



THE WANDERER

SEPTEMBER 2008



Garlic Rebels vs BlackImpiesGreen (aka BIG)

13 September 2008, a cold winters morning on the east front, the grass was crisp underfoot. We were cold but knew we had to move. Our platoon leader, Major Kritzinger aka Camo Man, had his orders. They came from the top issued by 4 star General Podile (aka The BAR¹ man) himself. The strategy was to move our last CAKE² tank into position and take the Garlic Rebels final stronghold. Gherkin. Both sides suffered many casualties; some beers were decapitated and emptied



CAKE tank

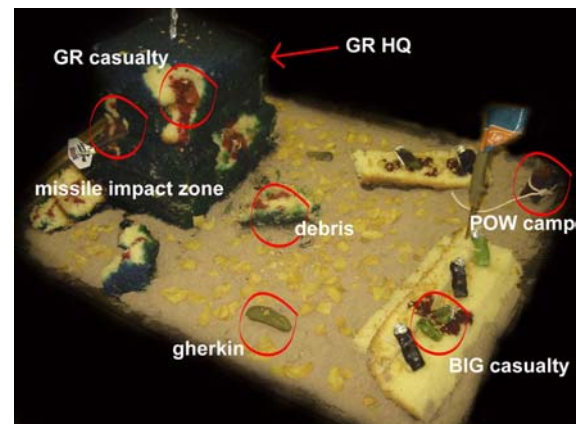
The Garlic Rebels, so known for the Garlic flakes they were guarding at their last HQ, were holding up strong. They would shout out their slogan 'life is fruity'³ and drive us back into the safety of our bunkers. We had to dig deep to find the courage to proceed. At the end we found what we were made of "INGREDIENTS: Glucose Syrup, Sugar, Water Gelatine (Bovine), Invert Sugar, Food Acid (E296), Fruit Juice, Flavours, Sodium Citrate, Colours⁴".

CIA⁵ were quick to get the vitals from the Prisoners of War.



***Squirt* ... aarrrrggggghhhh ... blood**

As we finally approached the GRHQ we used the BAD⁶. We obtained two BAD's from England but fortunately at the end we only needed to use one to drive them to surrender. And then the Garlic was ours.



**Satellite imagery of GR HQ under
attack**

Jelly babies were harmed in the making of this cake.

Notes

¹ Black African Romeo

- ² Camoed Anormous quick Enormous. Only a few of these have ever been manufactured. None have survived a boy's birthday party
- ³ Also a trademark of Maynards, Tiger Food Brands LTD
- ⁴ Only the colours from this list that make up Black or Green. The Garlic Rebels are made up of the red, blue⁷, orange and yellow colours: E122, E133, E104, E110
- ⁵ CAKE² Intelligence Agency
- ⁶ Barmy Army Dart
- ⁷ No blue jelly babies have ever been found. But Intel are convinced they would be Garlic Rebels

Courageous reporting by our war correspondents Private Vetseun and Private Anne

Exploring the Island round 2

On the 17th, I went on an exploring mission. Myself and Petrus did the round island trip via Repetto's. Before the departure we celebrated Jared's birthday the previous night. We had fun until the early hours of the morning. I woke and took a quick shower to make me alive. The jungle juice was still in my system. I packed the backpack and had a quick breakfast.

Off we went. Hardly 30 minutes from base, the jungle juice started to operate on me. I must say jungle juice x too much = disaster. I survived all the way until Repettos. Since this is the breeding season, I also started marking the territory. So be

warned. If I find you on my spot, there will be a penalty fee to be paid.

I drink water all the way which made matters worse. From Repetto's it was good and still tired moved through to Cape Davis. I retired early and woke up when it was time for supper. The next morning we headed for Mixed pickle. This was going to be the furthest I have walked since I got here. The walk was a mellow one. I was not running after the field assistants.

We headed for Swartkops in a lovely and sunny day. As you know, Marion is known for its 4 seasons in one day. The wind change and all hell broke loose just for few minutes. The snow and soon it was over. The wind didn't die out. It was blowing around 35 knots until we got to Swartkops. Did what we do best, fill up the generator and charge batteries. Do maintenance where we dim it necessary. My face was white with the spray from the sea. I washed and applied some hand lotion. My face felt great after being dry and all. Went for some sight seeing and took photo's.

Swartkops to Greyheaded is the next trip and our destination. 08:30am, backpacks on our backs and we are underway. That was one of the good days. We just cruised our way and minding our business. Rooks was just a pit stop. Drank some tea with E S.M. Greyheaded here we come. The last time was there, the Greyheaded albies were coming back for breeding. Can't wait to see how the cliff looks like. Gen and Edith have been at GreyH for weeks and couldn't wait to see them.

We arrived at the hut to the happy birders. As usual, tea and catch up on the happenings at base and their work. Ryan and Tom also pitched up on one of their rounds to Goodhope bay. Almost half of the team is at Greyheaded. I spend three days and Monday the 21st myself and Edith headed back to base. I must say, the weather was on my side from day one until I got back to base.

That was one of the great trips and one that took out the cabin fever. Spending months in base and not going out for day trips and sleep out can drive a person crazy.

Out
Shati

... Survival ...

I am a simple person who normally gets pleased or encouraged by whatever happening around me even when they are so small. The fact that I consider myself lucky to be one of the very few South Africans who got the chance to explore Marion Island in any way can never over emphasized. Simply because I see God on whatever happens around me as an individual. Mostly because I always need a challenge by all the things, I become involved in. I am writing this article with the idea that some of the M66 team members (the ones to over winters next year) might read and it could be helpful to them.

Since we arrived here, there is one thing I have seen on every animal that lives or breed in this precious place including

people. That only thing is Survival. My biggest achievement when I finish my stay in this place will be to survive. We sometimes even decorate it & give the details of how we want to accomplish our goals, which is to arrive in Table Bay and see our long missed loved ones who constantly wait for the day we arrive back to them. I have walked in most of the places around the island to the point that I now know the life in this island.

On the September month, I was working on the coast when the animals that are now breeding (e.g. Gentoo Penguins, Fur seals, Elephant seals, King Penguins to name few) in the island arrive in the beach and in less than 5 minutes then pass the famous Orca or two hunting. That to me simply suggest that for them life in the water is the Survival of the fittest. On Monday morning while I was working next to King Penguin colony at Kildalkey, I saw more than five penguins that were severely bleeding. That to me suggest that they were missed by one of their predators in the water & or in the colony itself.



“A pair of Skua’s feeding on a burrowing bird”

Even when I count the number of birds (e.g. Great Petrel & Paddies) which are feeding into the same colony every single day. I have a great respect on burrowing birds, specifically my all time favorite White Chin Petrel. The way in which they design their burrows, with a pond on its mouth to help in keeping out predators of bouncing into them. The speed when they are flying, make them incredibly impressive to me. Nevertheless, I have seen many Skuas preying on them (see photo) displaying their smart distinctive skills of hunting their prey.

However, for a human being is a bit different because we do not really have the predator in this place simply because we are more invaders than citizen in this island. Nevertheless, for these 13 months that I am here, I need to survive. Even when we are supplied with all the basic need, you can think of, it is still a challenge to work in this unpredictable place. Sometimes we want to move from the East where Base is situated to the West, which lies more than 15 kilometers away on rigorous conditions. No wonder we undergoes that medical examination as part of interview. My biggest fitness I rely on is mentally ready for any walk. As long as I do not have worries, I can achieve and arrive in my destiny simple. I always thank God that HE direct my footsteps wherever I goes because He knows me better. That always simplifies things for me because I only do my cause and He direct me.

“I WILL SURVIVE.”

By Mashudu.
(Biologist)



“Mashudu at Katedraal”

Katedraal Fiasco...

This month has been very good in terms of getting data from the AWS and also improving the methodology of the project. There has been some short-term accomplishments this month: I managed to do Long Ridge site, Tafelberg site, managed to put the i-buttons in Katedraal to backup the AWS, expanded both grids in Katedraal and Tafelberg, successfully downloaded AWS without problems in snowing weather.



One would laugh if they can see me downloading data in Katedraal when the

weather is bad (which is the norm in those mountains), the laptop I use to download is so much protected it makes me feel I can be a good social worker or something. After dressing the laptop with a fleece (I used Mashudu's coz I had to keep mine as I was going to be out there for close to an hour), I put it in a rubbish bin, and then I put that on my inner sleeping bag cover then my outer sleeping bag cover. No matter how much it's snowing, raining, windy there's nothing that can penetrate the cover.



“Mphumzi downloading data”

That's me downloading data for about an hour in snow, scary cold hey but it has to be done.

Just returned from Katedraal in a few days with a Gogga (Mashudu), the weather was terrible as we were forced to spend a day inside the cave (my sleeping bag). It was so hard to even open the door alone. When I woke up the snow was inside the hut and the door was frozen, the previous night I thought we were gonna be chucked into the sea with the hut as it was rocking like crazy. The top door (it's a two-way kinda kitchen door) kept being ripped out of its

bolt and it was threatening to brake, so we had to tie a rope in the handle to the hangers on the wall. This plan worked as the door was at least secured. Tomorrow I am going back to Katedraal but am even expecting that the top-door is ripped off the frame as it wasn't holding tight at all.



“the frozen door in the morning”

Besides the above, things were normal and am happy the weather is turning good meaning am gonna spend more days in the field and get more data, it's also time for needle ice to start showing up so the observations and measurements are going to be exciting to do and an experience of a lifetime. I almost forgot, I walked up and down this month from base to Katedraal that everyone was telling me I've lost a lot of weight. This disturbed me so I went to the scale and to my shock I've lost 5kg's in just a month (that's 30days and there was no BIOSLIM), I was disturbed more when a Metkassie lady said her exact weight and I discovered she weighs the same as me. I couldn't say my weight now to them (am not that stupid) because as a Xhosa man (uSkhomo into kaMhlatyana, uBhodlinyama) I can't weigh less than a woman. Not to sound chauvinist or

something (hoping there are no feminists reading this) but I believe a man should not weigh less than a woman it's against the biblical order. So now I have permanently put big rocks (I'm a geomorphologist after all) on my backpack and also have a few that I put in my pants and jacket to give me weight when it's windy.

Looking forward to the new month and hoping it's going to be fruitful.

SPRING - TIME ON MARION

This has to be one the most exciting and busiest times for field workers on Marion island.

There is so much to do and see but all you have to do is get out there. This is not always the most pleasant thing to have to do as the weather (which everyone knows) does not work in a field assistants favour. Needless to say, the normal dinner table chatter on Marion goes something like "what a challenge" "I did it" "did you see" "wow that wind" and so on.

And the reason we are here is to look, learn and listen (sometimes prod or tag) to the animals. The more you watch, the more one realises that the animals are playing out a daily soapies the difference is it is not shared with everyone - no flashing lights, no scripts just pure honest nature.

Here are a few scenes from this weeks episodes of Marion soapies top favourite's.

1. Probably the bravest is EV(female) and EW (male), the 2 resident skua's that arrived back a few weeks ago from who knows where to claim their territory back.

The claim came from the paddy's who have had the run of the island whilst the skua's move away for the winter months. Yesterday we watched EV and EW mating outside the kitchen window. (even a bit of porn)!!

2. AAM the resident macho male paddy who owns the base, has had to move to smaller quarters which is below my little house on the point. All day, he patrols from his lookout outside my door. He has the advantage that if any predator comes by, he can duck under the house or hide in the passage. Now AAM seems to not be able to make up his mind which mate he actually wants. He has had 2 over the past few weeks and ABI seems to be the "flame of the moment", (will keep you posted) Needless to say he brings "the flame of the moment" to his lookout every day where they run up and down and S---T all over the place. Problem is the 2 skuas also like to see what is going on around my house, and to my amazement I have seen AAM and EW standing together outside my front door. I wonder if they have some kind of agreement???? or is AAM just being a brave fool???

As if that is not enough, the female elephant seals have started giving birth to their 40kg monsters, the Gentoo chicks are now getting bigger and forming crèches, the Northern Giant petrels settled down about 3 weeks ago and the females laid eggs and the southern G.P.'s have recently followed their lead. The Sooty albatrosses have just arrived back at the island so too the white-chinned petrels who can be heard each night just about everywhere one goes. They make burrows into the slopes sometimes 2 metres long.

But the most exciting spectacle besides the killer whales arriving back, is the expected arrival of 300 000 Macaroni penguins who within 4 weeks will walk out of the ocean and make their way back to their breeding sites. 2 of the sites have over 100 000 birds who normally return to the same spot they use each year to meet up with the same wife they have had forever. The exciting news is that during take-over we fitted a few Macaroni penguin with satellite trackers (PTT's). These are still recording, and the latest information we have is that the male we fitted with the tag is just about to arrive on the island any day now with the female just a few days behind!!

So for the next few weeks you can see that we will busy enjoying the circle of life. If only people in the real world could just find the time and patience to admire these marvelous animal miracles we are so fortunate to be watching first hand. But similar miracles also happen in one's own back garden. You just have to get out there and find them, and if more people took the time to do this, this world would be a far better place for us all!!

We can only hope!!!

Linda Clokie



“National braai day, Jared, Edith, Mashudu and Shady “

Marion trivia

Did you know?

The Islands are young in geological terms. The oldest recorded date for lavas on Marion Island is 450 000 years, and it seems likely that the islands are less than one million years old.

(McDougall (et al. 2001). In: The Prince Edward Islands: land-sea interactions in a changing ecosystem. Chown and Froneman (eds). 2008. pp4)

Photo quiz answers...

In the previous Wanderer, we showed photographs of four species of goggas that are found on Marion Island. The answers are (from left to right): springtail (*Isotomurus palustris*), weevil (*Ectemnorhinus marioni*), spider (*Myro paucispinosus*), and slug (*Deroceras panormitanum*).



Marion Island weather data

September's temperature statistics

Average maximum	5.5 °C
Average minimum	0.6 °C
Average	3.0 °C
Maximum	11 °C
Minimum	-3.4 °C

Pressures in September

Average maximum	1012.8 hPa
Average minimum	998.4 hPa
Average	1005.8 hPa
Maximum	1028.6 hPa
Minimum	975.7 hPa

Maximum September wind gust

35.6 m/s or 119.9 km/h

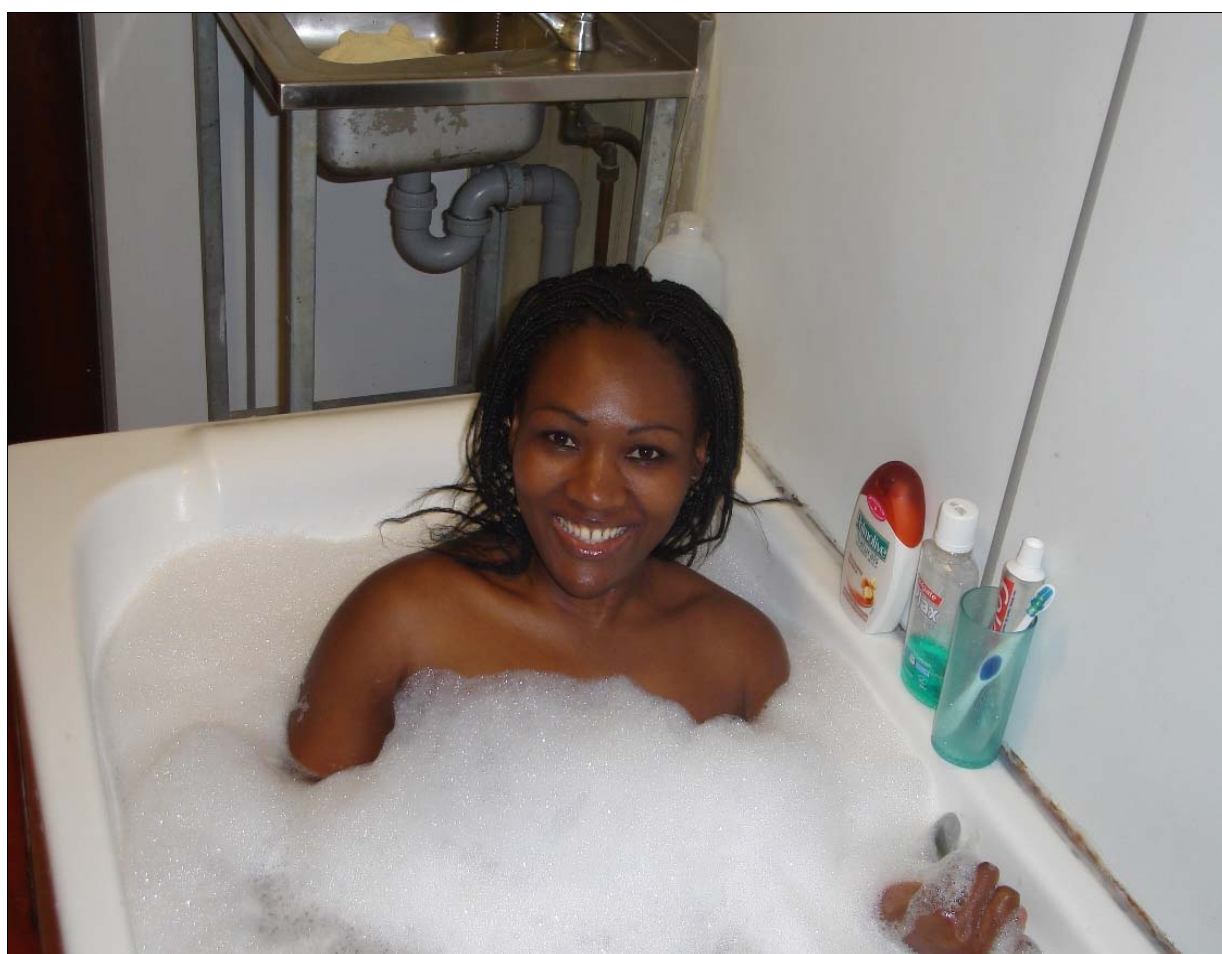
September rain

Total rainfall	86.5 mm
Highest in 24 hours	13.6 mm
Total days with rain	24 days
Total days > 1mm	14 days
Total sunshine	99.6 hours

Humidity in September

Average maximum	97 %
Average minimum	67 %
Average	84 %
Maximum	100 %
Minimum	33 %

Sponsor of the month



M65 shiny white teeth with smooth skin thanks to Colgate palmolive

Marion 65 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 headlamps 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 its warm enough to have an outdoor braai.

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

“When poverty comes in at the door,
love flies out of the window.”

Anon

That’s it for now folks. So until next month...

