

# Gough Bunting: G61

## *April 2016*

### **A Welcome from the Team Leader:**

Greetings to all our readers!

It is amazing just how time flies! One moment we're wrapping up take over and the next we're wrapping up Christmas presents. Yes that is just how quick things happen when you are an islander. Gough Island has been great so far with different natural spectacles unfolding right in front of our eyes. We've seen the Dusky dolphins around for some time and we've also observed some of the most amazing weather displays on the island. Time has really flown and now we are looking forward to celebrating Easter on Gough.

It has been a really great experience personally to be on this island which many wish to see but don't really have the opportunity to, so one has to make the best of one's stay here as best as possible. The field team continues to conduct their work and research on the island and will therefore provide our readers with some of the best pictures from the island, I know photography is also one of the many hobbies the team prides itself with so get ready to be taken on a trip of your lifetime through pictures. The base based team members will also share their experiences so far on the island.

Lastly from the team leader's office I hope everyone enjoys this issue of the Gough Bunting, it is the second issue of our stay here as we decided to release our issues on a quarterly basis.

### **Lehlohonolo Rakoteli—Team Leader**



### **In this edition:**

**Not fat no gain.**

**Salute and goodbye to fellow islander**

**Wildlife Round-up**

**Christmas on Gough**

**Visitors from Tristan**

**Tuesday Talks**



*Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross chick, Chris Taylor*

# No Fat, No Gain - It's that simple!

*By Prince Mlongwana*



**EXERCISE?**  
i thought you said  
"Extra Fries"

We all have gone through it before, It's January and the festive season is over, you decide to hit the bathroom scale believe it or not it gives you the results of all those delicious festivity meal you were having and you dawn on you that weight doesn't wait.

Well, here is another way of looking at it for an islander. The elephant seal pups pick up weight at a tremendous speed within a few weeks. This stored blubber is what will keep it warm whilst in cold climates and so it acts as a blanket.

Mostly, once a fellow islander come to such remote places especially when they are so used to the hot weather back at home, their bodies automatically store up some fat which keeps them warm in turn once they get accustomed to the weather condition they tend to lose all the jackets and turn to the shorts. So your body is very good at adapting without asking your permission for it. On the island side we are pretty much ok with the stored reserve, however the same cannot be said with our folks back at home.



*Looks familiar? Damn that festive food; don't worry you have a year to work at it until the next festive.*

# Salute and Goodbye of a fellow Islander:

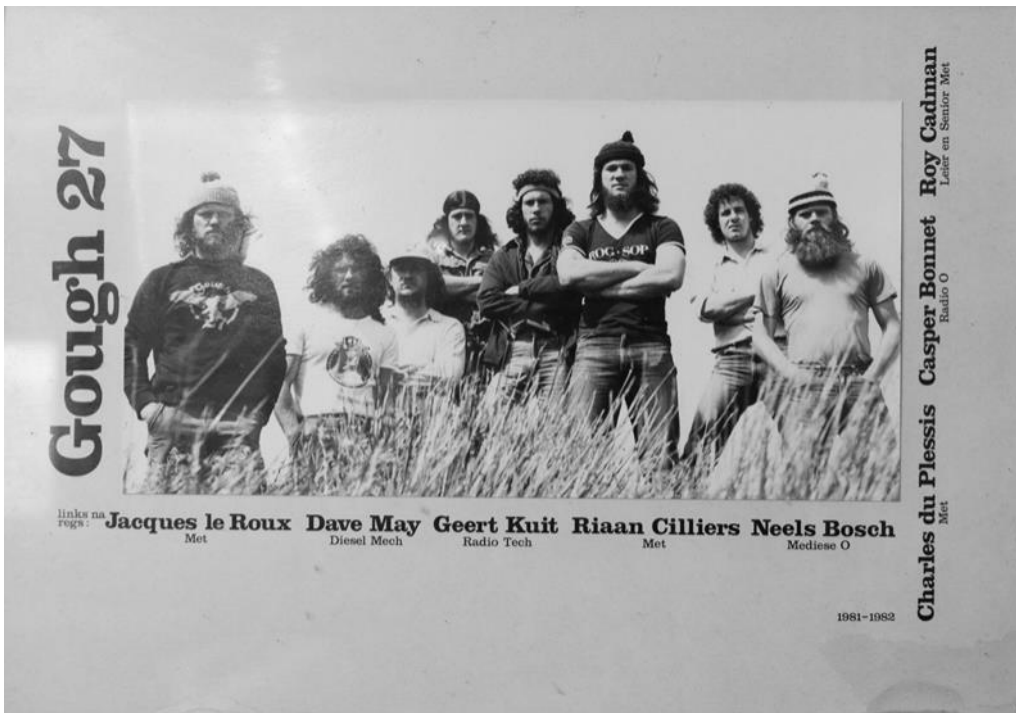
## By Josef "Joe" Klaasen

**R.I.P: Riaan Cilliers: Team Gough 27 (1981-1982 and 31 (1985-1986)**

During our take over, it was a great honour for me to be asked by the South African Weather Service to bring a great fellow colleague to his final resting place on Gough Island. Exactly one year later, on a Sunday, I finally managed to do it and we were blessed with good weather. Early that morning the Chaplin

was conducting a small service and the ashes were blessed. The SA Alghas 2 crew arrived on a speed boat, I was lowered by the crane into the boat. After few kilometers out into the South Atlantic Ocean, the proceedings were done in a respectful way.

**May his soul rest in peace, Amen.**



*Team pictures from the Gough wall of fame.*

*Riaan Cilliers was on Gough with expeditions 27 and 31*

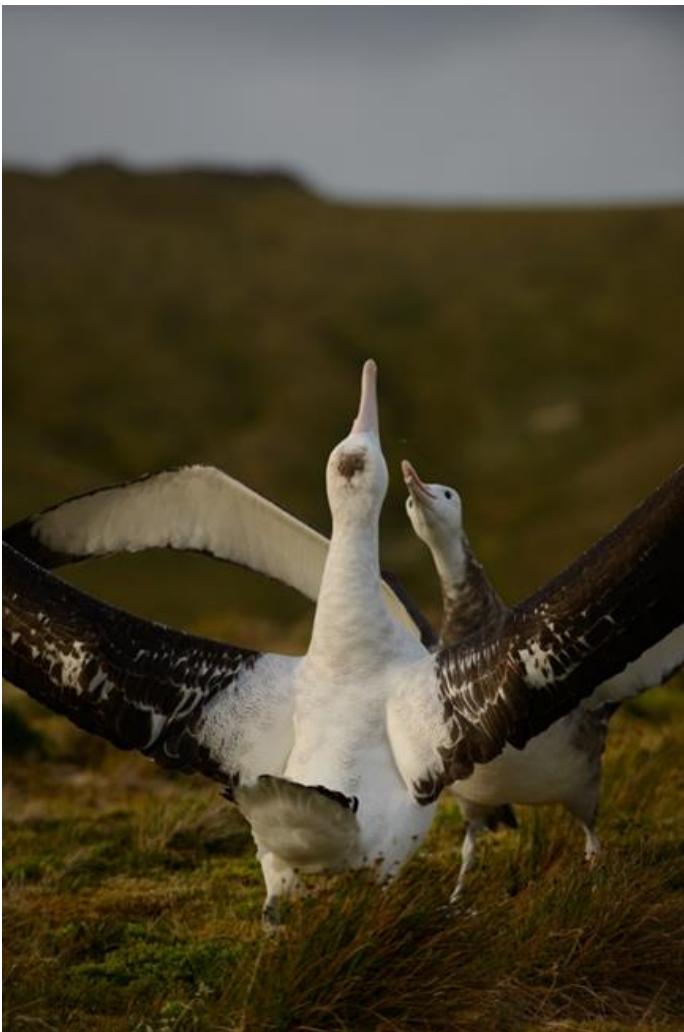


# Wildlife Round-up

*By Derren Fox, Senior Research Assistant*

Since the last Bunting was published the island has seen a huge change in the wildlife present on the island, with the last of the Tristan Albatross chicks of 2015 finally fledging and heading out to sea and this year's birds returning to lay. We've also been treated to a few visiting species, not all flying birds either, with huge pods of dolphins sighted close off-shore and King Penguin spotted on our round island trip.

Arguably the most spectacular event on the island is the return of the Tristan Albatrosses to breed. These magnificent birds (one of the largest flying birds on the planet) breed only every two years due to the length of time and effort it takes to raise a chick. The single egg that is laid takes around eleven months from laying to the bird finally fledging. That means, that at certain times of the year we have one year's chicks that are ready to leave and the next year's adults coming back and displaying to attract a mate and nest building. It's a hectic and spectacular time of year.



*A pair of Tristan Albatrosses displaying in Gonydale and a young adult female Tristan Albatross on its nest*

# Wildlife Round-up

Our other two species of albatrosses that breed on Gough (the Sooty and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses) hatched back in late November and are now growing well, but still a good few weeks away from fledging.



*A sooty and yellow-nosed albatross chick*

Many of the early breeding birds on the island have already started to leave and head off for the winter, their chicks hopefully having fledged and heading off on their first trips out to sea. Brown skua numbers have declined rapidly in the last months or so, and all our Northern Rockhopper penguin chicks have fledged, whilst at our three Southern Giant Petrel colonies there is an eerie quiet as the now smart grey chicks have finally left.

As many of the early breeding birds leave the island and the later ones grow rapidly, the island still holds lots of wildlife. Due to the islands location it also supports a wide range of wintering species, which come here to breed in colder months. As I write this, the evenings up at Gonydale are filled with the calls of Grey Petrels and Kerguelen Petrels which are only now returning to their burrows to breed.

Across the beaches on Gough (few of which we can reach by foot), Sub-Antarctic Fur Seal pups are now abundant. With their unnervingly human like cries these fantastically charismatic creatures call to their mothers for food or squabble and play fight on the shores. They have a few months yet before they get their sleek grey swimming coats, but are already venturing into the waves to frolic. Part of our work on the island is to weigh 100 of these pups each month until they leave. It's a fun but hectic job, chasing down the pups on the beach and in February Scelo and Joe gave us a much appreciated hand to get the job done, and I think had some fun too!

# Wildlife Round-up



*Chris, Derren, Scelo, Joe and Jan weighing seal pups at Tumbledown Beach in February*

Around the base in the evenings at the moment, the nights are still alive with the calls of Great shearwaters and Soft-plumaged petrels who are busy feeding rapidly growing chicks.

Several times over the last few months we've had a fantastic display of dusky dolphins just off shore, with pods of hundreds of animals leaping and summersaulting just a few hundred metres from the coast.



*Dusky Dolphins observed South of the base*



# Wildlife Round-up

Another messy day on the beach for the birders has included pre-fledging weighing of the Rockhopper adults. After their chicks fledge, the adults return to the island to moult, and during this time don't go back into the water. We catch and weighed fifty male and fifty female birds to ascertain the health of the population. Although they look almost identical, they can be sexed by taking measurements of the bill. For everyone out there going 'ooh, that must be lovely working with the lovely, cuddly penguins...' I tell you now, in good faith, all penguins are evil. All of us returned home with bites from their incredibly strong, plier-like bills and lots of bruises from the flippers, with which we were repeatedly battered, all in the name of science!

We've had very few wildlife visitors recently, but managed to see a few new species as we were given a round the island tour by the marine research folk from Tristan da Cunha. We were lucky enough to see a solitary king penguin on Long Beach, ironically gazing out towards penguin island! There were also a few Northern Giant Petrels along the east coast that same day, distinguishable by the red tips to their bills, compared to our native Southern.

Until next time, that's all from Gough and it's spectacular wildlife.

Derren Fox



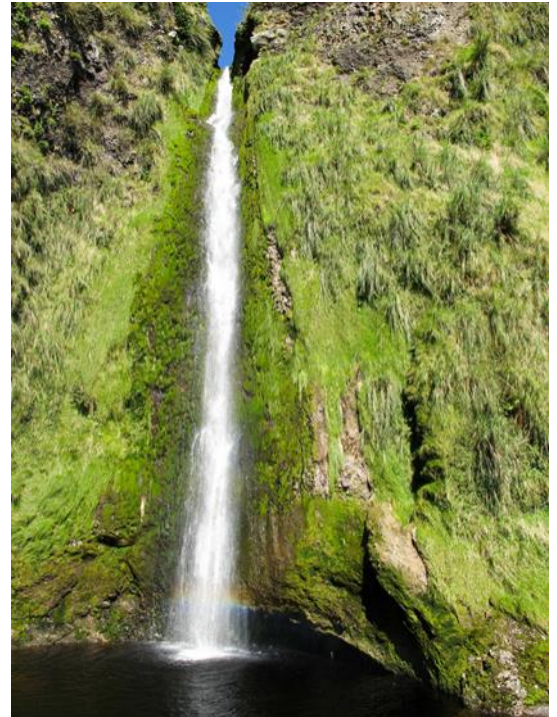
*King penguin on Long Beach, with Penguin Island in the background.*

# Visitors from Tristan

The population of Gough grew from its usual 9 to a massive 14. The base was alive with new conversation and activities.



Trevor Glass (Head of Conservation for Tristan Da Cunha Government) arriving by his favourite method of transport. The Crane.



Islanders were treated to a boat trip around the island. The Field Assistants and Alex Mithom (Administrator) spent the night at the Glen. Among the seals and various bird species including Great-winged Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Great Shearwater, Storm Petrels, Prions.



Stroll along Long Beach (above) and a chance to see some rarely visited waterfalls (top). A King Penguin was also seen



# Christmas on Gough

Christmas is a good time for everyone to get together and enjoy some good food. This was no exception on Gough.



The table was laid for the big day. (left) with presents following the feasting



Islanders arranged a Secret Santa which gave everyone the opportunity to make a gift for a fellow team member a present (in secret!). Team photo (left) and Hloni receiving a beer mug made from old rope (above and right). Other presents included a paper model of Gough Base, a Manchester United wall picture, awards for outstanding achievement, pen-knife holder, mobile phone stand and framed pictures.

# Tuesday Talks

In the beginning of the year the team came up with the initiative aimed at increasing knowledge as well as team cohesion, we have what we refer to as “The Tuesday Talks’ taking place every second Tuesday night after dinner. It is a very good initiative I must say and we have so far seen the effectiveness of the resulting discussions. I am no medical expert nor am I a qualified psychologist but from my point of view, the sessions are somehow therapeutic as they allow everyone to express their views and opinions without fear of reprisal.



*Berend starting his talk*

The talks started with **Chris presenting his Island experiences**, he is a well travelled fellow I must say. His presentation included pictures of all the Islands he has been to in the past as well as his experiences on Gough so far. We then received another presentation from **Berend with his “Online Village” presentation**. The idea behind it was to show how far technology has grown and advanced and just



*Great Shearwater featured in  
Chris’s presentation, Chris Taylor*

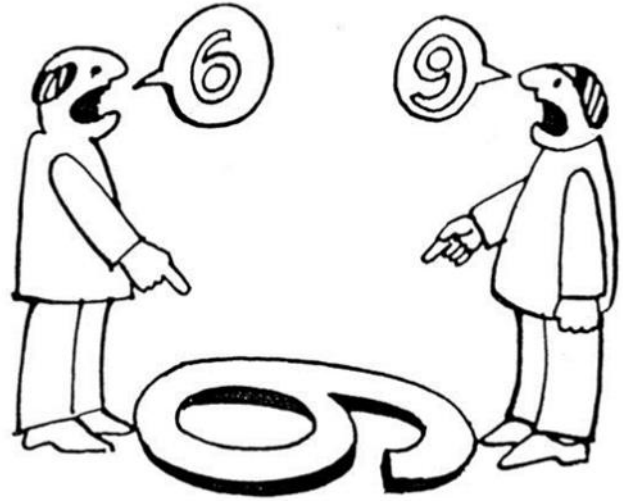
how advantageous it can be to the youth of today as it may be used to enhance learning in our communities. Coming from a small village in Limpopo where the youth have to walk long distances to access learning, his idea of bringing learning through technology to the village seems the solution to help produce more matriculates from his home village.

I had an opportunity to do my presentation too; I showed a documentary from the History Channel, “**South Africa, A Miracle Rising**”. The documentary showcases the South African history briefly before the 1994 elections and what transpired during that time. The message I aimed at depicting was that nothing beats the power of negotiations and dialogue, South Africa became what it is today through negotiations between the leaders who were committed to ensuring a peaceful and smooth transition into the new South Africa, even though they were faced with many challenges. As a team we will meet challenges but our commitment and willingness to sit around the table and discuss the ways forward will ensure that no challenge is too big for us to overcome.



# Tuesday Talks

**Prince** had his presentation last week and I must say personally I will now see things differently going forward. His was focused on “**Perception**”. He explained to us what it means, how relevant it was to his presentation and what outcomes he wanted to achieve out of his presentation. There is one drawing which caught my eye during his presentation and I think from my perspective it summed up his whole presentation. It shows two individuals standing on opposite sides of a number, one sees it as a 6 and the other sees it as a 9 and the argument continues. It just goes to show that it is not about being wrong or right, it is the perspective from which you see things that will determine the outcome of a situation at the end of the day.



The talks will continue and I trust that the guys will continue giving the support they have displayed towards them in the previous weeks. And to our readers I say lookout for the next issue, we will be summing up the last topics.

**From G61 Team Leader, till next time!!!**



*Tristan Albatross in flight over Gonydale, Chris Taylor*