiac.

Not 10 minutes after meeting every one I felt I was home again, on an island for a year, again.

Martin

July's statistics	Temperature
Average Maximum	6.9°C
Average Minimum	1.8°C
Average	4.3°C
Maximum	11.7°C
Minimum	-2.5°C

Gentoo penguins on Marion Island

At this time of the year, we are busy monitoring the Gentoo penguins that arrive sometime in June. For the past five months there has not been a Gentoo penguin in sight, but with the call of the breeding cycle about to begin the birds suddenly start arriving on the island. We are monitoring the arrival rate of the birds so Everyday from the beginning of June, we walk out to Ship's Cove about 35 minutes from base and count the number of penguins that are on the beach. This

is not easy as they come out at the end of the day and are so much fun to watch that one forgets about time. With the shortest days of the year, it was normally a less than 30 minute walk back to base to get back before dark. During the day at this time you still wont see a Gentoo penguin but every night they are back and every morning early they leave to go fishing. Gradually we get to see them pair up and they start building a nest together. Once they are happy they mate and about a week later the female lays an egg. 3-4 days later she lays another egg. Now the work starts for the adults, as the eggs have to be incubated for 36 –40 days. Whilst the one adult is incubating the other leaves each day and goes out to sea. Normally at the end of the day they will arrive back from fishing and what a



Gentoo adult on a small chick

welcome they get from their partner. But it is time to change duties. It seems that before the partner leaves to go to sea, they bring a present for the nest in the form of a piece of dirt or grass whatever is available close by. Very cute to watch!

Well all our monitoring has paid off . Over the last few days, we have been able to witness the arrival of the first 15 chicks for the season. Now not only do the adults have to keep up

alternate duties, but now there is added pressure with 2 hungry chicks to feed, so during fishing expeditions the adults have to get to the fishing grounds as fast as possible and return to look after the chicks as quickly as possible.

We leave on a 12 day round island next week, and will be counting every single Gentoo penguin that is breeding on the island, to try and get an idea of the success of the 2008 Gentoo penguin breeding season. Will keep you posted on their breeding success.

Linda

July's Rain

Total Rainfall	107.8 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	21.4 mm
Total days with rain	22 days
Total days > 1mm	15 days
Total Sunshine	76.7 hours

ANTICS ON MARION

So do Jelly-babies have different flavours or not?

During another cold evening we decided to see if the different colors that appear in the Jelly-babies actually have a different taste.

So Edith and I did not hesitate at all to give it a shot, to get blind folded and see if our taste buds actually work. And besides its free Jelly-babies because we have only a limited amount left.

The conclusion was, after the testing is that infact Jelly-babies do have different flavours because Edith and I

were tested on several different colours and we both got one or two types wrong out of about 6 samples, so well done to both of us. And of course to our Judges and supporters.

Below is Edith, Martin (Our Feeder) and myself

Jared



Jelly baby testing. The long dark nights on Marion lead to discovering the small things of life

Humidity on Marion in July

Average	89%
Maximum	100%
Minimum	13%

July's tribute to Marion's history



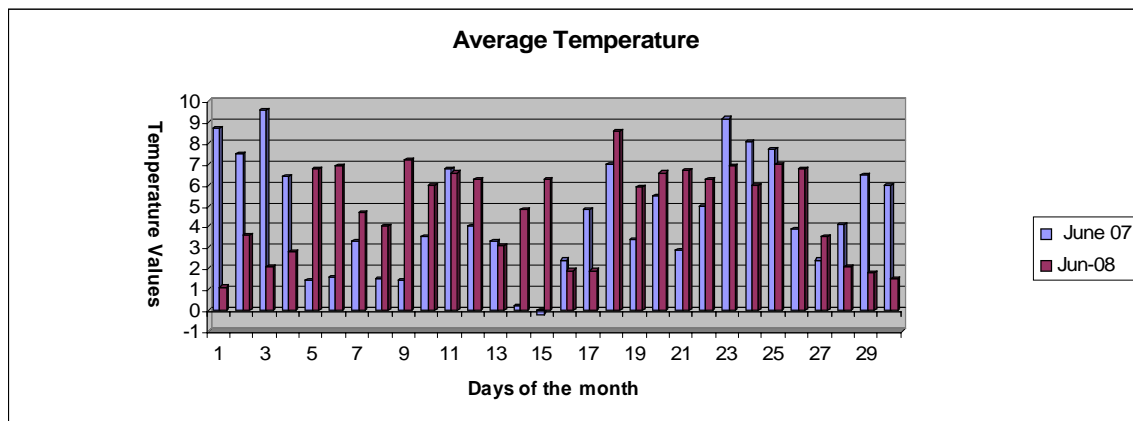
Cat traps assembled from black aa lava rocks. A gin trap would have been placed in the central hollow.



Martin being lifted onto the island via the Personnel Carrier

The Weather

The weather on Marion has changed a lot since the last time I was here (2000-2001). During the takeover period we had heavy snow falls and lots of rain. This time around it is a different scenarion. From the graphs below you will see that our daily temperatures vary a lot. There were days where we were colder as you can see on the graph. These values are a daily averages.



Now something out of the ordinary happened during this month. We experienced some lightning and thunder. You should have seen the M65 glued to the windows in the dinning room. I heard that places like Marion don't get lightning. We saw it 3 times. Since this phenomenon was having them glued to windows, I went to fetch my

camera and put on the flash. My flash flashed and made them so happy as they thought it was lightning. 'Surprise it was the flash' and all they heard was the shutter of the camera. I got you. They all laughed. I guess if they wanted to strangle me they would have. But because I have great guys then they just smiled. To all the ex Marion Islanders, have you guys reported lightning?'

Shadrack

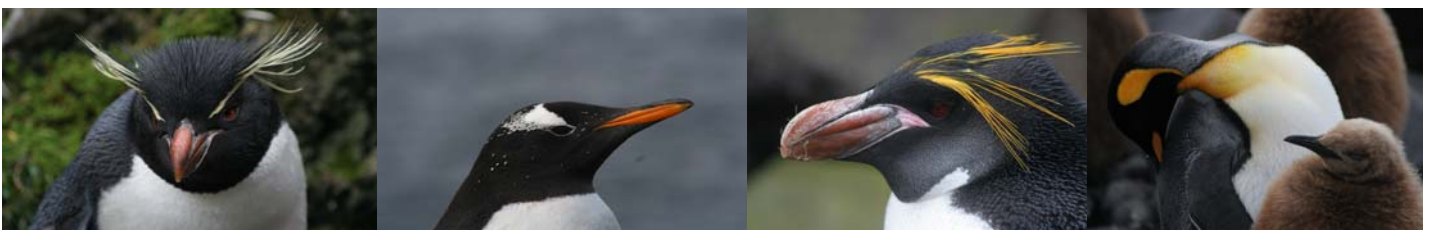


Team members engrossed in searching the skies for lightening

The answers...

In the previous Wanderer we showed a number of rock formations that may be seen on Marion. For those who are intrigued they are identified as, or located at (from left to right): a formation between Black Haglet Valley and Tate's Hill, Boot Rock which may be seen off shore between Repetto's Hill and Lou se Kop, Killerwhale Fin Rock seen just west of Cape Davis Beach, a mounted rock that may be found near Azorella Kop (Mixed Pickle side), the 'sliced bread rock' may be seen on Longridge above and south of Goney Plain and a large remarkable hollow piece of lava seen en route to Katedraal Krans via the hill First Red (Pew Crag in the background).

Four penguins may be seen breeding on Marion Island. Can you identify the King, Gentoo, Rockhopper and Macaroni Penguins?



Sponsor of the month



Petzl lighting or way (around the island and back to the walk in freezers).

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.

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 day.

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

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

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

July's Meditation

"Don't you talk to me about progress.
Progress just means bad things happen faster"

Terry Pratchett