

The Wanderer

DECEMBER 2018

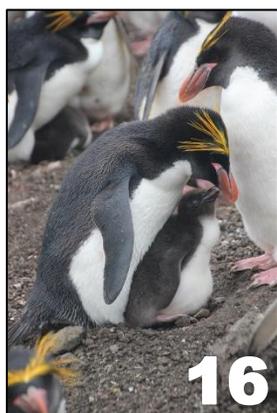
MARION ISLAND
CHRISTMAS

Sealer Diaries

GREY-HEADED
hut of the month

up in the clouds
- weather update

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COVER IMAGE:
King Penguin
Aptenodytes patagonicus
- Elsa van Ginkel



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



letter from the *editors*



December... 2018! I cannot believe we have reached the last month of the year. It feels like our time on this magnificent Island is slowly running out... and there is still so much to do, so many hills to climb and so many memories to make - but time waits for no-one. So far we have made the most of our time and the festive season was a colourful one. To all our families and friends out there – thank you for all the support and enthusiasm. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. *Carpe Diem!*

Elsa van Ginkel
Editor

What a way to end the year! This festive December on Marion has been fantastic and the memories of Christmas and the time leading up to it will stay with me forever. This was a month of celebration from beginning to end and, although work continued throughout, we managed to get into the holiday spirit quite enthusiastically.



It has definitely been tough for many of us to be away from our families and loved ones, particularly during this time. The end is in sight though; causing a host of mixed reactions. Of course everyone is missing home (and fresh food!), but Marion remains an incredible place with many experiences we have yet to live through!

James Burns
Co-Editor

Interview with...

The O&C Birders



Sean Morar

Oyena Masiko

These two islanders KNOW how to have fun and are truly well-loved members of the M75 team. They work hard, play hard and always leave room for a little bit (okay, okay...a LOT) of humour! One rarely leaves the room that they are in without a huge grin on your face. They have formed a formidable team, focussing on monitoring various sea bird / penguin colonies, but also helping other teams whenever they can. Both of them love exploring the island and always have amazing stories to tell about their travels. They are deeply passionate about the island and show a lot of compassion for the other beautiful creatures we share the island with. Keep up the good work, you two. And always keep smiling...you make us all SO happy!!!

Job description

- Liezl Pretorius

I am employed by the DEA as an Oceans and Coasts field assistant here on Marion. Largely this means that, together with Oyena, I monitor multiple ocean-going bird species and their breeding colonies throughout the year as a contribution to a long-term data set.

I am a Seabirds Research Field Assistant for the Department of Environmental Affairs under the Oceans and Coastal Research directorate.

Best part of your job

The fact that I get paid to hike and explore one of the most remote places on earth and get to observe so many different life cycles in the process.

I get to work with different species of seabirds, most of which only a few individuals in the entire world get to say they have laid eyes on.





What do you miss most?

Other than family and friends I would have to go with Pizza.

My family (this including my boyfriend) 😞



Favourite movie

- None

I actually don't have one.



Favourite food dish on the island

I would have to say that JB's homemade lasagna is a winner.

Lasagne (oh yes, I am a Garfield).



Favourite book

This depends on whatever I'm reading at the time but currently I have just finished the '100 year old man who climbed out of the window and disappeared'. Though it probably isn't my favourite, it is a good read and one I would suggest off the top of my mind.

A Grain of Wheat

Favourite animal

The Rockhopper penguins are probably my favourite as they are so small, aggressive and full of character. The killer whales are a close second though.

The Gentoo penguin. They are MAJESTIC; so elegant, clean, beautiful and have the fluffiest offspring ever!

Worst day on the island so far...

This will have to be the third day of my first Round Island, during take-over, when my feet were covered in blisters, my morale was slipping and we got lost over Azorellakop for 5 hours in the mist, ice pellets and some impressive wind... Only to arrive at Mixed Pickle and find an occupied hut. Our journey thus had to continue on to the next one.

My worst day had to be when I almost fell off a cliff at Ship's Cove (~150m drop) whilst doing the weekly Sooty albatross monitoring. Hectic day...



Best day on the island so far...

It is hard to choose one, but any day when we have spent a good amount of time working hands-on with the wildlife and the weather has been particularly good.

Yho I have had so many, I cannot commit to just one.

Favourite part of the island

The area between La Grange and Kaalkoppie is a particular favourite, as it looks like something from another world.

Ship's Cove. It's unexplainable but there is just something so peaceful about sitting at the top of Ship's and just watching the ocean, looking over at Prince Edward and thinking about nothing else except how amazing it all is.

Advice for future Marionites

Haha, it is hard to give advice to people who have no idea what they are getting themselves into... but I think the most important thing would be to never lose your sense of humor no matter how hard things might get.

This is amongst the best places you will ever be in your life. Pace yourself, take it all in - bit by bit - and trust me, you will create memories that will last a lifetime.



Sean was M75's Father Christmas...he is fun like that!!



Oyena is rarely seen without a beautiful smile on her face!

A title for a book about your year on Marion

'How to achieve anything while soaking wet'

'We are DEFINITELY going to need more wine'

Grey-headed

Hut Stop # 6

Hut of the Month: Grey-headed

- Elsa van Ginkel

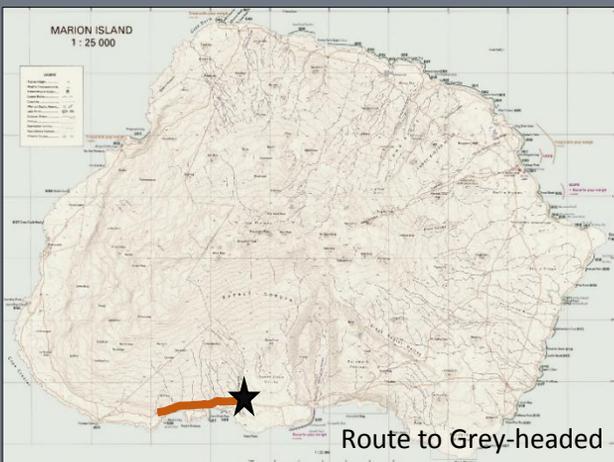
Route to Grey-headed

The walk from Rooks to Grey-headed is short and sweet - it starts with a rather steep hill but after that first climb, the terrain transforms into a sea of small fellfield hills which are quite enjoyable. You get a great view of Rooks Bay and further along the route, if you have extra time on your hands, you could head down to Rooks Peninsula.



Ladder at the foot of Grey-headed Ridge

As soon as the dark rock formations of the Santa Rosa Valley comes into view, you know that you'll soon find the stick on the edge of the Ridge which marks the way down to the hut ...



Route to Grey-headed

After *Rooks Pen*, as the Sealers like to call it, you'll find Goodhope Bay to the south – which is worth the visit on a clear day.

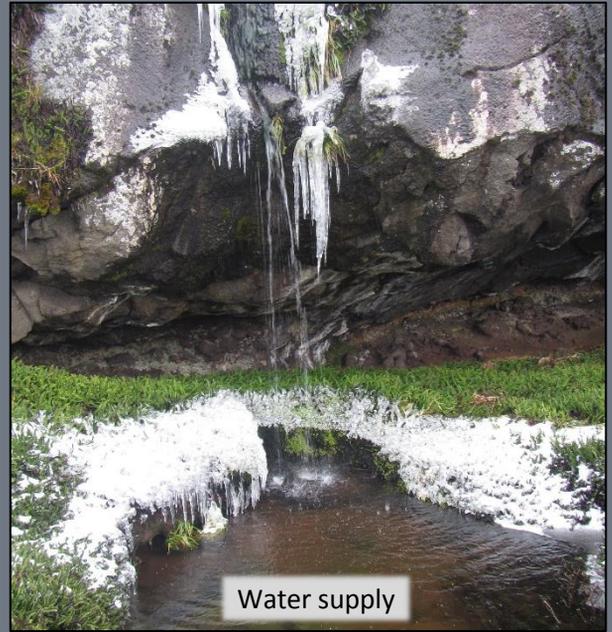


View from the Ridge

Hut of the Month: Grey-headed

The Hut

This field hut is the newest of the nine huts and it is not hard to spot amongst the black lava hills of Santa Rosa. It is a bright orange and white and you can usually see it from afar, when you are coming from Watertunnel's side. It is well-equipped and it is the only hut where you don't bump your head against the ceiling when you are sleeping on the top bunk.



Water

This is by far the best water feature. We collect our water from a small pond at the foot of the ridge which is constantly filled up by a waterfall. In comparison to the other huts, the path to this pond is tricky as you have to walk up-and-down along some of the black lava hills to get to the pond.

Hut recipe: Wraps

Ingredients:

- Half a packet of self-raising flour
- 2 tbl spoons oil
- Water

Methods:

1. Mix all ingredients together
2. Add water until dough is not sticking to bowl.
3. Roll dough out into wraps.
4. Fry wraps in pan
5. Enjoy the wraps with chilli-con con or any of your favourites.

Hut entry

13 September, 2018

Well Well Well Grey-headed
 never ceases to bring a
 challenge. IP it is all a
 non-franchised relation computer. But man
 e seen operational today's challenge... the
 I didn't expect door h thought we were
 elephant - proof second h thought we were
 open for a second h thought we were
 going to sleep in the po like so
 Anyway we made our way in like so
 and boy you do not want to know
 what we used to pee through the
 right. maybe the pots, the
 zip lock bags, our boots... You will
 never know.

Demo 11/15/18



17 11 July 2018

Santa Rosa

the walk through

like

hurry up

like

this: my lava - veg lava

leg stuck in

veg lava, walking stick

stuck in veg lava, up-down

up down

and

some

mistake

Oh! amongst my lava travels I had a
 thought... what is a whale-bird?
 what is special about the whale-bird's
 head? Is it the whale-bird's
 to the whale-bird is its relation
 head? unless it is a whale-bird's
 is which case it is a whale-bird's
 crane I am probably not the
 am probably not the

option 1:



option 2:



option 3:



option 4:



Other surprises
 seen out

Work in the area:

Winders: We have two wind stations at Grey-headed, one on the Ridge and one within the Santa Rosa Valley.

Birders: It's all in the name of the hut- The main focus is on the Grey-headed albatross colonies that are found all along the ridge. The birders monitor a specific colony all through the year and also deploy GPS devices on a some of the individuals. Night birding occurs occasionally and the O & C Birders ensure that no bird is left uncounted...

Sealers: Their main focus at Grey-headed is the sampling on the Goodhope Bay beaches.



Grey-headed Albatross

PICK OF PICS

Night dweller



Elsa van Ginkel

White-chinned Petrel
Procellaria aequinoctialis

Ahhhhh...



Liezl Pretorius

Elephant seal
Mirounga leonina

Macci's Got Style



Elsa van Ginkel

Macaroni Penguin
Eudyptes chrysolophus

Huh!?



Liezl Pretorius

Elephant seal
Mirounga leonina

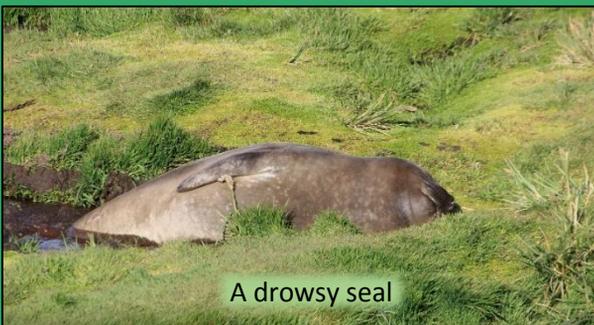
Experience the Natives

species of the month...

- Marike Louw

Callitriche antarctica & *Montia fontana*

Ah, what a lovely day it is to be strolling along the coast: sunshine in abundance, the seals too drowsy to moan at your presence, no breeze to even rustle the inflorescences of the grass. "Perhaps a perfect day to spot a killer whale," you muse happily, turning your face to the cerulean waters of the southern Indian Ocean... your gaze intent... expectant...



FSHHLOOOP!

Your leg is sucked up by the earth. But this time it's not a mire. Oh no. The smell and brown gunk covering your limb as you extract it attest to something more... gross.

"Agh! Seal wallow! Pieeww! Not again!"



Photos: Elsa van Ginkel

You have been fooled by two nifty plants that create the perfect booby-trap for the distracted field researcher working along the coast: *Callitriche antarctica* and *Montia fontana*. The former is a small plant that forms mats on very wet areas on sub-Antarctic islands, such as mucky seal wallows. *Montia fontana*, too, likes wet areas, but it can be found at higher altitudes where *C. antarctica* is absent and it also has a more global distribution.

With flowers:



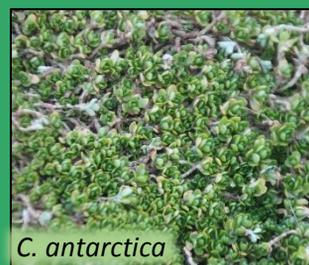
Callitriche antarctica is referred to as the Antarctic water-starwort. It sports little yellow flowers.

Montia fontana is referred to as water chickweed and has small white flowers.



Without flowers:

When these two species are without flowers, they can easily be confused...



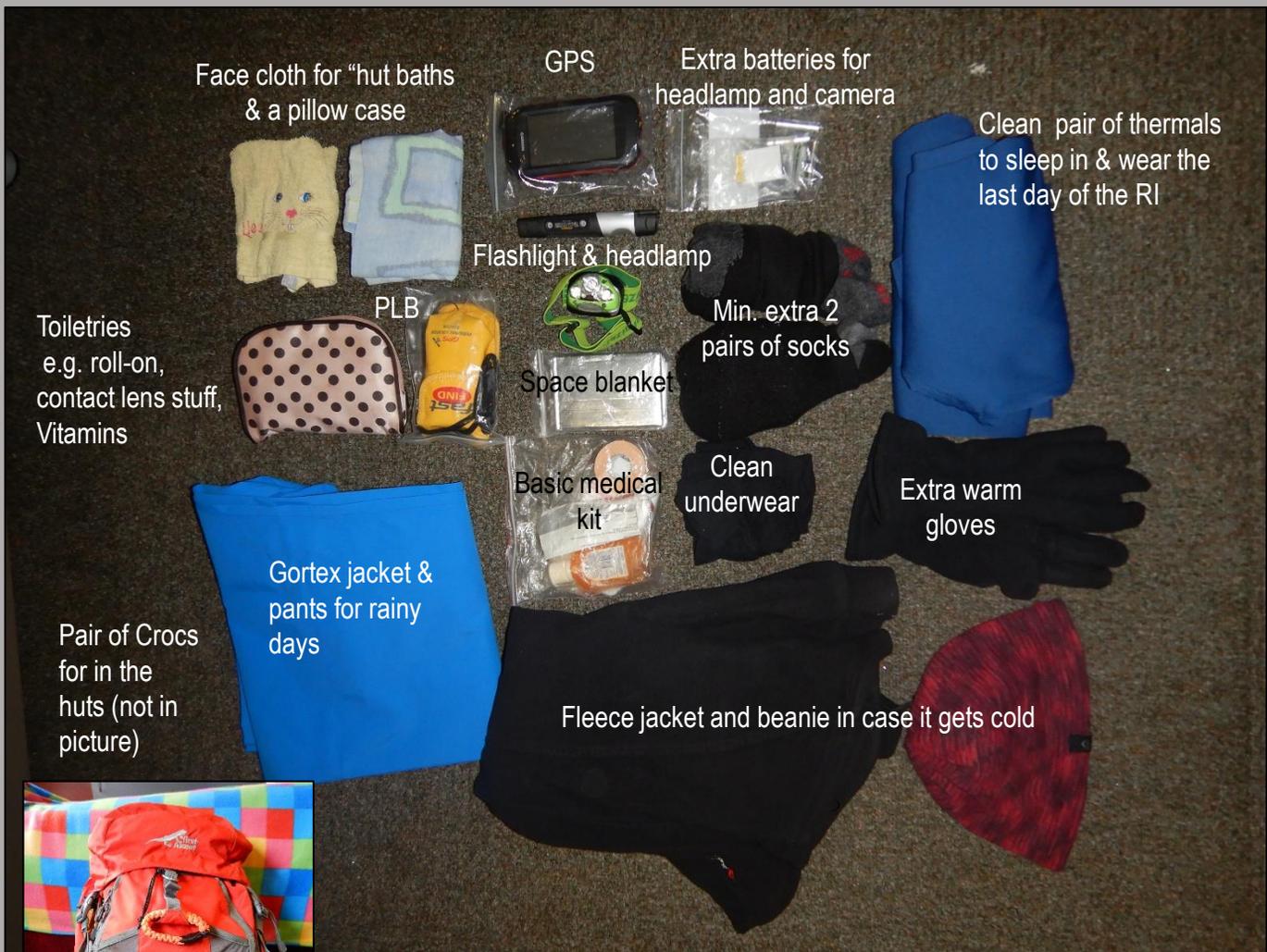
ROCKING YOUR FIELD GEAR

... we're sexy and we know it...

- Liezl Pretorius

How to pack for a Round Island

Lots of people have asked me how we pack for our round islands; i.e. when you will be spending days out in the field, sleeping at the huts while doing work around the entire island. Everyone packs differently, but here is what I do, just to give you an idea. These are my bare necessities (excluding all things work related) that I always carry with me in my trusty 55 (+10)L backpack, with some optional additions mentioned below...



Additionally, I might consider carrying books or special snacks around with me if I don't mind the extra weight...



Taste of Island life



Abu Nguna

Elsa van Ginkel

Liezl Pretorius



Liezl Pretorius

Elsa van Ginkel

Elsa van Ginkel



Elsa van Ginkel

Abu Nguna



Elsa van Ginkel

Abu Nguna

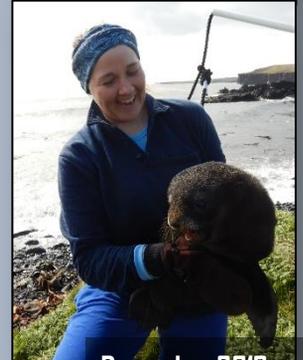
Sealer Diaries for December....

- Liezl Pretorius

End of Ellie Breeding Season Celebrations
Thanks to everyone who came to the Old
Mammal Lab to celebrate with us !



Cuteness & Overall Happiness Overload!!!
New-born gazella pup weighing at Trypot &
Watertunnel
Thank you for the help!



CHRISTMAS...

Preparations & Celebrations

We kicked off this festive season on the 3rd of December... with Christmas decorations, good company and some nice music.





...and from there on... I guess we just enjoyed every moment up until the 25th. The M75 family made this Christmas quite memorable and we even had a Secret Santa!

My favourite piece of equipment...

- Liezl Pretorius, M75 Sealer -

Being part of the sealer team, we intensively monitor the three seal species on the island, namely the Antarctic fur seal (*Arctocephalus gazelle*), the Subantarctic fur seal (*A. tropicalis*) and the Southern elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*). The elephant seals are especially close to my heart and coincidentally one of my favourite pieces of equipment is used with this species, namely the SPOT tag/device. It is fixed on the head of the animal with epoxy and every time the *ellie* raises its head out of the water at sea, it sends out a satellite signal, recording the position (latitude and longitude) of the elephant seal. Because we can't physically observe their foraging and some of their mating behaviour out at sea, we use this instrument to track their movements. How cool is that?!



What's up with this Weather?

... partly cloudy with a chance of...

- James Burns

Much to the disappointment of the team, Marion did not give us the white Christmas we were hoping for. The month of December did however give us the next best thing; a feeling of summer holidays. There was still a fair amount of wind and rain, to be sure, but we had several days of relative calm and decent sunshine. Even on windy days, the sun shining through the windows and in the passages warmed up some parts of base considerably and we have finally been able to dig out our shorts and t-shirts from the backs of our cupboards. Our weather station has been running smoothly and all our operations have continued uninterrupted. For this month, I will be taking a break from the various meteorological apparatus I have been discussing and focus instead on our most important function with the regular observations we perform; determining the state of the sky.



Mid-level altocumulus lenticularis cloud

When we speak about the state of the sky, there are quite a few things we need to consider. Cloud type, cloud height and total cloud cover are foremost among these and all of these are interlinked and can be used when determining the others. Some cloud types only occur in certain amounts, for example, and not if it is overcast.



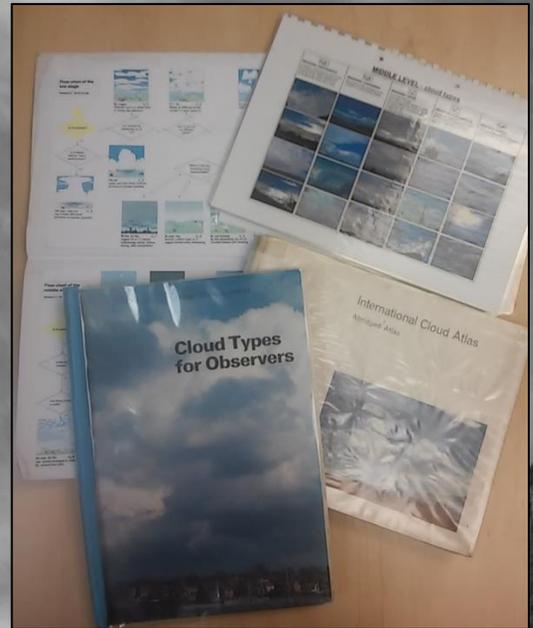
Altocumulus lenticularis cloud above e-base



Low-level cumuloform clouds over Marion Island from the SA Agulhas II

What's up with this Weather?

The first observation is total cloud cover. This is reported in octas, or eighths, of the sky. Clear skies will be 0 octas (never on Marion) and if is completely overcast, there is said to be 8 octas of cloud-cover. The various fractions between these extremes fall into the categories of few, scattered or broken, or more commonly, partly or mostly cloudy, etc. The tricky part is, where there are multiple levels or types of cloud, we need to determine how many octas of each cloud type there are in each level or etage as it is properly referred to.



We used various reference books and guides to help with identifying cloud type



A variety of cloud types on multiple levels



Mid-level altocumulus cloud

Cloud height is probably one of the most difficult things to determine. It is possible to get a rough estimate of height by determining cloud type as we will soon learn. Cloud height is reported as the number of feet between the ground and the cloud base (the bottom of the cloud). The most accurate way is by using a reference height and, from base, we have a good view of a number of different mountain peaks and the height of each peak is known. When the clouds are touching the mountains, we have a good idea of how high they are. Without solid reference points we need to rely on our knowledge of the different cloud types and the heights at which they occur. There are three etage, low, middle and high, and each can only have certain cloud types due to temperature, pressure, etc.

What's up with this Weather?

There are many different cloud types, and dozens of variations of each type so I will be focussing on the basics. To summarize, there are several basic cloud types and you may recognise some of them from highschool geography. These are cumulus, cumulonimbus, stratus, stratocumulus, altocumulus, altostratus, nimbostratus, cirrus, cirrostratus and cirrocumulus. These are found at different heights and have different colours and shapes or patterns. The cloud type also determines what kind of precipitation occurs. Drizzle can only come from stratus clouds, for example, and showers are only associated with cumulus clouds. By knowing the cloud type, it is possible to estimate cloud height, predict certain precipitation type, etc.

Now there is a lot more to this than I can fit in a few paragraphs; cloud formation theory, cloud varieties, characteristics and species (there are 9 possible cloud types / combinations for each of the three etages that we need to identify in our observations). This cloud theory forms a large part of the material covered during the months of training we had before boarding the ship. So now you know that it is not as simple as 'partly cloudy with a chance of ...'

SAWS MONTHLY WEATHER STATS – December 2018

TEMP	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	AVERAGE LOW	AVERAGE HIGH
	-0.3°C	16.3°C	8.2°C	5.3°C	11.1°C
PRESSURE	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	HUMIDITY	AVERAGE
	985.3hPa	1022.3hPa	1006.4hPa		83%
RAIN	TOTAL	DAYS WITH RAIN (>1mm)		MAX IN 24 HOURS	
	162.2mm	21 (20)		36.8mm (12 th)	
WIND	MAX	DIRECTION	SUNSHINE	TOTAL	
	120km/h	NW		136.2 HOURS	



M75

Thank you to our sponsors!!!

We give a special thanks to...



A winery committed to preserving the environment.

There was no space for the gloom of missing our family and friends during Christmas and New years as we had delightfully delicious donated Brut with which to enjoy these special occasions together here on Marion Island.



Abu Nguna



Abu Nguna

Even the Sub-Antarctic Skuas (above) and Sub-Antarctic fur seals (below)

approve of this generous wine farm.



The **hospitality** brand company



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PURE
BEGINNINGS
Organic Care