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# THE WANDERER

ISSUE 1

APRIL—15 JUNE 2012

This is Marion 69 team's first issue of the tradition of *The Wanderer*, a monthly newsletter where we'll bring you up to date with what we've been experiencing. We hope you enjoy!

\*PLEASE GIVE A THOUGHT TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND DON'T PRINT THIS IF YOU DON'T NEED TO. THANKS, M69

## And then there was team M69...



Imagine the meet and greet of the 22nd March at the East Pier Building, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town. Twenty-one familiar strangers hover about, chat politely about what brings them to this point, laugh in spurts, cajole each other lightly to feel out the extents of the personal-space boundaries—still quite wide at that stage.

Initially, faced with the prospect of the introductions, the team training ahead of me and the year I'd be on the island, I was bravely nervous that morning. I got myself a cup of tea to be sure not to fiddle empty-handed and loosely moved in and out of circles of banter.

Many of the team had been down to Marion before, some of them several times—old timers! Others had experience on the SANAP programme, having travelled to Gough and SANAE. Most of them—it seemed to me then—were so self-assured in the face of this adventure, born to be in-the-wild, ready for (what I had heard were) treacherous hikes, fending off enormous wild animals with sticks, braving snow and ice and craggy landscapes.

The team training, with its "up's and down's" gave us the

building day was the first step to showing us how to try avoid setting the stage for it and how to cope with it when it arises.

chance to find things out about one another; passions, experiences, recent past, plans for the island, plans for the future, people in our lives and so on. All jesting whilst questing. The team training comprised a final dental exam, first-aid training, basic fire-fighting training, cooking class, packing and prepping and a team-building day.

At the team building day we were coaxed out of our personal bubbles to discuss core values and beliefs, all in an effort to better understand each other and develop sensitivity. We've been lucky enough to have had little personal conflict yet and team-

Many of my reservations at the time, about how I'd manage all this (that is the daunting prospect of Marion Island for a year, with the take-overs and the ship trips included) and whether I'd be able to manage all the interpersonal relationships in this lonely-communal life, have been utterly dispelled.

After two months on the island, a month on our own, I'm pretty sure all of us can give a "Hoorah!" to having made the choice to come here. Although we'd probably just make a raucous attempt at mimicking the seals and birds in expressing our pleasure.

—Christelle van Vuuren



The "troof fairy" smites Leonie, at team-building day.

# Going Green

## Word from the ECO

Not only is it a privilege, but I am proud to be the first dedicated environmental control officer (ECO) for South Africa's only special nature reserve. An ECO and assistant ECO are appointed on the M69 team and the year ahead is an exciting challenge as we are the first to forge a path through a carefully planned, but brand new, work schedule. One of our most im-

portant tasks during the year ahead is the implementation of an eradication, monitoring and control plan for alien and invasive alien species on the island. These species include six plant species of high priority and, of course, the house mouse.

During the months to come we will share our time here on Marion with you through The Wanderer, keeping our readers

abreast with the environmental issues and aspects associated with the little piece of paradise that surely is the jewel of the Southern Ocean.

**Jacqueline Davis**

### Marion Island Weather Statistics

May 2012

Supplied by Marion Island Weather

Ave. Max Pressure	1009.5 hPa
Ave. Min Pressure	996.3 hPa
Ave. Pressure	1003.2 hPa
Max Pressure	1023.0 hPa
Min Pressure	974.0 hPa

Ave. Max Temp	8.7 °C
Ave. Min Temp	3.2 °C
Ave. Temp	6.0 °C
Max Temp	16.4 °C
Min Temp	-1.0 °C

Ave Humidity	84 %
Max Humidity	100 %
Min Humidity	55 %

Max Wind Gust	151.3 km/h
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Total Precipitation	247.4 mm
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Highest in 24 Hours	45.4 mm
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Total days with rain	29 days
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Total Sunshine	88.4 hrs
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## Thankful hearts

### A poem by Zandile Simama

In sorrow, in pain, in need and in life itself

In happy times, joyful days and when it's just smiles,

Confining in one thing that's taken for granted by most,

Bringing love, comfort, faith and hope.

The feeling of being human beings and cared for in this cruel world,

Peace being the chore of all things and understanding...

For even the ones who can't even hear,

See nor read, but it's still powerful,

Telling stories that will never die,

Yesterdays that will always be,

And tomorrows that will always bring hope for even the lame...

A friend indeed to...

THANKFUL HEARTS

My name is Zandile Simama and I'm a CEO ASSISTANT. It's my first time on Marion Island. This short poem is one of the 3 poems and one song I wrote within the first month on the Island. I was asked by the Chaplin to write few words for the Bible institution that helped us with the bibles that were handed out during take over ...so that should say a lot about how inspirational, beautiful and calming this Island is...





# Marion Boulevard

## The faces of the M69 team....

Get to know  
who's who.



**LEONIE OLIVIER**  
LEADER & MEDIC



**RORY MEYER**  
DEPUTY & RADIOTECH



**MORNAY EGGBERRY**  
DIESEL MECHANIC



**YANGA SAPEPA**  
BASE ENGINEER



**MIA WEGE**  
SEALER



**JOHN LUCAS**  
SEALER



**WIAM HADDAD**  
SEALER



**NICO LÖBCKER**  
SEALER



**DAWN CORY-TOUSSAINT**  
KILLER-WHALER



**FRED FOURIE**  
SANSA



**RASHAWE KGOPONG**  
GOGGA-MAN



**JACQUELINE DAVIS**  
CONSERVATION OFFICER



**ZANDILE SIMAMA**  
ASST. CONS. OFFICER



**BEN DILLEY**  
BIRDER



**DELIA DAVIES**  
BIRDER



**INNOCENT MTHEMBU**  
BIRDER



**LINDA CLOKIE**  
BIRDER



**NOMPILO RADEBE**  
BIRDER



**CHRISTELLE VAN VUUREN**  
JUNIOR METKASSIE



**JASON NEL**  
JUNIOR METKASSIE



**TSHEPO TAWANE**  
SENIOR METKASSIE



# The Gogga-man speaks

## News about the “small things”

Go sepela ke go dibona, from the words of the Chaplain Molefe “I didn’t believe that a bible can take me to such places”. It feels like a dream come true, when I was informed that I was on my way to Marion Island and working C.I.B (Centre for Invasion Biology at the University of Stellenbosch) under the supervision of Prof. Steven Chown.

A long trip from Limpopo Province to Cape Town, I couldn’t believe it. The first day of team training was very exciting for me, as it marked the day I was going to meet my new family. M69 is a large team with 21 members strong, as we adjourn in the board room at Cape Town DEA waterfront I already felt at home. Team training went fast and it was very informative, with our team leader Leone Olivier on top of very thing. I have been reading wanderer’s letters for years and been around some of the field assistants who were at Marion before; it was a pleasure.

After team training it was time for me to go to Stellenbosch, to

meet all the people from C.I.B, and get my duty statement and some training. My first time meeting Prof. Chown and all the staff members at C.I.B was overwhelming. Thanks to Erika for the gifts and Prof for the book.

Then it was time to board on the SA Agulhas to Marion Island. People kept talking about sea sickness and they had pills, but I believed it’s all in the head; so I thought. It kicked in two days after the ship left and I felt like I could jump off the ship. But nothing a can of beer can’t fix.

Finally we arrived at Marion Island and what a beauty she is. I couldn’t believe it – “Rashawe you’re here”. We left the oceanographers on the ship and flew to the island to meet the M68 team members. The old team members welcomed us with open arms and made us feel at home. After six days at sea, I was feeling land sick, but it was time to work.

The Gogga team during take-

over comprised of CJ, Tanya, Kersti, Mashudu and myself. What a super group. Through hard times and harsh conditions we always pulled through. CJ and Mashudu were very influential in preparing me for the work ahead for the year and going on around Island was the peak of take-over. What a time we head and being in a hut for the first time was just overwhelming. Mashudu was in charge of informing me about plants and all other things such as office work; while CJ was responsible for collem-bola (spring tails) and laboratory work. Sleeping was my enemy, because when you sleep you lose and I couldn’t afford to miss even the slightest thing from Mashudu and CJ. Thank so very much guys for all the effort you put in, not forgetting Niek Gremmen for all information about identification of plants.

Holla da.

**Rashawe Kgopong**

(standing) CJ  
Scheeper, Tanya  
Haupt and Kersti  
Hickley; (green-hat  
soldiers) Mashudu  
Mashau and  
Rashawe Kgopong.  
Take-over team  
2012



# Marion Orca Awards



"Quote of the month" awarded to...Nompilo for "FINISH IT!"



"Flop of the month" awarded to Clokes (Clokes, "My next meal").



"Darwin award of the month" awarded to...guess who? Clokes, "By the time I've walked to the next swinging door, I've forgotten which way it goes and I stand there trying to make it open."



"Meal of the month" awarded as a tie to Jason (wraps), Clokes (roast & potatoes) and Rory (pizza).



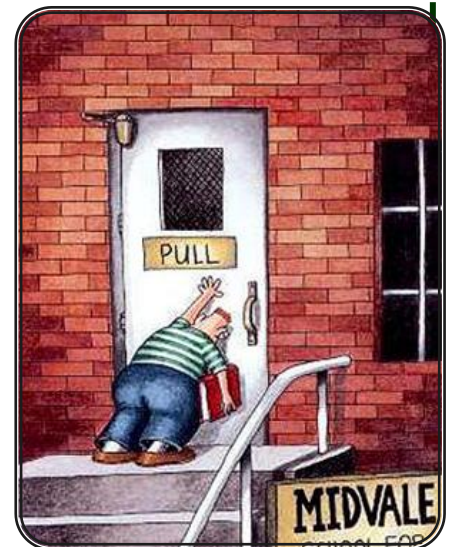
"Hut recipe of the month" awarded to Nico for his Hut-Ciabatta bread.



"Dessert of the month" awarded to Christelle (chocolate chip biscuits).



Photo of the month to Ben Dilley (shown below).



Ben Dilley



# Seal's breath

## Sealers news

So, here we are. A set of four fresh sealers, waiting in great anticipation for the infamous "breeding season" to arrive.

For those at home who are not familiar with the mammal program on the island, here follows a brief introduction.

Marion is a major breeding site for three species of seals which roam the Southern Ocean. The surprisingly dog-like Antarctic fur seals (about 5800 on the island) and Sub-

Antarctic fur seals (about 150 000 on the Prince Edwards) breed on the island's beaches.

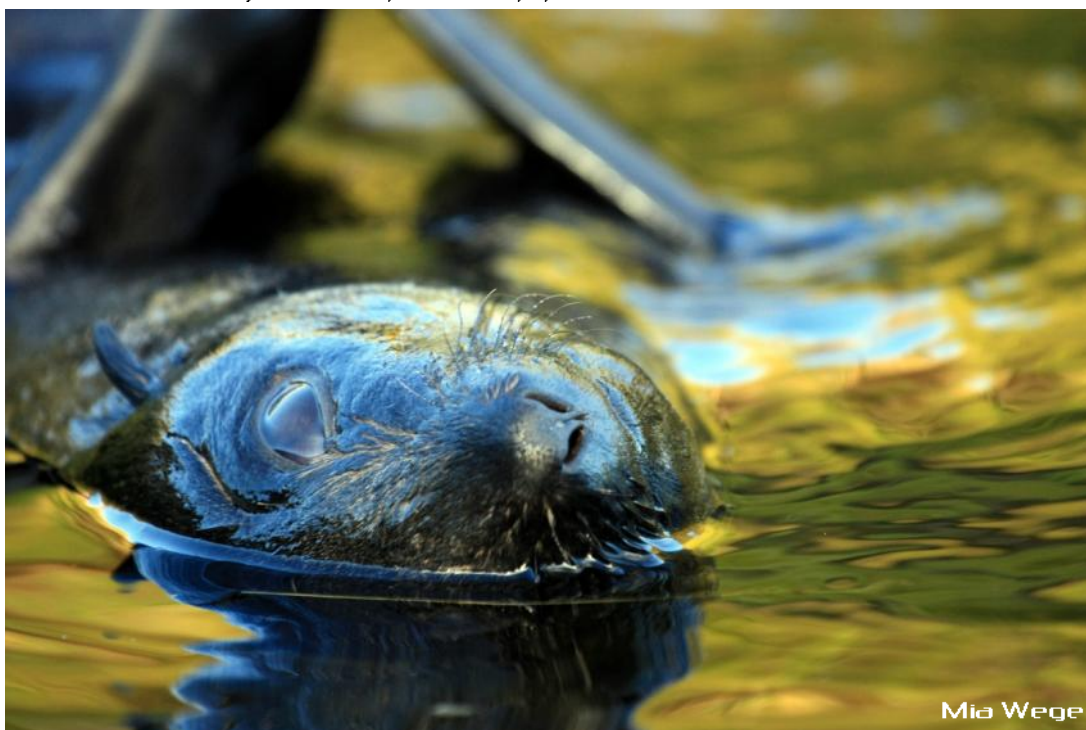
The mighty Southern Elephant Seal also breeds and rests on Marion—this is the flagship species of the Marion Island Marine Mammal program and the majority of the sealers' time is spent working with these massive animals.

During the breeding season in summertime, every single elephant seal pup that is born on

the island gets a unique set of tags. About 500 pups wean on the island every year. Marion seals have been tagged since 1983 and all these animals return to the island to rest and breed, where we wait for them on the beaches to record their every move. During the year we will try to keep you informed of what's cooking with the Marion seals.

Sealater!

Wiam Haddad



Mia Wege



John Lucas

(top) Tropicalis Fur Seal relaxing after a long day's playing.

(bottom) Mia and John deploying a device on an Elephant Seal

# What-the-weather!

## TEMPERATURE

The average daily maximum temperature for May 2012 was higher than that recorded for May 2010 and May 2009, but below what of May 2011. The temperature has dropped from the balmy 10.3°C average maximum of April 2012 and we can expect a further drop in June, if the recorded average maximum of June 2011 (5.8°C) is any indication!

In May 2012 we had only 4 days that the minimum temperature dropped below 0°C and we had a few very warm days in the 5°C – 7°C range. On average, it appears that May 2012 was warmer than the months of May in 2011, 2010 and 2009. The average minimum temperature during May 2012 was below that recorded for April 2012 and it'll keep getting colder in June.

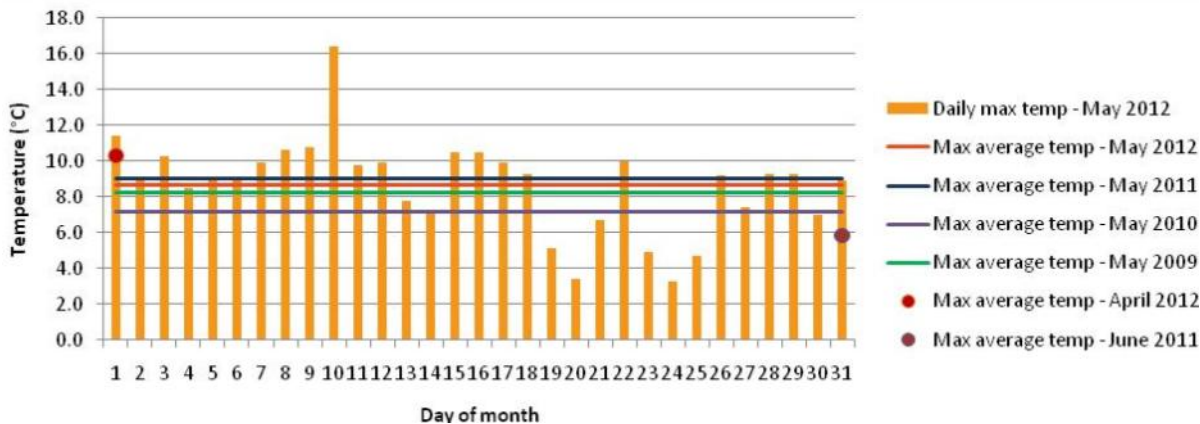
## SUNSHINE

On average, the daily sunshine during May 2012 was 2 hours 55 minutes out of a possible (average) 9 hours and 20 minutes. This is less than what was recorded for April 2012, at 3 hours 40 minutes. It seems the sunniest May in recent history was recorded in 2011 – lucky M68; otherwise May 2012 average daily sunshine was on trend. In effect we experienced 7 completely overcast days during May 2012.

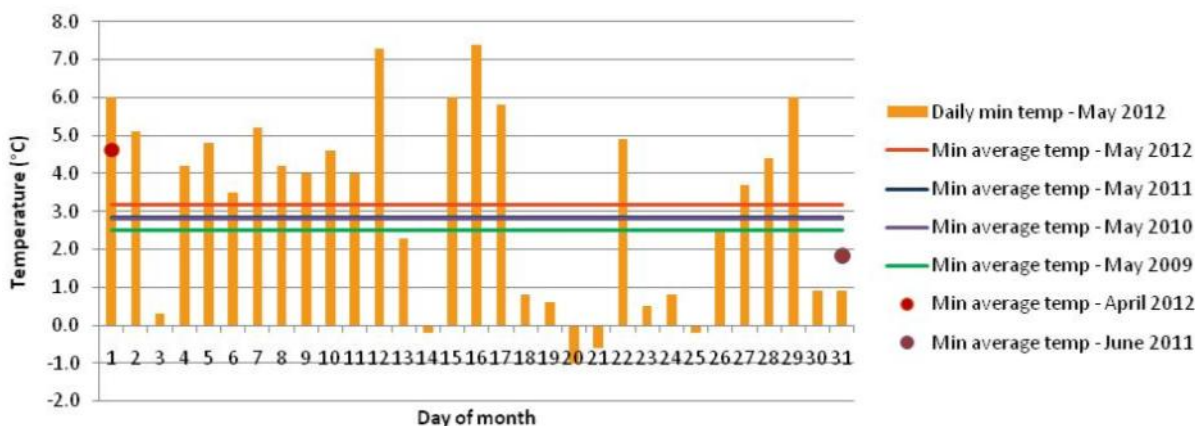
June promises even fewer sunshine hours, with an average daily sunshine of 1 hour 50 minutes recorded during 2011. We have definitely also noticed the shortening day-light hours as we go into winter, with almost an hour less light everyday we're pulling the blinds down earlier and earlier every day. Mid-winter will be on 21 June, when we will experience our shortest day at 8 hours 31 minutes (Cape Town: 9 hours 53 minutes, Pretoria: 10 hours 32 minutes).

## PRECIPITATION

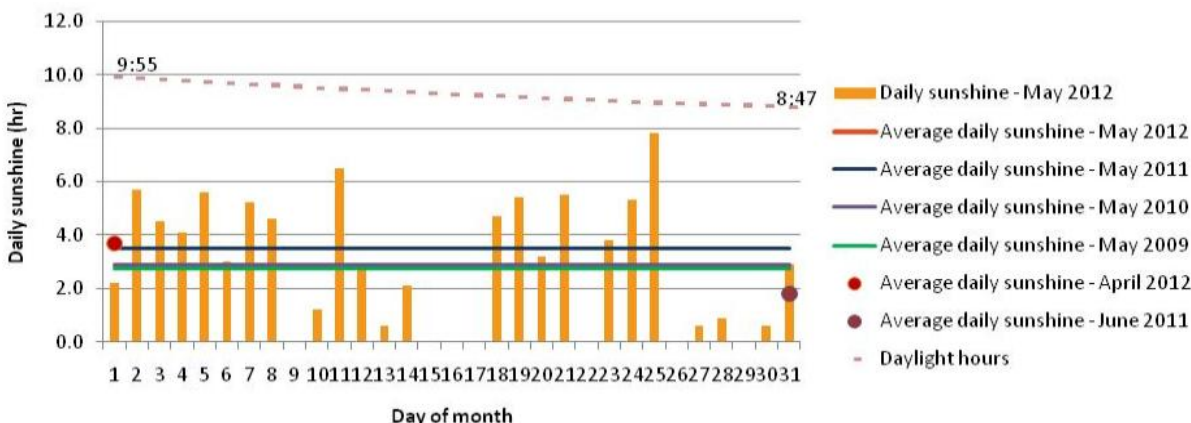
May 2012 has been a particularly wet month as compared to Mays in the recent past (2009 – 2011. May 2012 recorded more precipitation than April 2012, whereas in the previous 3 years, May has had less rain than April of the same year.



**Figure 1:** Daily maximum temperatures in May 2012, daily maximum in May 2012 (8.7°C), May 2011 (9.0°C), May 2010 (7.1°C) and May 2009 (8.2°C); average daily maximum in April 2012 (10.3°C) and June 2011 (5.8°C).



**Figure 2:** Daily minimum temperatures in May 2012, average daily minimum in May 2012 (3.2°C), May 2011 (2.8°C), May 2010 (2.8°C) and May 2009 (2.5°C); average daily minimum in April 2012 (4.6°C) and June 2011 (1.8°C).



**Figure 3:** Daily sunshine hours in May 2012, e average daily sunshine in May 2012 (2.9 hrs), May 2011 (3.5 hrs), May 2010 (2.9 hrs) and May 2009 (2.8 hrs); average daily sunshine in April 2012 (3.7 hrs) and June 2011 (1.8 hrs).

Continued on next page...



## WIND

During May 2012, it was only wind-still for 3 hours during the whole month, otherwise the wind pre-dominated from the WNW and was most often in excess of 40 km/hr. The wind blew roughly from the south for about 90 hours and was particularly cold. The highest gust speed reached during the month

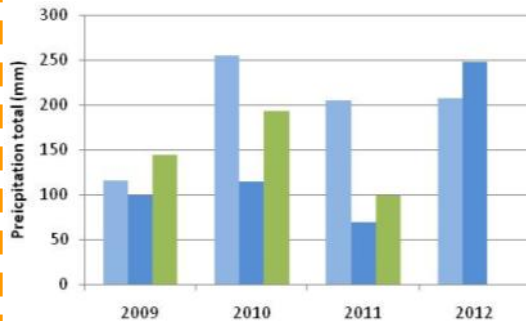


Figure 5: Monthly precipitation 2009–2012 (April–June)

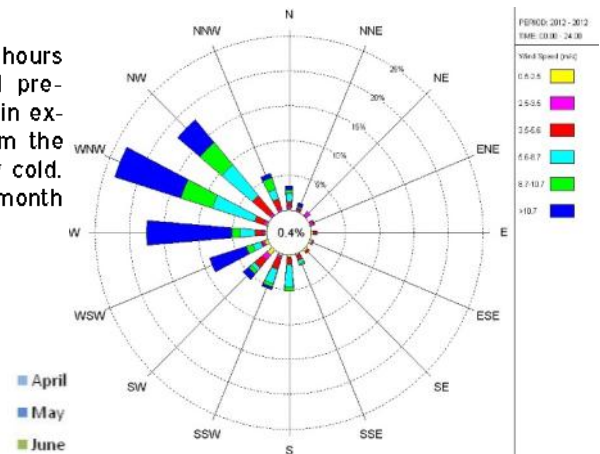


Figure 4: Windrose for May 2012 was a whopping 151 kph.

Christelle van Vuuren

Cloud of the month—Christelle van Vuuren



Christelle van Vuuren



(top) Salvador Dali and the Puss-in-Boots put in a surprise appearance for Mia and Nico's birthday party.

(right) Celebs hang-out at Club Jax, celebrating "Hawaiian Night".

## Celebrity spotting!!!





Get to  
know the  
team.

## Interviews

This section will provide interviews with a few of the team members every month. This month we have introductions made to Yanga Sapepa (Base Engineer) and Tshepo Tawane (Senior Met Officer), as the first two birthday's on the team.



### YANGA SAPEPA

**Q: What is your name, age and do you have a nickname?**

A: My name is Yanga Sapepa. I am 31 years old. My nickname is Y.

**Q: What were your reasons for coming to Marion Island?**

A: Legacy.

**Q: What were you doing before coming to Marion?**

A: I worked as an Electrical Engineer.

**Q: Where do you come from**

A: South Africa, the world.

**Q: Tell us about your family**

A: I have two siblings; actually 6 Billion brothers and sisters.

**Q: What type of movies do you enjoy**

A: I love documentaries.

**Q: What music do you listen to?**

A: The mood and occasion dictate what genre I listen to, but I prefer Classical Music (baroque to modern).

**Q: What has been your greatest achievement in life so far?**

A: It is helping others.

**Q: What has been your biggest challenge coming to the Island?**

A: Trying to understand others and getting others to understand me.

**Q: What are your plans after Marion Island**

A: My plan is to bring about World Peace and Prosperity and Common-Wealth amongst all nations of the world, and to change lives for good at an individual level. Remember, until the power of love overcomes the love of power the world and humanity will continue to be what they are.

### TSHEPO TAWANE

**Q: What is your name, age and do you have a nickname?**

A: Tshepo Tawane, age 27, a.k.a TauTona.

**Q: What were your reasons for coming to Marion Island?**

A: Gain more knowledge and experience meteorologically and to be more hands on with the systems I am helping people with back in SA.

**Q: What were you doing before coming to Marion?**

A: Working for SAWS as a Network Administrator.

**Q: Where do you come from**

A: I'm from Rustenburg but work and live in PTA.

**Q: Tell us about your family**

A: I'm from a family of 5 My Dad, Mom and my two sisters.

**Q: What type of movies do you enjoy**

A: Suspense and romantic comedy.

**Q: What music do you listen to?**

A: Anything that sounds nice to my ears.

**Q: What has been your greatest achievement in life so far?**

A: Being able to sustain my job for 4years and still am counting.

**Q: What has been your biggest challenge coming to the Island?**

A: Leaving my fiancé behind.

**Q: What are your plans after Marion Island**

A: Go on with my Job at the Weather Service and study more to my field of work.



# The almond croissant

## Birders news

It's take-over April 2012 and we are on our round island trip to count Blue Petrel burrows. Three spoons hot chocolate, two milo, one coffee and 'chh-re-moara' was Maelle's standard morning beverage order in the huts. A little complicated for Peter's taste, but he obliged every time. Ben, Delia and Mike persuaded Maelle to repeat her French pronunciation of 'cremora' just one more time to roars of laughter.

It has been 30 years since Mike, Marion Expedition 36, was over-wintering on the island. In those days, expedition members had to walk around the island with an insanely heavy tent and wooden poles, a hefty radio and all the canned food they could carry! It didn't take much to twist Mike's arm into taking several weeks off work in Grahams-town for an epic return to the island.

Back then, before feral cats were eradicated from Marion Island, petrels that breed in burrows were in serious danger of having their chicks eaten by cats. These days we suspect that invasive mice may be doing similar damage to birds that breed on the island, and therefore a comparative study is what we are planning.

He showed us all sorts of cool tricks for sniffing out the differ-

ent species in the ground, a skill that is little used in his usual work, which incidentally includes having a coffee and an almond croissant at his desk.

So to Mike, the burrowing petrel legend, thanks so much for getting us all psyched up for our year ahead!

**Ben Dilley and Delia Davies**



(top) Remote camera capture of Wandering Albatross parents returning to their chick (picture by Delia Davies);

(bottom) Wandering albatross chick, contemplating its future. (picture by Ben Dilley)





# Beard reporting

A beard is like a good wine, it only gets better with time.

Marion Island has two claims to fame: world class research and world class BEARDS. As we ourselves attempt to follow in the bearded footsteps of mightier men who came before us, we will take you along on our journey in making our own hairy history.

Upon arrival on the island, we as the clean shaven were faced with a major dilemma. Very much the same dilemma as any man faces when he encounters a beautiful young lady- does one focus on the eyes or other distracting assets? We could not help our gaze wondering to voluptuous locks draped over the collars and chests of the brave men who managed to survive a year on Marion!

Over the following months we will discuss and describe the various beards developing on the island. Using criteria such as density, shaggyiness, absorption, versatility, colour tones, sheen, tensile strength, volume and length (to name but a few) we will guide you

in our progress towards our hairy happiness. We are now but past our second itching stage, but fear not- we feel our

strength increasing with every millimetre!

**Wiam Haddad and Fred Fourie**



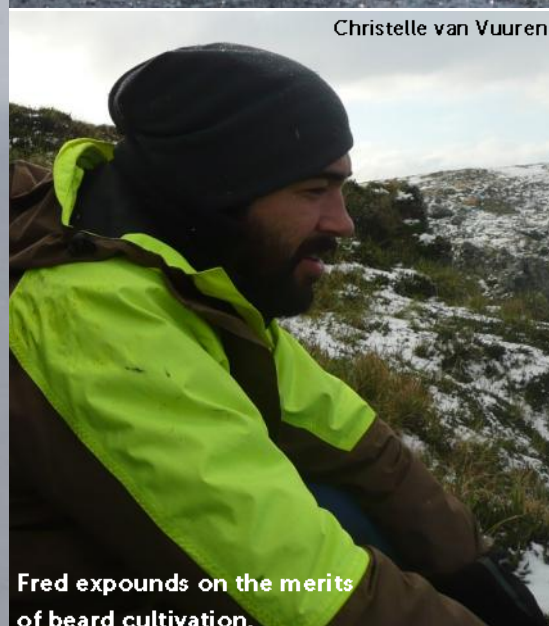
**Wiam showing the vitality that comes with a beard.**

Jason Nel



**Rory cries about his handicap.**

Fred Fourie



**Christelle van Vuuren**

**Fred expounds on the merits of beard cultivation.**



# Birthdays and special occasions

(top-left&right) Inno & Jax' birthday bash.

(mid-right) Nico dressed for Nompilo's birthday party.

(below) Early St. Patrick's day for Mia and Nico's birthday party.



(clockwise) Tshepo beware the cake-smearer at his birthday bash; Nompilo dressed for a showdown; looking cool at Mafia party; Tshepo smiles a mile at Mia and Nico's; Jason the water-world cowboy at Nompilo's birthday; Mornay jams some tunes.





# Gallery

(top left)  
Team musical performance at the take-over function .



Tshepo Tawane

(middle left)  
The Kamov flies by in a last farewell for the year.



Ben Dilley



Tshepo Tawane

(bottom left) Team picture at Nompilo's birthday—a beach party theme .



Wiam Haddad



Jason Nel



Jason Nel

# In paradise again

For me Marion Island is a paradise indeed; it feels good to be back; this time not with the crew but working on seabird research which is very close to my heart. So far so good; everyone seems to be positive & excited to be here. This time my eyes will be fixed on all penguin species here, which are: King; Macaroni; Rockhopper and—my favorite— the Gentoo penguins.

For me settling in here was very easy because this is my third expedition so I knew what was expected of me. Adapting to the weather was not a problem either. The biggest challenge ahead is to keep the spirit of unity, which I believe we going will do. The weather is one of the biggest challenges especial for researchers; but we'll never allow weather to stand in our way. The job has to be done!!!

As a birder; my job has began already with

Great Winged Petrel monitoring and Gentoo penguins. Gentoo penguins have arrived on the island for breeding am I am looking very close to their response towards this breeding season. I am wishing them a very successful breeding season

Till next time.

Innocent Mthembu (Birder)



## al-Qaeda on Marion

al-Qaeda, the global militant group, has apparently extended its network to Marion Island. On the 4th of June 2012, a ransom note was found pinned to the dining hall notice board. Uncharacteristically, the ransom did not make demands for the release of political prisoners or make threats about the downfall of the capitalist powers, but demanded sweets and beer, for the exchange of a hostage, a Mr Nico Lübcker, who had been overwhelmed and abducted.

There followed a tense stand-off as Leonie, the team leader, was sent to negotiate and complied with their demands of sweets and beer (a personal contribution). The exchange was made in the central hub, the terrorists manhandling Mr Lübcker through the passages.

It is suspected that they had outside aid who was responsible for the ransom note and transport of the hostage.

The terrorists were hooded during the hostage-sweets transaction and could not be identified.

However, footage was later discovered revealing their faces. This evidence is being processed by the M-CIA for clues as to their identity.

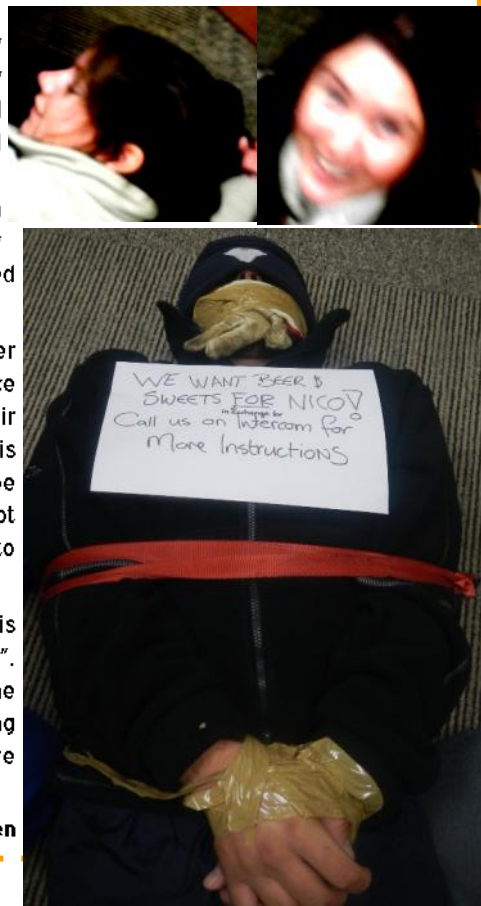
After the hand-over a local mob, displeased by the lack of intervention by the authorities, captured the two terrorists and locked them in Office 1. The terrorists, now in a tight spot, made angry appeals to someone named "Coco" on the intercom.

The terrorists were later freed, but escaped justice and disappeared with their bounty into the mists. It is expected that they will be apprehended quickly, not having anywhere much to go.

Mr Lübcker described his experiences as "harrowing". He could only assist the authorities in confirming that the terrorists were both female and "giggly".

Christelle van Vuuren

(below) "Have you seen these terrorists?"; bottom) Nico, victim of a dangerous plot to distract authority and get more sweets and beer.





# Mememes from the editor...

Having spent just over a full month on Marion Island now, I have started to feel a real sense of belonging and also of possession. But it occurs to me that this is cyclical, it happens each year with each team—almost as if Marion Island “happens” to the people that visit and overwinter here. Even the highlights and emotions portrayed in this newsletter of ours, is repeated in some form or another from year to year. So in that sense, the term “meme” as I understand it,

is probably the right one to use, because they don’t really originate from me, but I feel rather that they emanate from the Island and fill my mind, from which we transmit them to family and friends.

So not to get too philosophical, suffice it to say that this is an infectious place—a tremendous experience so far and we’re all looking forward to all the experiences to come. The real challenge is actually to formulate these experiences into

packages that we can share with you at home.

The quiet sense of community (although often it is not so quiet...) that has developed between the team members and the happy banter that fills the gaps in the work most days, has been wonderful and I’m so glad to be a part of it.

That’s us for this month, folks. Catch us again next month.

Marion, Out.

**Christelle van Vuuren**

**"If you can meet with triumph and disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same"**

**Rudyard Kipling**

**We would like to thank our kind sponsors.**

