

WANDERER

Marion Island newsletter
July 2015



Meet Sherwin Hirallal

100 days celebration

Selso spotted on Marion!

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A few words from the editor



Hi all,

My name is Tegan and I am the new editor of the Wanderer. As always this month's edition was a massive team effort and I would like to thank all my team members that made a contribution! I hope you enjoy it!

FROM THE TEAM LEADERS OFFICE:

Hello my dear friends,

The 22nd of July marked an important turn of events for us as we have made the 100th day on the Island possible with no denial that teamwork and unity is a seed to the tree of success.

July is an important month as we celebrate an icon, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, whom made history. He changed the way the world will teach younger generation in years to come. His story was one that the world has embed in their minds as a successful learning curve. He taught us that the sky is the limit.

We had a few birthdays on the island starting with Pierre, Stefan and ending with Moses and Nkoane whom shared a birthday. Pictures tell many tales, they will show you how these events were enjoyed and the cakes that suit the person were baked to perfection by Janine or cupcakes by Janine.

We have adopted a sporting style amongst our team. This is good food for the heart and pre-empted our sports day event to commemorate the 100th day spent on the island. Stefan and Janine provided the main meal which was wors rolls followed by everyone pitching in and helping out to make the event a remarkable and memorable one.

I wish all a happy belated birthday (lekker verjaars) if you have shared your birthday with us in July and hope you had a whale of a time.

Signing off until next time

Sherwin

P.S. Look out for our yummy recipes that will work no matter where you are in the Antarctic.



Meet Sherwin Hiralall

Team leader and Medic

Tell us a bit about yourself?

"I have a sports side to myself and a car fanatic. I opted for the outdoors with fast cars leading to a field of emergency medicine and rescue. That soon changed as I challenged other areas of my practice like off-shore and remote site paramedical work but then I got side tracked to Marion.....and so life goes on... "

What are your responsibilities on the island?

"I have secured the team leaders position but with that came my medical responsibility and to oversee the management of the food store. All of these responsibilities came with one common aim and that was to make sure that the M72 team is fit, happy and safe in all regards until they step off the ship in Cape Town."

What lead to the decision to apply for the expedition?

"When one is bitten by the travel and adventurous bug, I guess that feeling never leaves. As a team of remote site medics we love challenges in harsh and austere environments and the profile of Marion Island fitted that part of a challenge"

As team leader what has been your greatest challenge so far?

"Learning to understand different cultures, backgrounds and methods has challenged me in several ways but I'm getting there....and of course the wonderful weather at Marion with buckets of rain that fall without warning....then getting 2 feet stuck in a mire?"

What do you do to pass time on the island?

"I have a medical programme to finish which keeps me in check with my profession...but I have just acquired a new talent before I left home which I am now trained by the M72 resident DJ, mixing not drinks but music tracks"

What do you miss most about home?

"The area I live in has many trees that I cycle through, so I guess it's the sight of a tree or the smell of fresh flowers that makes my nose tingle."

What made you decide to go into the field of medicine?

"I wanted to change the way that the world thought about medical help and thought that I could bring the help that people needed to them instead of they going to get help. So a bit of an idealist thought but I think I try my best!"

What has been your experience of the island so far?

"One word "Tremendously fascinating" Okay more words that one could imagine. This is a place that should be on one's bucket list to visit!"

Do you have any hobbies or interests other than the work you do?

"I actually have no time for much other than my training and keeping fit and ready to deploy if and when the need be."

If you could leave one piece of advice to future team leaders what would it be?

"Take advice' would be my advice because no matter how prepared you are, there is always a curve ball coming around the corner....hahaha☺"

Selso spotted on Marion!

Like us, he has come from South Africa... only difference is that he swam here...

Author and photographer: Mike Mole



Selso is a very special elephant seal with a unique story. He was found on a beach at Southbroom on the KZN coastline, South Africa in June 2013. At the time, he was less than a year old. He was in poor condition and was taken in by uShaka Seaworld and rehabilitated over a period of 6 months. Elephant seals on the South African coastline are not a common site and definitely not normal.

“Selso is a very special elephant seal with a unique story”

The reasoning behind his arrival was very puzzling. None the less, Selso became a perfect study animal for researchers in South Africa. With a satellite tag attached, a healthy Selso was released offshore of Port Elizabeth in January 2014. By June 2014, after having completed a trip down to Antarctica, he arrived on Marion Island. After a short stay on Marion, he made his way back up to South Africa, ending up on the Port Elizabeth coastline during November 2014 to moult. In February 2015, after roughly 3 months resting and moulting at Bayworld in Port Elizabeth, he was released once again. Unfortunately, his satellite tag stopped working in June this

year and his last known location was within the vicinity of Prince Edward Island.

As the sealers, we were told to keep an eye out for Selso during our weekly elephant seal census. On the 24th July, I spotted Selso on Toothpick Beach, on the northern coastline of the island, close to Repettos Hut. At first, I had no idea it was Selso. All I saw was an elephant seal with a satellite device on its head. This is not a strange thing as we have deployed a few devices on elephant seals over the past few months. However, the problem was that this specific device was not one that I had ever seen before. After a silent and stealthy crawl up to the animal, I noticed that its flipper tags were also not of Marion origin. At this stage, I was very confused. His relaxed nature soon made me realise that this was no normal elephant seal, but rather one that has been around people before. Selso was on Marion Island, looking very healthy and content with life. Unfortunately, he did not stick around long, the following day to the disappointment of a number of M72 members he was no longer around. Where he has gone is unknown but hopefully we will see him again on Marion sometime soon, or maybe you will see him on South Africa's coastline again. You never know.





The Wandering Albatross

*Author and photography:
Stefan Schoombie*

The wandering albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) is most definitely the darling of Marion Island and standing in front of one of these birds only one word comes close to describing them, majestic! With their wingspan reaching up to 3.5 meters they truly look like Boeings in the sky.

“Unfortunately they can’t take passengers”

They are similar to Boeings in more than one way as they also need a “runway” to take off and can cover the distance of a Boeing flight as these birds have been tracked going right around the Southern Ocean when not breeding. Unfortunately they can’t take passengers.



Wandering albatross

Their breeding period is just over one year going from egg to flying juvenile within this time.

Wandering albatrosses have been monitored on Marion Island since the 1980s and this is a major part of our (me and my wife Janine) work here as Fitz birders.

“monitored on Marion Island since the 1980s”

Marion Island, together with the neighbouring Prince Edward Island, is an extremely important site for wandering albatrosses as it provides breeding grounds for close to 45% of the global breeding population of these birds. They are currently listed as vulnerable (one step above endangered) and recently doing well on Marion Island.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.acap.aq/en/acap-species/304-wandering-albatross/file>



ECOs' Round Island trips-mini working vacation

Mire...black lava...grey rocks...climb up the scoria...go down...birds here... seals there, an adventure like no other... a round island.

Authors and photographers: Nasipi Mtsi and Mpho Nemahunguni

Our job, as the Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) requires us to walk around the island once a month. As we journey through our monthly round islands en-route to the field huts, we monitor the known alien plant sites (part of our work scope involves alien eradication) and also look out for possible new aliens. We also assess the severity of path degradation along the established footpaths. When we arrive at the huts we check everything from the toilet, to rubble outside the hut, to possible bird strikes, to mice activity inside and outside the hut, to the state of the hut inside including the pantry and if the team members are leaving the huts in the state they should.

“breathtakingly beautiful environment”

This time allows for the mind to refresh. It's a working holiday which allows one to really take in the beauty that the island presents. We get to enjoy the simplicity of life at the huts and the serenity that one feels as soon as you step into any of the field huts, priceless moments. It's truly a privilege and an honour to be given an opportunity to work in such a breathtakingly beautiful environment.



The beginning of it all, first round island trip



Nasipi being helped out of a mire 😊



Devil's Staircase

ECOs passing Kaalkoppie



Young selfie before climbing up Devil's Staircase 3/05/2015 11:34



*Author: Stefan Schoombie
Photography: Kate Du Toit and Sherwin Hiralall*

We looked back in time and suddenly realised we have actually been here for 100 days! It feels like yesterday that we arrived on the red taxi (SA Agulhas II) into this wilderness, some not knowing what to expect others excited knowing the wonders of this place.

“we have actually been here for 100 days!”

Over the past 100 days we have gotten to know each other as a team and slowly started to figure out who has buttons where that should not be pressed or who prepares the tasty food or who bakes the nicest cakes. The experience in the field can be measured by the fading colour of the waterproof clothing that shield us from the onslaught of rain that we have become accustomed to. To celebrate this milestone

decided to change things up. Instead of having an old fashioned party, we put on our tekkies and had an evening of sport. The food was simple and consisted of good old South African “boerewors” and bread rolls. The games played were volleyball, soccer and badminton. In the end volleyball stole the show with the other two sports being side dishes. Teams of 4-5 played against each other to determine who the victors were. The final was a duel of epic proportions but only one team could walk away with the hypothetical trophy and they were Boy, Marius, Mike and Nasipi (with Sherwin as substitute in the final).

“The final was a duel of epic proportions...”

As I am writing this we are already on 116 days and the 200 day mark is slowly creeping up on us where we will think of another creative way to celebrate our time here.

ISLAND STYLE FOOD

Author: Janine Versteegh

A few people at home have been wondering about our food situation here on the island. Seeing as we have no visits from the SA Agulhas II throughout the year, we have a very large food store with lots of food and drink supplies. We have three industrial sized freezers – affectionately called Tom, Dick and Harry – that contain our fresh veggies and various meats and we have good selection of fresh meat & veggies to satisfy the different eating habits of all 20 team members. In addition to the frozen food, we also have a large food store full of various canned fruits, vegetables and meats with plenty of starches such as pap, rice and pasta. We have a variety of drinks including juice concentrate, Oros, soda stream as well as some fresh juice, but we keep that for special occasions. Baking supplies are also abundant and many of the team members have become pro's at baking bread. Since bread baking is one of the highly valued skills here, we decided to share one of our bread recipes with everyone back home.

Everyone in base gets a chance to cook for the whole team. We have a rotating cooking schedule for the entire year, where a different person cooks every night with a free night on Saturdays. There are a few team favourites that have been enjoyed a few times such as pizza (courtesy of Benoit, John, Nasipi and Tegan) and hamburgers (courtesy of Stefan, Tegan and Mike). We've also had some excellent curries by Sherwin and Benoit and Kentucky style chicken by Kate, Tegan and Mpho.

Since bread baking is one of the highly valued skills here, we decided to share one of our many bread recipes with everyone back home.



TEGAN'S BREAD RECIPE

Ingredients:

| | |
|--------|----------------------------|
| 1kg | Flour (sifted) |
| 3 | eggs |
| 5ml | salts |
| 12.5ml | sugar |
| 30ml | oil |
| 30ml | margarine |
| 10g | instant dried yeast |
| 500ml | water (OR ½ milk, ½ water) |

Method:

- Add the ingredients together and fold ingredients over one another until a soft dough is formed.
- Knead the dough until firm (approximately 10 minutes).
- Put the dough in a bowl, cover and leave in a warm place to rise (approximately 30 minutes)
- When the dough has risen, roll into individual buns or bread shape and place on a well greased oven tray
- Again place in warm place to rise (approximately 30 minutes)
- Bake at 180°C for 20min or until golden brown. Baking time may vary for different roll sizes or if baked as a loaf in a bread tin.
- For a soft crust, take the bread out of the oven and brush with water while still hot .



Photo competition

This months theme: base

Alfred



Mike Mole

3rd



Stefan Schoombie



2nd



John Dickens

1st



Janine Versteegh



About the weather



Photo by Stefan Schoombie

Author: Nkoane Jack Mathabatha

The history of Marion Island dates back to 1663 when it was accidentally discovered by the Dutch ship *Maerseveen*. However, they did not land on to the island. In 1772, Frenchman Marion Du Frasné, whom the island is obviously named after, came across Marion Island and Prince Edward Island while looking for Antarctica and five days later he discovered that they were two small islands, 19km away from each other. Four years later Captain Cook saw the islands but no landing was achieved due to bad weather.

The first recorded landing on Marion Island was in 1803 by a group of sealers who found signs of earlier occupation. Well, not our sealers who do scientific research. These guys' main focus was business, elephant seal blubber for oil and I guess other stuff and fur seal pups' skin for its soft fur.

South Africa took possession of the two islands in late 1947 and early 1948 and annexed them under the command of Lieutenant-Commander John Fairburn.

The first expedition to Marion Island was a meteorological team led by Allan B. Crawford who was also part of the first expedition which included meteorology to Gough Island. Meteorologists have always been part of the expedition teams since then. As such, Marion Island has a long history of weather observation and climate data collection used in research to better understand weather and for predictions/forecasts for saving lives and property.

Marion Island is generally windy, wet, cold and mostly cloudy with only about 29% sunshine per year. Being in the “roaring forties” latitudes, Marion Island is characterized by gale force winds. Wind chill makes it really cold which is why we need to

About the weather

wear or carry protective gear when we venture out into the field. Some of the people who have over-wintered or visited the island for a takeover period over the years say you can get all four seasons in one day.

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The average annual temperature is about 5°C with mean maximum and minimum of 8.1°C and 2.8°C respectively. However, temperatures as low as -4°C to -6°C occur frequently throughout the year. Temperatures drop below 0°C during the winter months resulting in frozen precipitation, snow, snow pellets and occasional ice pellets while apparent temperatures drop even lower, around -10°C

with the ground feeling frozen beneath our gum boots and puddles of water completely frozen, even the sides of the lakes which are abundant here on Marion Island.

The annual rainfall is estimated to be ± 2 500 mm, spread fairly evenly throughout the year unlike Gough Island where a week may pass once or twice without rain in summer or Cape Town with more rainfall in winter than in summer or some provinces more inland with more rainfall in summer and dry in winter. This is my third expedition here on Marion Island and I don't remember a full week without rain or any form of precipitation and that I find fascinating and I think makes Marion one of the perfect places to study the weather.

We are hoping to share more about Marion weather during this expedition, pictures included.

For more information:

www.sanap.ac.za

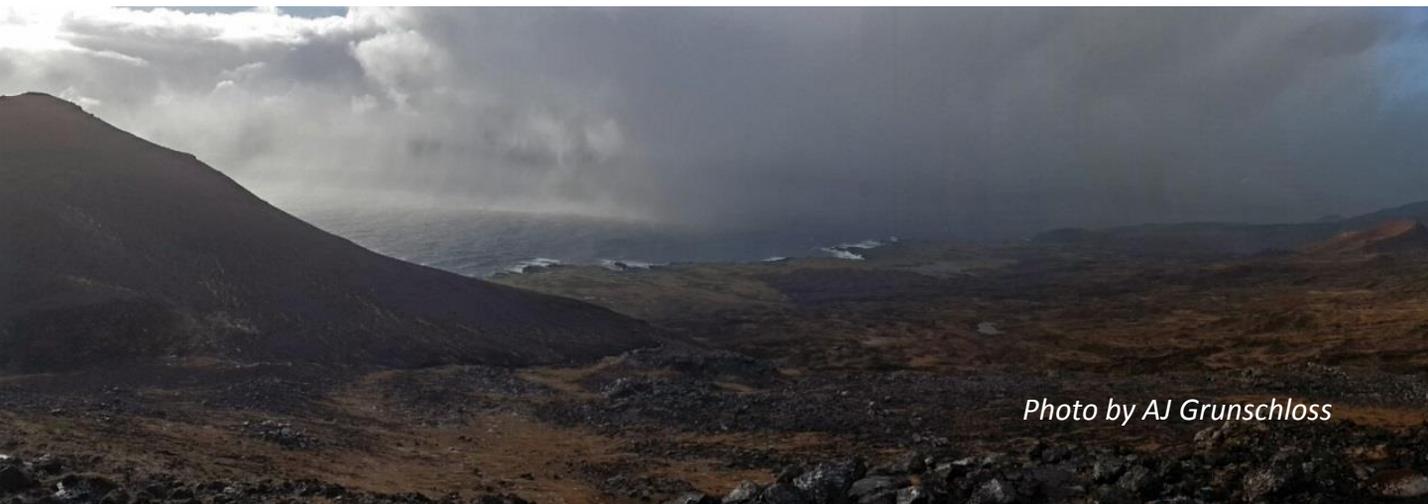


Photo by AJ Grunschloss

PHOTO CORNER



By Pierre Joubert

By Mike Mole





By Pierre Joubert

By Stefan Schoombie





By John Dickens

By Pierre Joubert





By John Dickens





Sealer's trying to find Selso.. And a pretty view



Jack and Moses's Birthday



Pierre's cake



Stefan's birthday



Pierre's birthday



Old sealer shelter



Crane Point



Dinner time



Stefan's birthday



Killer ob



July pup weigh team



Mechanic in the snow



Kildalkey