



THE GOUGH BUNTING

G65 OVERWINTERING EXPEDITION

ISSUE 2 | NOVEMBER 2019 – JANUARY 2020

FROM THE TEAM LEADER

Wow... already four months here at Gough!!!

Since the last issue, we celebrated Christopher's (1st November 2019) and Thabiso's (17th December 2019) birthdays.

Captain Clarence with the Geo-Searcher, arrived in the first week of November with some goodies from home, including a karaoke system, which provided a good theme on Thabiso's birthday. It is always a very welcome call from Captain Clarence when he is in radio reach. To say thank you for all his efforts, Christopher used his drone and took high resolution photos of the crew. The Team sent one of these photos in an engraved frame to the vessel, to be hung in the bridge.

Some team members accompanied our Biologists to Gonydale, which they truly

enjoyed. Others assisted them in burrow nest recordings. Always an informative exercise, because they would patiently explain details of the island and wildlife to the not-so-informed.

And then Christmas came. For some, it was the first time so far from family and friends. However, each team member received two gifts. Each member was randomly assigned as a secret Santa, while the second gift was a 'choose-any-one-under-the-tree'. Just goes to show, we don't need a shopping mall here at Gough for gift hunting. We then had a festive dinner on Christmas Eve, followed by some Karaoke. During the Christmas day, we all relaxed and "spent" the day remotely with family and friends at home. This was more or less the same for New Years.

On the 11th of January, our deputy Team leader, Thendo received very sad news from home, his Mom passed away. The team assisted Thendo through the week, and the next Saturday morning, we managed to have Thendo attend the funeral, remotely via video.

G65 have grown physically (I already noticed some clothes started to "shrink") and emotionally, adapting well to the island life. The first four months gave us time to really learn about one another.

We are now preparing the base for the Gough Island Restoration Programme, and are looking forward to welcome the rest of the world to South African hospitality.

Errol



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FROM THE EDITOR

2020 is here! We wish all the loved ones we have back home a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. A lot has happened since the last issue. We have had two birthdays, the Geo-searcher returned to Gough, delivering packages just in time for Christmas, and we have

seen our first group of the chicks start hatching. But most excitingly, more team members are taking the opportunity to explore what Gough Island has to offer. The days are also counting down for probably the biggest conservation project ever to happen on Gough,

and by late February, the mice eradication program will be in full swing.

Enjoy the read

Dylan



Points of interest:

- *Don't forget to spread awareness of the mice eradication, and support the cause.*

WORLD ALBATROSS DAY

by Michelle Risi Jones

This year on the 19th of June 2020 we will celebrate the first ever World Albatross Day. Why, you might ask? When it comes to seabirds, most people could probably point out a penguin or comment on their behavior from the various depictions of penguins in movies or perhaps having seen them in an aquarium. However, albatrosses, which are just as charming (and smell way better), hardly get any limelight. This is unsurprising given the fact that they breed on remote islands. They are the great wanderers of the oceans, soaring for many days at a time and circumnavigating the globe.



Michelle Risi Jones

They can live just as long as humans do and usually mate with one partner for life. Wisdom, the oldest known wild bird, is a Laysan Albatross breeding on the Hawaiian island of Midway, currently at least 69 years old and she raised a chick in 2019. Albatrosses are extremely endearing to watch and a pleasure to work with. So unafraid, having evolved on islands without native mammalian predators, they occasionally approach us in the field out of curiosity.

However, the fact that they are so unafraid and have no natural defenses against mammalian predators has led



to a conservation crisis. On Gough Island albatross chicks (and more recently adults) have been observed being eaten alive by mice. This has occurred on several islands where albatrosses breed and invasive mammals have been introduced by man. For those of you that don't know, this year the Gough Island Restoration team aims to restore Gough for the millions of seabirds that breed here by eradicating mice. Seal hunters accidentally introduced mice on Gough in the 19th century. Albatrosses are not only impacted by invasive mammals, but are also at risk by long-line fishing vessels (which accidentally catch albatrosses) and by ingestion of plastic, which they mistake for food.

Here are a few albatross facts:

1. Gough Island is home to three albatross species, Tristan Albatross (Critically Endangered), Sooty Albatross (Endangered) and Atlantic yellow-nosed Albatross (Endangered).
2. The Tristan Albatross is virtually endemic to Gough Island as only two pairs breed on Inaccessible Island. The breeding success of Tristan Albatrosses on Gough has been as low as 10 % in some years due to mice eating Tristan Albatross chicks alive.
3. Albatrosses only lay one egg per year, so if the breeding attempt fails they cannot try again until the following year.
4. Albatrosses have an elaborate courting display, which they practice for several years before they start breeding. Their dance moves include head bobbing, bill tapping and in the case of Tristan Albatrosses they end off their dance with a crescendo of high pitched squeals and outstretched wings. Sooty Albatrosses are more graceful in the sky and do part of their courting in a synchronized flight in the air.

5. Albatrosses need our help, our current behavior (fishing, plastic mismanagement) and our actions of the past (introducing invasive mammals) have pushed some species to the brink of extinction, so we should do all that we can to protect them and raise awareness for the sentinels of the ocean.



Michelle Risi Jones



What can you do to celebrate World Albatross Day?

Tell someone about albatrosses, use less single use plastic, support sustainable fisheries which use bird scaring lines and if possible donate to the projects which aim to remove invasive mammals from the breeding sites of albatrosses.

WORLD ALBATROSS DAY

19 JUNE 2020

Agreement on the
Conservation of
Albatrosses and
Petrels

www.acap.aq
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FULL-TIME BIRDERS, PART-TIME SEALERS... AND OTHER ODD JOBS

By Chris Jones



We call ourselves 'birders' since most of our work involves the birds of Gough. This term is likely a carry-over from Marion Island because the overwintering teams there consist of various field scientists that focus on specific things like just birds, seals, plants or geomorphology etc. Hence there is a need to differentiate nicknames. However on Gough, the 'birders' tend to do a bit of everything since we are the only field scientists here.

Our 'part-time' seal work involves weighing fur seal pups at set intervals and we sometimes have volunteers from the rest of the team, to come help us wrestle with these little fur balls on the beach, which is often a lot of fun for everyone involved. This year we also did a breeding census of the small population of elephant seals on Gough, which hadn't happened in the last 20 years or so.

Other odd jobs outside of bird work has involved vegetation monitoring, invertebrate surveys and even a bit of construction work. So to be a field scientist on Gough certainly requires a lot of adaptability.



Christopher Jones



Christopher Jones

THE HATCHING OF FIAZA

Between late October and early November of 2019, G65 became parents to Fiaza. The two Skuas, Gonzalo and Goose, who are famous around the base, laid two eggs, of which only one hatched, and was promptly named Fiaza, by Errol. The Skua chick has since grown to its full size, and we are all waiting in anticipation for when we see it fledge.



Dylan Seaton

GOING ON AN ADVENTURE

By Dylan Seaton

Slowly but surely, I am making progress to explore as much of this island as I can. Whenever I have the opportunity, I go out wondering the island by myself, or with the more experienced birders. Shortly after the SA Agulhus departed, I joined the birders to Serengeti where they were counting the Yellow-Nosed Albatrosses and marking their nests. We ended up having lunch by Waterfall Point overlooking Quest Bay and where the old base used to be. On our way back we came over a hill called 960, and despite the aching legs and sweaty clothes, I got my first taste of adventure of the island, and just wanted more.



Soon after when I was free again, I decided to take a short walk to see The Admirals, and looking at the view, I can understand why so many team photos are taken there, it's a magnificent sight. Later on, I joined the



Dylan Seaton



birders once more to Tumbledown where they were working on the Sooty Albatrosses, and I got to spend some time with the Rockhopper penguins and a few fur seals which was fun.



Dylan Seaton

When I had another few days free, I joined Alexis to Richmond where he was replacing the batteries that monitor a few Yellow-Nose Albatross nests, and I also got to see first-hand the horror that the mice are causing to the birds, when we found an Albatross with a nasty wound on its back. This was later confirmed by video footage which Michelle showed us when we got back to base that a mouse was feeding on the bird. Nevertheless, it was an awesome trip and I got to see many more Yellow-Noses.



Alexis Osborne

But the best place I have visited so far on the island, is Gonydale, when I joined Chris and Michelle to help deploy GPS devices on the Tristan Albatrosses. It was amazing to see the Tristan Albatrosses for the first time and I soon realized that their pictures don't do them justice for their size. We spent the night at Gonydale in the newly designed hut and left early the next morning.



The second trip to Gonydale, included Chris, Bubele and myself. Only this time we took a different route back, via Tafelkop and although that hike was tougher than coming back via the normal route, it was worth it.



My latest trip, I was lucky enough to join the birders once again to Low Hump, where they monitor the Giant Petrels. Its amazing how each new place you go seems like a completely new island altogether. Next on my list are Edinburgh Peak, Waterfall Camp, and the biggest one of all, The Glen.



THE FISHING VESSEL MV GEO SEARCHER IN GOUGH ISLAND

By Thendo Sihkwari

As Gough Island is one a remote island, it is rare to see ships passing by. We at Gough 65 were very fortunate enough to get a visit from the MV Geo Searcher along the island coast doing fishing. It was an exciting time for the team to witness something different around the Gough Island oceans. A little bit of information about the Geo Searcher; the ship was built in 1982 and then refurbished in 2005, and again in 2014, the ship has a gross tonnage of 1 863 tons, a length of 69 m, and, has also served as a scientific research vessel. The ship was converted in to a factory freezer vessel, and designed for cargo and passenger ca-

pacity. The MV Geo Searcher replaced the MV Edinburgh as the islands main fishing vessel. When the MV Edinburgh was retained by the company, it is now used as a dedicated cargo ship as well as for limited fishing.



Above is the Geo Searcher docking near the Island. Left is one of the power boats that gets dropped for the day, to release the crayfish traps and other fishing.

THE GOUGH ISLAND DAM

By Thabiso Maphumulo

When there are a few good days on Gough, the team tries to go out and see different parts of the island. A few team members took the opportunity to go visit the dam and spent the day there. On rainy days the dam gets full and it looks incredibly beautiful, with a group of connecting small waterfalls feeding in to the dam. However, more water in the dam sometimes causes more problems and we often find ourselves on a mission to rectify blocked pipes and faulty systems. Nevertheless, its enjoyable and worth it, as water is our number one need on this island.



Team at the dam, along with different levels of the dam before and after rainfall.

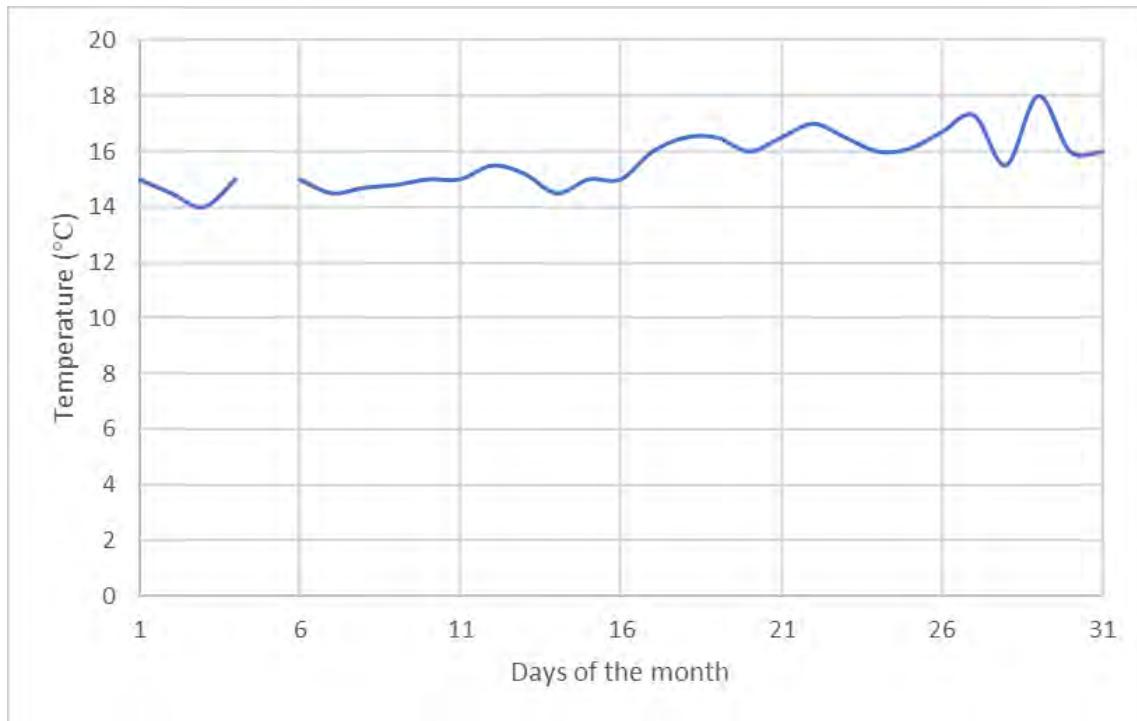
GOUGH FESTIVITIES

Christmas was a bash, filled with music, dancing and the most favourite, karaoke, which we were lucky enough to have thanks to Errol and the Geo searcher. Competitions were high on who was the best singer, but ultimately, our very own Bubele took it away with 'Feliz Navidad'.



New years was just as fun and festive, with DJ Thabiso bringing the heat, with the team tearing up the dance floor. No one partied harder than G65 on Gough Island, of that I can guarantee you.

FROM THE METKASSIES



Daily Sea Temperature for January 2020

Ave Max Pressure	1027.1 hPa	17/01/2020
Ave Min Pressure	994.2 hPa	13/01/2020
Ave Pressure	1009.0 hPa	
Max Pressure	1029.3 hPa	17/01/2020
Min Pressure	989.5	09/01/2020
Ave Max Temp	18.2 °C	21/01/2020
Ave Min Temp	10.2 °C	03/01/2020
Ave Temp	14.8 °C	
Max Temp	22.2 °C	27/01/2020
Min Temp	7.6 °C	15/01/2020
Ave Humidity	76%	
Max Humidity	94%	
Min Humidity	21%	06/01/2020
Max Wind Gust	$30.2 \text{ m.s}^{-1} = 60.4 \text{ knots} = 120.8 \text{ km.h}^{-1}$	
Total Rainfall	322.4 mm	
Highest in 24 Hours	90.8 mm	
Total days with rain	18 days	
Total days > 1mm	16 days	
Total Sunshine	174.9 hours	

Monthly averages for January 2020