The Wanderer

FEBRUARY 2019

THE MEN OF MARION

island life and icy adventures

Kildalkey
hut of the month

the birders

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Homo sapiens ☺
- Elsa van Ginkel

environmental affairs
Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SANAP

The day is TODAY
MARION75
The time is NOW

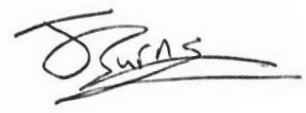
letter from the editors

The days are rushing by as we approach the end of yet another amazing month... We had moments of fun and laughter as well as a few days filled with close encounters, including pup-weighing, penguin weighing, vegetation transects and many more. All the plains are painted with white spots of courting Wandering albatross and the majority of the Skua chicks have already fledged. The flowers of Marion are losing their colour with winter settling in once again and the interior of the island is coated in a white blanket more often than not. Marion is continuing her cycle of neverending life. To all our readers, thank you for all the support – may this February edition be a memorable one...

Elsa van Ginkel
Editor

Another month has come and gone; can you believe it! The clock is ticking and our time is short. We have come the full circle, as far as seasons are concerned and we are definitely seeing the first signs of winter setting in.

The temperatures are dropping, we have been seeing less and less of the sun as the days get shorter and the seas are very often churning wildly with the stormy conditions. Work has continued dutifully although the prospects of a proper long holiday back home are sounding superb. This continues to be the experience of a lifetime and we are glad to be able to share it with you all.

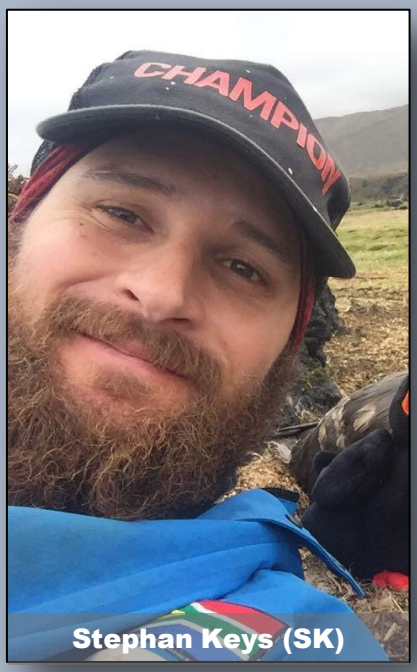


James Burns
Co-Editor

Interview with...

The NMU Birders

- Liezl Pretorius



Stephan Keys (SK)

Danielle Keys (DK)

Michelle Thompson (MT)

The three NMU birders spend a lot of time in the field and even work outside at night sometimes. WHHAAATT? Working at night in the sub-Antarctic?! "That is crazy!" you might say. But these highly motivated, hard-working individuals take each challenge their work throws at them in their strides; doing what needs to be done and, frankly, while still being awesome human beings! They give 110% to everything they do, whether work or team related. And because of this, each one of them is a well-loved and cherished part of the M75 team. Keep up the good work you three Musketeers, we are extremely proud of you all!!

Job description

SK – My wife and I work with a wide variety of the bird species. We deploy GPS devices to monitor where they go during breeding season and at times place AXY depth and TDR's which helps us to determine how deep they dive and daily diaries that helps to understand flight dynamics. We also get to monitor the chick growth rates for almost all deployed bird species.

DK – My job is to deploy and retrieve long term tracking devices on sea birds and to identify foraging hot spots. We then aim to link chick growth rates with biological data and the tracks.

MT – I work mainly on the burrowing petrels on the island, collecting various samples from feathers to blood to stomach contents. I collect it all!

Best part of your job

SK – To be honest...everything! We get to work with almost all the bird species on the island. It's tough at times being out in the field 24/7 but so worth it when you can hold a Wandering Albatross.

DK – My favourite part of the job is working with all these incredible animals and also the amazing views we have while doing so.

MT – I guess the best is that I get to see and hold birds that some people on the island have never even seen, and that most people back home never will.

What do you miss most?

SK – Apart from family and friends, it's swimming! I haven't been able to free dive, surf or just snorkel in the shallows. Not fair that the water is so clean here and I can't get in.

DK – Definitely my family and friends. And being underwater.

MT – Meeting new people and the change of scenery. Trees! Songbirds…especially songbirds!

Favourite movie

SK – *The Yes Man* because it's very uplifting and funny and *Pacific Rim* because … fighting robots.

DK – *Lord of the Rings.*

MT – Impossible to choose but I'd go with either *Domino* or *Love Actually.*

Favourite book

SK – This changes a lot and there are so many. If I had to pick a few it would be the Terry Pratchett *Discworld* series, *Deep*, and the old faithful - the Bible.

DK – Currently, Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis.

MT – *Bridge to Terabithia* and *Ender's Game*, I read them both every year.

Favourite animal

SK – The Rockhopper penguin! That little guy is the smallest penguin on the island but has the most spunk. No cliff, seal or Skua will stop him from making a life here.

DK – Whichever one I'm working with, I love them all. Each has it's own unique challenges which I enjoy figuring out.

MT – Ooh, very tough to choose. I think I'd have to say the Skuas, they have so much charisma and now that their chicks are here they are the best parents. But basically, my favourite bird shifts to whatever I happen to be working on at the time. Really loved the NGPs and the Grey petrels too. The Grey-headed albatrosses win the cutest chick awards, tied with Kergies.

Best day on the island so far

SK – So many fantastic days! From holding one day old chicks to hiking over mountains with views that will make photos taken from your phone look as if it's from a 30 grand camera. Though the cream of crop were the ones shared with my wife, Danielle. I loved the time when she saw her first Orca. We were on cliffs with the Sooties and she suddenly screamed so loud I thought she fell off. So apart from my heart almost popping out my chest it was really special seeing her full of love for life.

DK – Probably one of my favourite days was just after completing the NGP round island with my hubby and Michelle. When we got to Greenhill, we saw Pintados for the first time, then watched Orcas hunting King penguins and to top it off - we also saw a leopard seal...all in one day!

MT – Ummmm, I can't choose a favourite day but I can choose a moment. I was walking from Grey-headed to Watertunnel in the late afternoon and the sun was shining on the golden mile and Sfinks – it was a beautiful walk. Halfway up Devil's staircase it was just stunning watching the seals playing in a still, glassy golden ocean, I sat there for a good 20 minutes just hoping the killers would show, even without them it was perfect.

Worst day on the island so far

SK – It was a drizzly Tuesday… I WISH! Marion showed her hand very early during Take Over, when we had to crawl over Rooikasteel. The gale-force winds funneled down towards us and were accompanied by rain that felt like needles. I've never experienced a more demoralizing, exhausting, frustrating time in my life. To this day I shudder when I think of going over Karookop from Watertunnel, even if it's ten knot winds with clear skies.

DK – Marion is full of life, but also a lot of death. It is not always easy seeing the birds you work with being eaten in front of you.

MT – The weather during take over was bad, several bad days were had there but the worst since was probably the day I had to climb over Johnny's in gale winds and ice pellets and I ended up leopard crawling over the saddle.

Favourite part of the island

SK – Sitting on the cliffs just above Mixed Pickle's beach, having a whiskey and a cigar. The amount of life that interacts with you, beautiful sunsets, and just experiencing the power of the waves crashing against the cliffs really makes it feel like my 'home' at Heidebaai. It's the epiphany of tranquility. I recommend it for all.

DK – Mixed Pickle and its surroundings. It is just so untouched and wild.

MT – I think my favourite will always be Grey-headed, I love having the ridge there, full of life and the stunning Goodhope bay just down the road. Plus the hut is 5 star – even without a door! The door makes a great picnic spot now. ☺

Favourite food on the island

SK – Freshly baked bread

DK – Hut pancakes

MT – Spinach and lasagne

Advice for future Marionites

SK – This island will test your character in many ways but after each test it will reward you in full. Come here knowing that it will be tough but the experiences of the life on Marion are well worth the struggle.

DK – Don't be stupid, don't be brave and you will not die. But if you are, Marion probably won't let you die that easy.

MT – Bring pretty clothes and 500 pairs of slippers.

Title for a book about your year on Marion...

An island that you will regret to leave

- Stephan Keys -

So you dig in mud? A birders tale on Marion Island

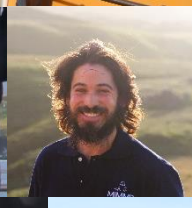
- Michelle Thompson -

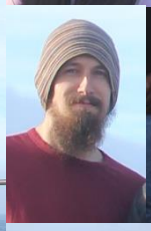
LOL

- Dani Keys -

The back of the book would say something like: Marion never ceases to amaze, but it will test you in ways that you could never imagine. But despite it all, its magic will captivate you and leave its mark on you forever.

Men of Marion





Kildalkey

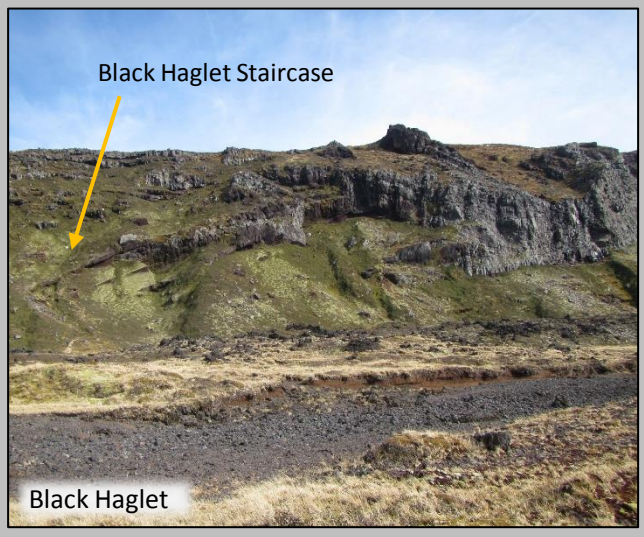
Hut Stop # 8

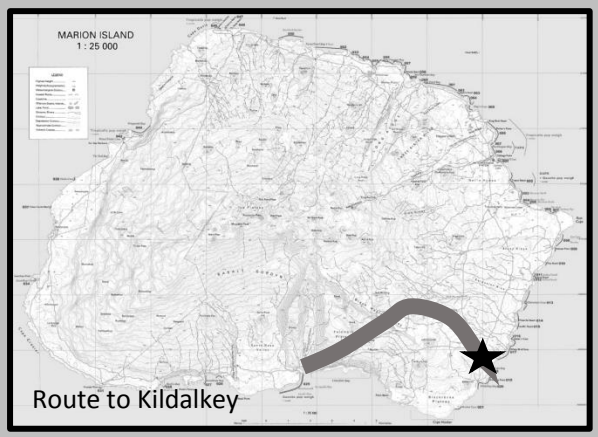
- Elsa van Ginkel

Hut of the Month: Kildalkey

Route to Kildalkey

The first obstacle is the Watertunnel *hill of hell* towards Rooikasteel. If you have the time to climb Rooikasteel, you'll have a great view of Crawford Bay, especially on a clear day. After this climb, you approach Karookop, where you'll experience the vastness of the ocean and realize that you will probably never feel this level of isolation ever again - unless you plan to return to this magnificent island, as my *winder buddy* often asks along this stretch, "Hey Sister, do you feel like you're on an isolated island?"





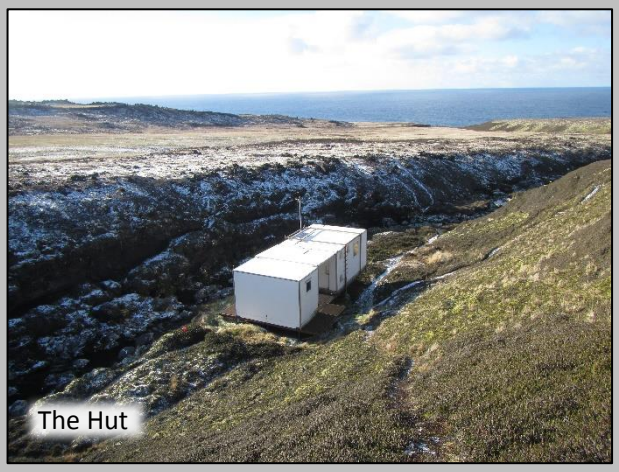
You aim for Karookop, pass over False Karookop, with Karookop on your right and Snok on the left and then you have a long stretch of grey lava fellfield before you see the *'red stick'* where you will head down the Black Haglet staircase – this area can be quite dangerous when it has thick snow... so be careful! One wrong step and you'll slide down the steep slope of *doom*.

After Black Haglet you pass through a stretch of black veg lava and aim to the left of Middelrooikop. Here you can descide whether your next destination is base or Kildalkey...

Mesrug

Johnnies Hill

If Kildalkey is the choice of the day, you will head southeast towards the right of Mesrug and find Kildalkey in a deep riverine valley where it likes to play hide and seek – usually if you haven't been there before.

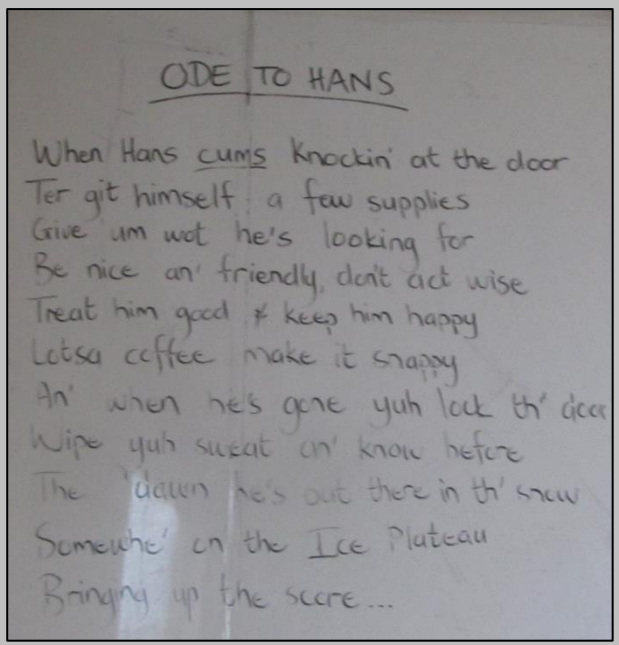

The Hut

You can also aim for Kildalkey before you have even reached Black Haglet... Which will take you past Johnnies Hill but different people have different routes depending on their work or preference.

River next to Kildalkey Hut

The Hut

The hut is situated in a deep riverine valley, where you usually collect your drinking water from the ever-flowing river right next to the hut.


ODE TO HANS

When Hans cums Knockin' at the door
Ter git himself a few supplies
Grive um wot he's looking for
Be nice an' friendly, don't act wise
Treat him good & keep him happy
Lotsa coffee make it snappy
An' when he's gone yuh lock th' door
Wipe yuh sweat an' know before
The dawn he's out there in th' snow
Somewhe' on the Ice Plateau
Bringing up the score...

Ode to Hans – our friendly Marion ghost

Hut recipe

Sweet and Sour Pork

Ingredients

- 1x tin Picnic Ham
- 1x tin Mixed Veggies
- 1x tin Mushrooms
- Pinch of Pepper
- 2x packs of 2 min. Noodles
- 4 tbsp. Chutney
- 4 tbsp. Vinegar
- 1 tbsp. Apricot jam

Method

1. Place noodles in a bowl of boiled water and cover with a plate for 5 minutes.

2. Cut ham into small pieces and fry them in a pan until they are slightly brown.

3. Mix the ham with all the other ingredients in a pot.

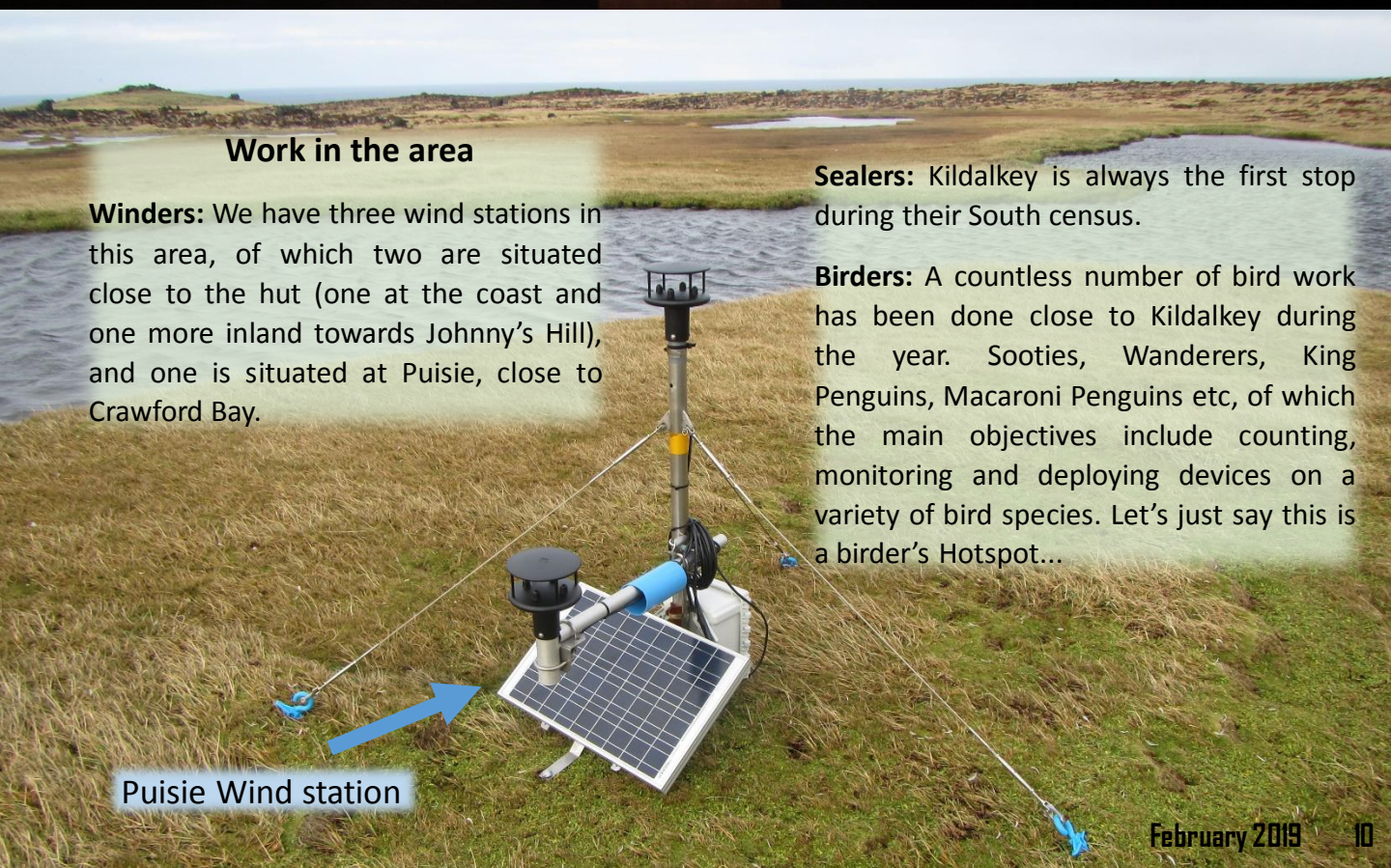
4. Cook as long as you desire and then serve with noodles.

Work in the area

Winders: We have three wind stations in this area, of which two are situated close to the hut (one at the coast and one more inland towards Johnny's Hill), and one is situated at Puisie, close to Crawford Bay.

Sealers: Kildalkey is always the first stop during their South census.

Birders: A countless number of bird work has been done close to Kildalkey during the year. Sooties, Wanderers, King Penguins, Macaroni Penguins etc, of which the main objectives include counting, monitoring and deploying devices on a variety of bird species. Let's just say this is a birder's Hotspot...



Puisie Wind station

Our First One day Round Islander!

Making us Proud…

All the field assistants aspire to complete a *One Day Round Island* during their expedition and the streak of *One Day's* has finally started. Marike was the first field assistant to attempt and complete this very long walk to victory. We are very proud of her and hope to see many more *One Day's* in the coming weeks…

Marike's stop @ Mixed Pickle

News from the MAPRU hybrids

Marine Apex Predator Research Unit

- Danielle Keys

What a year! Since the start of the breeding season we have had very little time at Base. We have been up and down between Mixed Pickle and Kildalkey - to measure the growth rates of Northern Giant Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel, Macaroni Penguin and Rockhopper Penguin chicks. Despite the cold, harsh weather and scores of predators, these creatures somehow managed to survive.

Our work slowed down a little when we only needed to measure King Penguin chicks, which do not breed at Mixed Pickle. It has been incredible to watch these seabirds up close and to start to understand more about them. As we say goodbye to the last of the NGPs we will start to weigh the little Wandering Albatross soon and we cannot wait to have the white *fluff-balls* dotting the island once again.

Photos: Danielle Keys, Elsa van Ginkel

Valentine's Day

A night in the library

PICK OF PICS

Growing up is hard...

Gazella Pup – Antarctic fur seal

Arctocephalus gazella

Mr. Morph

Macaroni Penguin

Eudyptes chrysolophus

Mommmmmmm!!

Macaroni Penguin Chick
Eudyptes chrysolophus

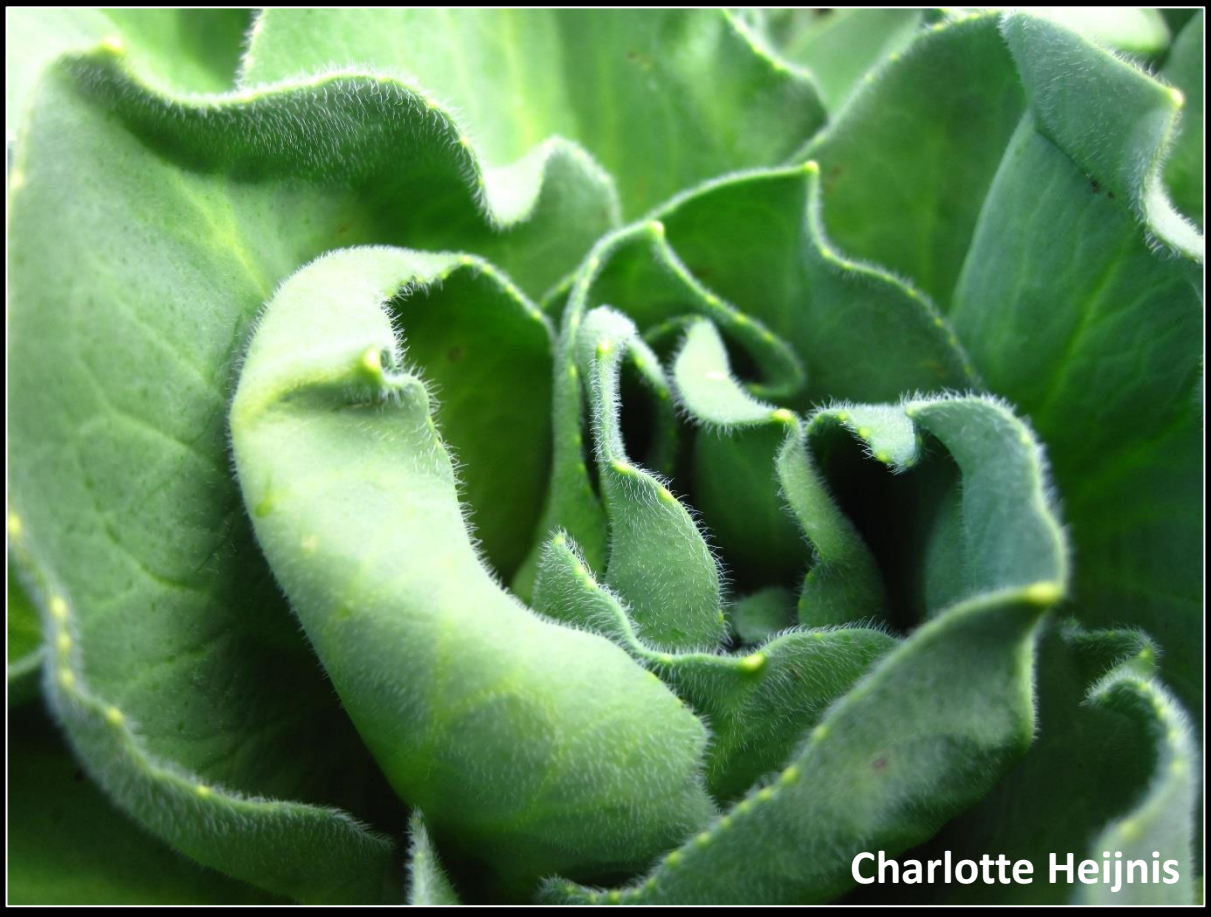
Morning Joga

Grey headed Albatross chick
Thalassarche chrysostoma

Courtship

Wandering Albatross
Diomedea exulans

Floral Beauty



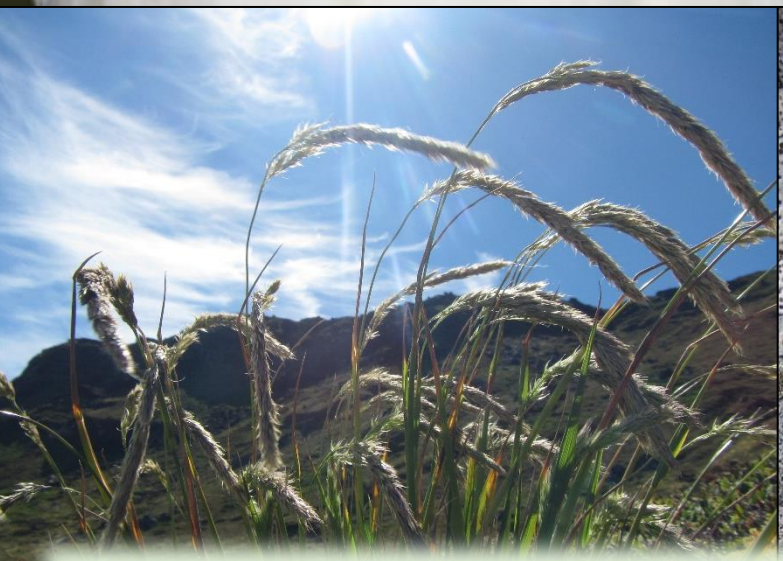
Kerguelen Cabbage
Pringlea antiscorbutica

DANI'S MEDIEVAL BIRTHDAY

Danielle Keys

Liezl Pretorius

Danielle Keys



Charlotte Heijnis

Taste of the Island life

Elsa van Ginkel

Charlotte Heijnis

Liezl Pretorius

Danielle Keys

Liezl Pretorius

Elsa van Ginkel

Danielle Keys

Elsa van Ginkel

Danielle Keys

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Danielle Keys

Danielle Keys

Danielle Keys

... and some more of the island...

Elsa van Ginkel

Danielle Keys

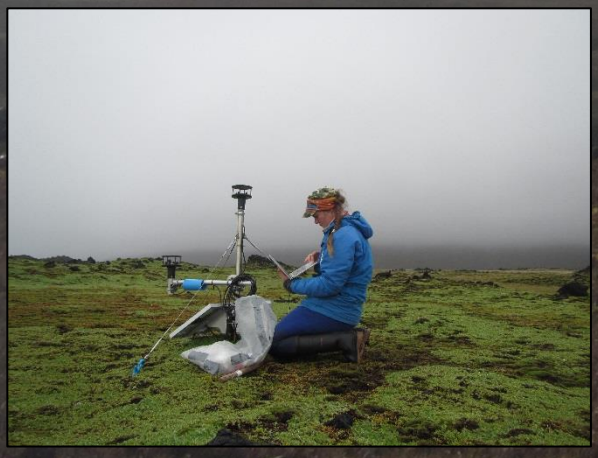
Danielle Keys

Favourite Piece of Equipment

Automatic Weather Station

The Automatic Weather Station (AWS) is a very crucial system for meteorological observers. The system is made up of accessible components and imported sensors. Although it operates independently, it still plays the major role in completing our daily observations. The parameters recorded together with visual observations (clouds, visibility, present weather other than rainfall), done by the observer on duty, are then used to generate meteorological messages (SYNOP/METAR). If it wasn't for the AWS, manual labour would be required for keeping records of the parameters measured, hence making life a living 'hell'. Imagine having to go to the meteorological site (outside) every 5 minutes to estimate wind speed and direction on a cold, gusting and rainy day. The AWS does not only simplify the duties of meteorological observers, it also ensures real-time reliable data acquisition (without human error).

- Zinhle Shongwe (#Metkassie)



The Trusty *Leatherman*

My favourite piece of equipment is definitely my *multitool*... it has been my *wingman* throughout the year and it has proved useful in all scenarios... when I'm at work, I use it to open the powerbox at our wind stations and during vegetation transects, I use it to collect some of the more hardy plant species. It has also proved useful in the huts when either opening a can or fixing something within the hut. Never a dull day with my wingman at my side!

- Elsa van Ginkel (#Botanist/Winder)

Tesa tape

My favourite piece of equipment is dry and warm Tesa tape. This waterproof material tape helps us attach GPS & other devices to the birds. It however doesn't stick when it rains

- Danielle Keys (#Birder)

Diesel Burner

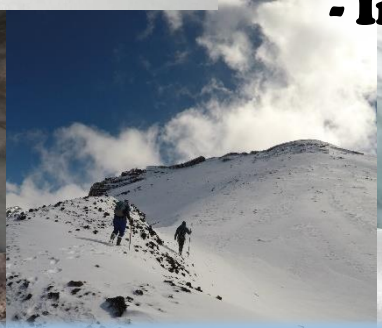
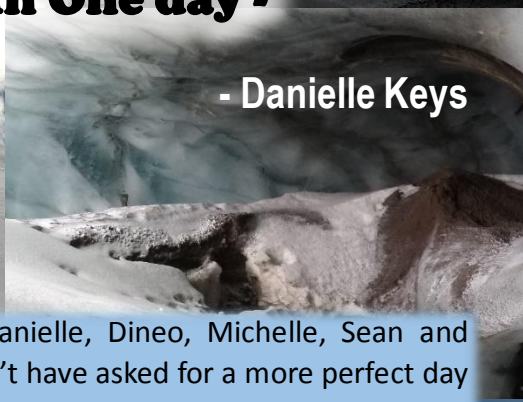
My favourite piece of equipment is the diesel burner. Here on Marion Island, we have two diesel burners, the one which works together with the heat exchanger to warm the building and the other one which boils the hot water - this burner is rated a 140KW. A **burner** is a mechanical device that supplies the required amount of fuel and air and creates a condition of rapid mixing which produce flames. Diesel is supplied from the day tank. A pump on the burner closed-loop water provides circulation through the plate heat exchanger, at which point the heat is transferred to the hot water cylinder (HWC) water. A cold water feed-point and expansion vessel ensures that the pressure is maintained in the plate heat exchanger (PHE) closed-loop water. It saves more diesel than when boiling the water using elements.

- Dakalo Gangashe (#Base Engineer)

Mascarin & Ice Caves

- In One day -

- Danielle Keys

On the last day of February, a group of adventurers: Bongi, Danielle, Dineo, Michelle, Sean and Stephan… decided to take a chance and peak ***Mascarin***. We couldn't have asked for a more perfect day to see the whole island from the top. We even found Marike and Mike, despite our detours - where they conveniently pointed out which peak was Mascarin.

The views were spectacular and we were filled with awe. It really made us realize how small the island was that we have been calling home. On our way down, we made our way to the ***Ice caves***, actually found them and explored inside. The ice plateau is a definite ***must see*** for all Marionites!

What's up with this Weather?

- James Burns

February has come and gone with all signs pointing to the fast-approaching winter season. While temperatures haven't dropped all that much (according to the thermometer), there was a definite chill in the air with biting winds and icy rain.

This will just be a short update from the weather office. Things are running smoothly in the office and we have been sticking to a nice routine which keeps us going steadily through the weeks. As a team of three meteorological technicians, we are responsible for the 24/7 operation of this station; a full-time and never ending job (the weather doesn't takes leave!)

We have a work cycle where one person is on day shift for a number of days, the second is on night shift for those days and the third person can rest and explore until the day shift cycle starts. So weekends aren't relevant and we must just hold our thumbs that our off days coincide with any celebrations or holidays.

While our duties may seem monotonous after several months, there are a number of ways to pass the time between our continued meteorological observations including reading, listening to music, building puzzles, distracting fellow islanders, etc. And there's always the excitement of all the possibilities that come with our time off!

SAWS MONTHLY WEATHER STATS – February 2019

TEMP	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	AVERAGE LOW	AVERAGE HIGH
	2.8°C	16.3°C	8.8°C	6.0°C	11.7°C
PRESSURE	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	HUMIDITY	AVERAGE
	980.9hPa	1018.8hPa	1002.8hPa		82%
RAIN	TOTAL	DAYS WITH RAIN (>1mm)		MAX IN 24 HOURS	
	106.8mm	23 (20)		16.0mm (24th)	
WIND	MAX	DIRECTION	SUNSHINE	TOTAL	
	138km/h	W		116.5 HOURS	

South African Weather Service

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A
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