



Gough Bunting

March 2009



Welcome to our Monthly Newsletter...

This is a Journey.... Enjoy the Read...



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Fortunate Islanders!

Hello and a warm welcome to all our readers. We have reached the halfway mark, and are looking so much forward to September when the relief team will arrive. Please don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that we don't enjoy the island any more, we still have lots of fun but I think better understandable, every team member settled into some routine, which back home would remind one of security. However, here it's a bit different, doing contract work and working freelance like most of us you never tend to experience the comforting idea of security, for the life of a contract worker is best understood in comparison with a one man business. Your success is not only a result or reflection of good business skills, but also depends on your good health. Any one ever interested to start doing contract work will suddenly find themselves in a position of filling out forms, one of those forms the ever important medical evaluation which will accompany you to a day long burden of blood tests, x rays, dental checkup, the normal blood pressure and stress ECG tests! One doctor that doesn't need any introduction by fellow islanders who done their application through DEAT Pretoria is Doctor Peter Rous. What a pleasant personality, done more than a fare share of humanitarian work in Africa, been the same time as myself in a little town in Southern Sudan, a bit north of Juba called Bör'. So if you ever have a fever or flu-like symptoms, and been to a malaria area, rush yourself over to the Louis Pasteur building in Pretoria, you can't go wrong with experience! Just to proof that humanitarian work face some challenges of it's own I've enclosed a few pictures!

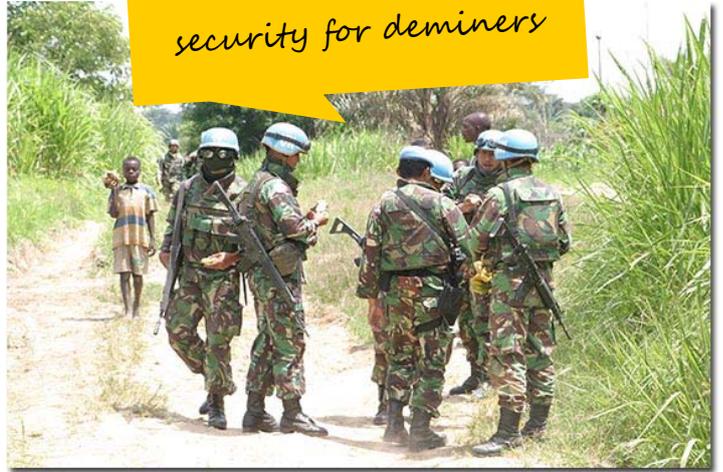


*View from MI-8
Helicopter DRC*



During 2004 I was fortunate to work on the side of the legendary and well respected Keith Byng, Probably the most well known deminer of all times. He devoted his life to demining. Sadly he passed away April 2005 after having cerebral malaria, he was on leave and I was getting ready to go to Iraq. He phoned me out of Harare, giving the symptoms and I confirmed over the telephone that that's definitely malaria, and begged him to go immediately to hosp, he was admitted but unfortunately didn't make it. I had malaria the same time, but recovered well.

UN Soldiers rendering security for deminers



However, we were standing in the DRC alongside a minefield when an old man way past his eighties walked past and greeted politely. One couldn't help noticing the 'sad eyes', and Keith turned around and



Familiar site - one of many ex battle fields

said to me: 'I wonder how many people he seen dying throughout the ongoing war over the past century, how many people did he witnessed dying of malaria, Ebola fever, yellow fever, and whatever live thrown onto them, don't you think we will actually be able to learn from him, imagine how many stories he'll be able to tell, but instead he's just another in the African jungle, surviving the regulations set by dictators and enforced by a magnitude of rebels, carrying the memories and pain'. He followed by;

'You know they say the eyes are actually the window of one's soul?' he turned sideways and wiped a tear from the eye...

The Island lifestyle is great, we are spoiled brats, having so much that we are actually gaining weight! I'm starting to sound like a Padre now but if you haven't been up in Africa you probably don't have an idea of what poverty really means. We came across thousands, and there are millions who just live from the earth, they got nothing except clothing issued by NGO's, they make their huts from branches, mud, banana leaves and other vegetation. Thank you to all DEAT personnel, who really look well after us, we received very nice brand name clothing, medicine for the year and a generous supply of food! Till next time, keep safe!

Demining dogs flown in by Helicopter





My Pride and Joy...

What do you get when you place 8 individuals on an Island together? A Chaplain's pride and joy.

Why do I say that and what do I mean by that? Let me explain.

It all started when I was selected as the chaplain for Team 54. Doing my medical, praying that I will be fit enough to join the expedition, and then the good news "You have been accepted. At first I was scared and confused because of what I would find. Tossing and turning, having sleepless nights of did I do the right thing? There was also that question mark about the one year that the team must stay on the Island. Who stays for one year on an Island and keeps his or her sanity? There must be something wrong with this team?

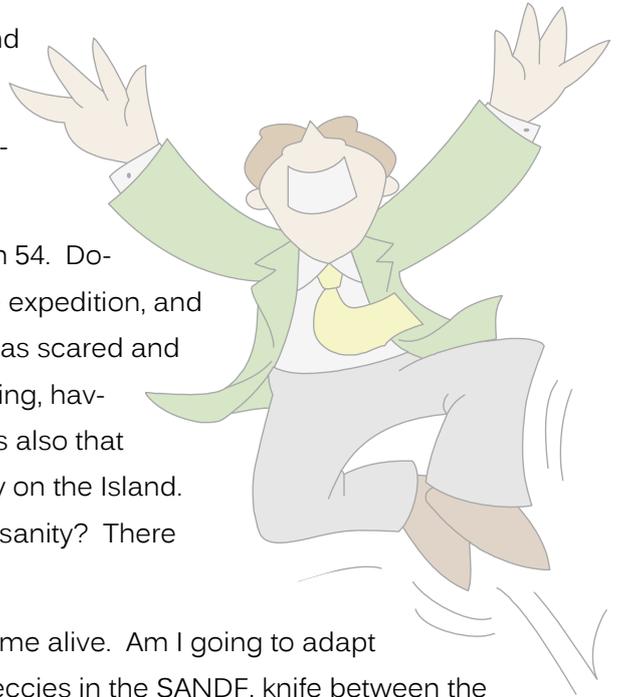
Then came the team training and my nerves were eating me alive. Am I going to adapt to this bunch. I was imagining this team, as I know the Reccies in the SANDF, knife between the teeth and scared of nothing on earth. During training I saw another side of the members. They were also just human beings, scared for the unknown and that made me to relax in their presence. Gradually the situation changed and before long I was part of a Team, not just any team, but the A-Team. We laughed and enjoyed ourselves with the team training, spending more and more time together and getting to know each other. This was precious time not wasted.

It was during this period that I realized how unique everyone actually was. Their love for Mother Nature and the urge to preserve nature was the only thing that drove them. The laying aside of their agendas and the courage to stay on an Island for a whole year. The eagerness to be out in the field, come rain or sunshine. The determination to work overtime even if there was no work. Picking up papers and other waste around the base so that the birds can't be harmed.

Now you understand why I say it is my team and that I am proud of them. Keep up the good work on the Island.

I Love You All...

by Chaplain Elsabé Francis





No Idea....?

Well the title says it all I have no idea as to what I will be writing about in this article, been that as it may, bear with me if you do not understand what I am scribbling about.

Some words in this article will be replaced by others in an effort to make it more interesting "I hope", for instance *Drunk* from henceforth shall be referred to as *Happy*, *Sad* will be an acronym for *Sober and depressed*. Maybe will be the dominant word beginning or in the middle of sentences since I have no idea what I am writing about?

Maybe I should write about the greatest events which have been happening in and around our little piece of heaven...how about our major achievement Dries and Chantal's engagement. When everyone is escaping from any sort of commitment Dries took plunging to another level. He finally decided to settle down with the girl he adores maybe that is something to write about don't you think? I usually see him *happy* I think he is very very *happy*.

Maybe I should be writing about a bunch of joy I received earlier this, a little girl, whom although haven't met yet look forward to seeing her. With the intentions of doing anything for her and willing to strive hard for her well being...I am *happy* with her existence. As if those two events were not great we took happiness to the next level, we had a wedding right here on the Island. We celebrated Tom's sisters wedding and I believe that we took the price for the *happier* guests away from the actual reception. We danced, we ate, hell we were so *happy* that it took some till the early hours of the morning to finally realise that the wedding back home would by then be long over. Hence I referred to us as the *happiest* bunch away from the actual wedding reception.

I thought that drama was left way back home but trust me I have not seeing two people have such drama despite the immense distance that exists between them. This is a light hearted article thus no names will be revealed it shall only be us who know whom we are referring to.

Maybe Mr. X and Ms. Y should forget their previous shortcomings and problems, and finally decide to start afresh. Since somehow Ms. Y has admitted her errors although not entirely, because the admission was not on its entirety I think Mr. X should just compromise and forget about the past. If they can not agree on mat-





ters I believe they should stop calling each other and wait till we return so that they can iron out their issues face to face. Or they will end up hating each other...hint! hint! What is at play here is a clash of egos and we all know how egos impede everything so this two are actually *happy* when they think about each other but very Sad when they actually get a chance to make each other *Happy*. So guys please be happy with love.

Maybe Henky-boy should stop doubting his ability to play the guitar, all this doubt is standing on his way of achieving guitar greatness. He must just play for the love of music and stop thinking of the guitar as an instrument rather as his soul..since with your soul you follow what you feel is right. So Henk fear not of hitting wrong keys just play until you are no longer self aware just be *happy my man happy in music*.

Well since I believe this is my least better article ever written I shall part with it here, least I start sounding like our intelligent void ruling party and its memberships i.e. Julius Malema. All my intentions were gunned at making readers aware of the word happy's dominance in the article more than anything. It displays that despite life's hick-ups we still come out victorious and I urge everyone back home to interchange words to create meaning to their own situations and life. If you decide what a word/s mean to your own individual situation it is quite easy to solve them, since there are no restrictions to how you find meaning. Drunk/happy is not a bad word as it does not necessarily refer to liquor intoxication and what not...but also our positive state of mind. I have no idea what I scribbled about so stop beating yourself trying to make sense of this article

by Clueless... oh! I mean Itumeleng Lefakane



The Major Theme Park...

Now when they said that we would share this Island with the animals, we didn't think that that included beds as well.

You see, over the last couple of weeks mouse activity has picked up considerably in the field as well as around the base area. The only conclusion that comes to mind is that food out there is harder to come by and that the mice are searching larger areas for food to stock up for the winter months that are almost upon us. The only thing is that we have also discovered that these mice are not only desperate and will eat anything they find, but they are persistent in their attempts to find the smallest crumb of bread for their busy metabolism. In the case of Tom and his snackwitches he told us about this noise that he heard upon eating his snackwitches in his room and only later to realise that it was mouse busy eating away at his floor from underneath to get inside his room (this is due to the base standing on stilts). Tom had finished his meal and the grinding of little mouse teeth under his carpet stopped. It is clear what they were after, and let me tell you that when that snackwitch maker is on it even brings to a halt and draws me from the Lab to the kitchen.



Paul and I were up on the mountain a couple of nights ago on one of our routine colony checks on the Tristan Albatross and we spent the night in a tent as we had some work the following day as well to be finished in the area. We had another killer meal. It was smashed potatoes (the powder type) mixed with a tomato soup and peas mixed into it all with a nice tin of pilchards in the side for some protein. The point where it became interesting was the fact that we discovered the next morning that there was a new hole in our tent, small enough for a mouse's head and a biscuit on the inside of the tent, eaten, forming a perfect mouse feeding half circle in the side of the biscuit.

There is also then the base again which is as mouse proof as our "gortex" jackets are waterproof. It seems that they are coming in everywhere and no matter how many traps get set in the base or how many attempts are made to keep them out, there is always some little fellow running around in this theme park. On sitting in the dining area playing some playstation games at night it surprises me sometimes as much as it entertains me to see how they move about. Running all along the walls, up a wire and onto of a counter, a little jump into a little window and into the kitchen they go, only to see them return the same way as they entered. They run across the dinning floor and one of them visited me that night on the couch. It was a brief and adrenalin packed visit as I looked over my shoulder after hearing the scratch on the couch linen.

Many of our rooms are mice proof though and some of us islanders have mice traps right at our doors, others have strips of carpet in front of their doors and some have traps inside their rooms, but in some cases those mice still find their way into our rooms, and sometimes, into our beds. *By Henk Louw...*



Halfway for us...

We go for our eight month on the Island, more than halfway. So far we enjoy the Island life and we are a great team. Sometime syou are hoping for time to go faster, because being on an Island for so long get's to you.

Some of plants on the Island also started to grow slower, because the winter is coming and you can see the difference in the colour of vegetation. For some of the birdlife the parental times are over, because the Sooty-, Yellow Nose Albatross and Shearwater chicks are going to fledge in the next couple of weeks. The Rock hopper Penguin chicks fledged 2 months ago, but the parents came back a month ago to molt (loose their old feathers). We also weighed 60 Rock hoppers before the molt and 60 after the molt. They are going to sea in the next 2 weeks and will be coming back to breed again in September, then we are going back to our homes.

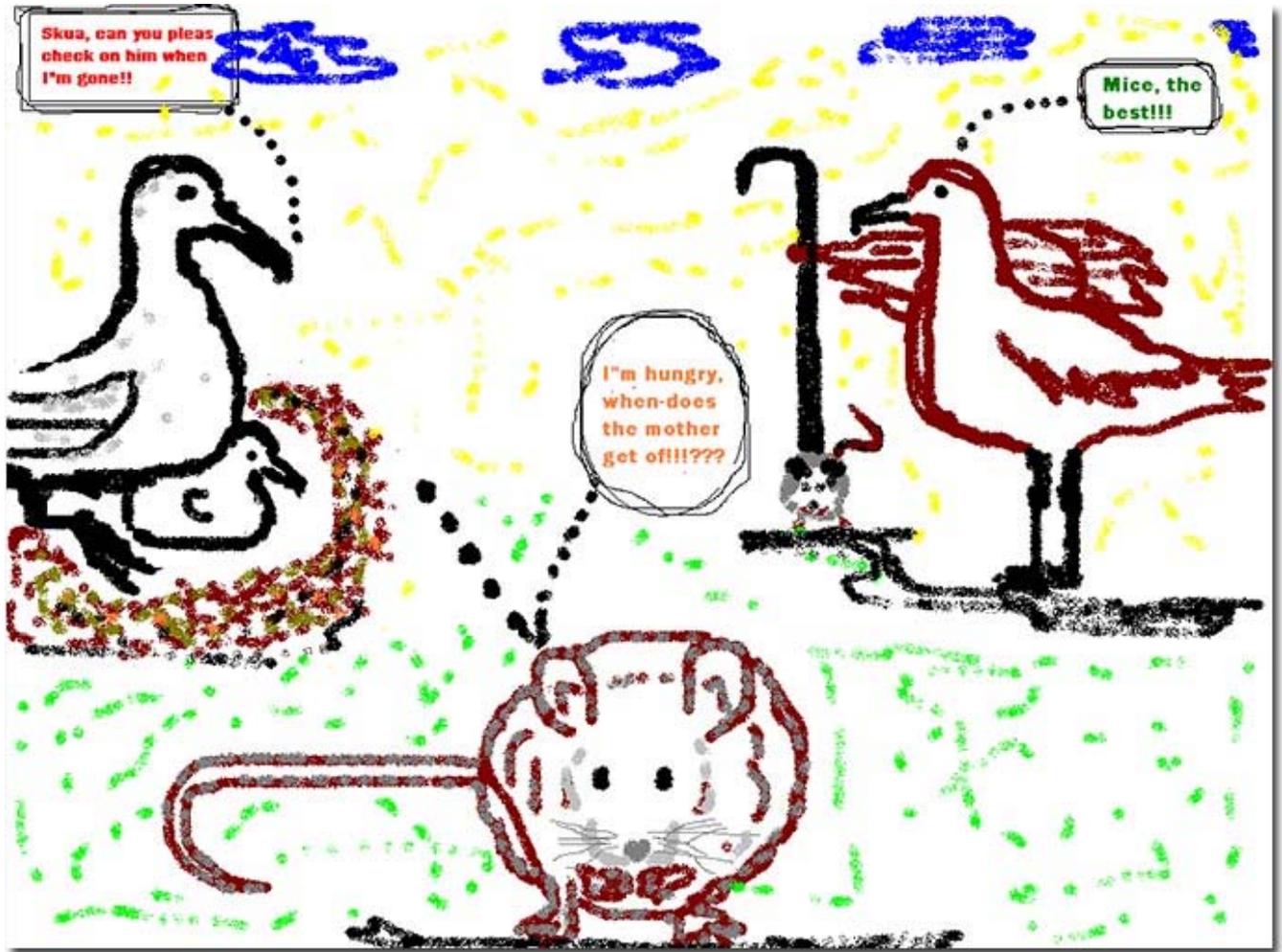
The Tristan chicks are hatched now after 2 months or so of incubating. Now there's 8 months of chick rearing for them. It's a very hard time for the Albatross chicks because of the mice on the Island predating on the chick in the winter months. Because of food getting harder to find for the mice, they prey on the chicks. We can already see the difference in sightings of mice in the field and around base. The mice are getting more active looking for food during the day and night now.

Hopefully we can get good video camera evidence on mice killing chicks, so that people can really see what's going on.

Paul



Newly Fledged Albatross Chick...



by Paul Visser...



Gough Island Communication Suite...

In the past, one of the major considerations of a South African National Antarctic Program (SANAP) island trip was whether you could deal with the isolation. Before satellite systems, High-Frequency (HF) radio communication was used and I believe each team member was allocated one time-limited call per month. During my expedition to Antarctica in 2006-2007, we had weather dependant voice communications and extremely slow data rates. This was great since I could still call my mom but was sheltered from all the horrible world news and terrible rugby scores on the Net.

The advent of satellite communication however has paved the way for real time data gathering and dissemination, greatly broadening the scope of research possibilities in remote areas.

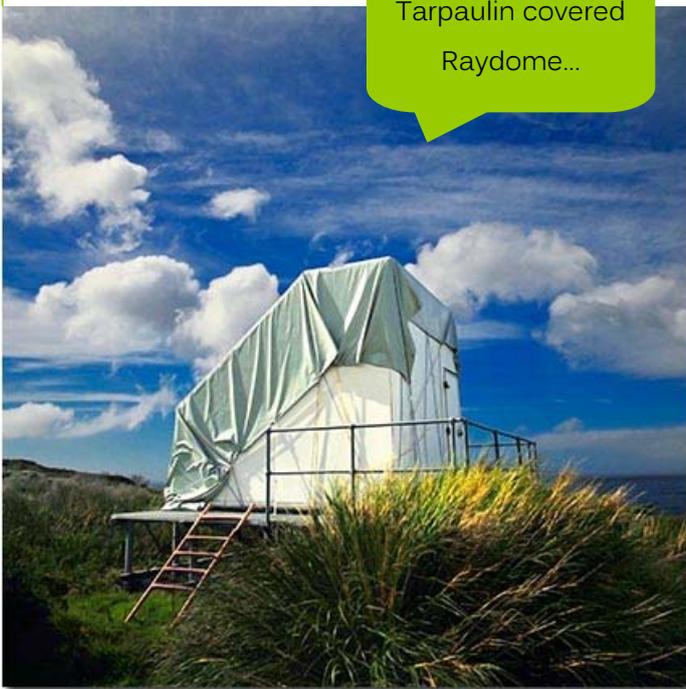
These days we have relatively stable satellite communication so I can speak to my mom anytime I like for as long as I want but unfortunately my morning cup of coffee is once again polluted by heartburn inducing world news and political flatulence. This is the bane of the recovering information addict.

Our communications server is situated at the SANAP Headquarters in Cape-Town, hence the Cape-Town dialing code. Last year the server was still located in Pretoria and we had a tuff time convincing unbelievers that we were in fact in Antarctica and not on a farm outside Brits... at least that's what they told us but I know some of my team mates were convinced we were in dream controlled cryogenic stasis on the above mentioned farm. I guess we'll never know for sure... moving on swiftly.

The bandwidth allocation between the four stations are:

Station	Transmitting(Kb/s)	Receiving(Kb/s)
Cape Town	512	512
SANAE	256	512
Gough Island	128	512
Marion Island	128	512

The satellite used is an Atlantic Ocean equatorial geostationary satellite which implies very low vertical dish alignments for Marion Island and Antarctica (SANAE) thereby causing signal quality to be attenuated by heavy precipitation and very large meteorites about to hit the earth in the South-Atlantic Ocean. However, SANAE has a larger dish (and very little rain...) and therefore minimizes the influence of precipitation at least. The satellite dish on Gough Island has a more vertical alignment. This leads to a greater surface area where water can seep and collect on the Ray-dome, the fiberglass box the satellite dish is housed in for protection against the elements. In the case of Gough Island the Ray-dome has perished due to extreme sun, rain and wind over the years. During storms the water saturated top cover leads to rain-fade, which is water based attenuation of the signal strength. After installation of the new satellite system we observed massive drops



Tarpaulin covered Raydome...

in signal strength during rain storms. Chantal then decided to cover the entire Ray-dome with one of the tarpaulins we keep for missing roof emergencies. This solved the problem and our signal has stabilized completely. Now we can partake in global hysteria even when it rains.

As is usual with technology, it's prone to failing. We therefore have a backup in the form of our High-Frequency (HF) radio. The HF signal is bounced off the ionosphere for communication beyond the horizon. We have talked with Cape-Town, Marion, SANAE and our close neighbors Tristan de Cunha on HF. This mode of communication is also used with shipping and specifically the SA Agulhas during

relief voyages and for listening to Saturday rugby games on RSG when the Net decides to capitulate.

For line-of-site communication we have Very High-Frequency (VHF) radios. This is used by team members when they go out into the field as a simple safety mechanism although the line-of-site constraint minimizes VHF usefulness on a mountainous island. Vincent claims he spoke to Elvis on his VHF set while servicing the one generator. We believe he tasted old diesel, Vincent, not Elvis.

Lastly we have a Morse code signal lamp which depends heavily on line of site and the ability of transmitter and receiver to decipher a defunct code. Chantal may be slightly uptight if ever required to communicate by this method and may dot more than she dashes.

Lastly, the Biologists, Henk and Paul, has a satellite telephone which may come in handy although not part of the official communications suite on Gough Island. Their employer, Royal Society for Preservation of Birds, specifically, may be moderately to incredible irate if we use the satellite phone to listen to a British and Irish Lions rugby test in case of a regular communication failure. That call may cost approximately R960... definitely worth it. [Dries]



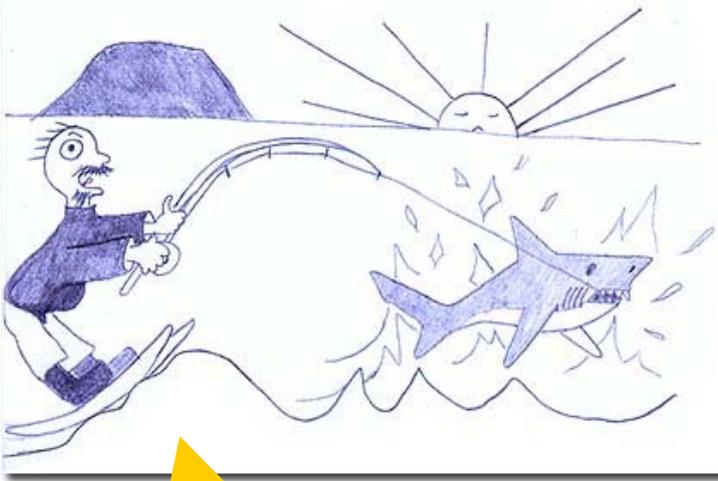


Merging Rivers...

Far up in the great big sky were "H2" and "O", two drops of water. They spent all their time up in the clouds flying high on thermals and watching the world below in its splendour, knowing that one day their relationship would go through some rigorous times on the ground. So came the weather fronts closer to Gough Island and they fell from the sky, all the way together until they hit the ground, the only problem was that "H2" landed on the western slope and "O" on the eastern slope of mount Zeus, their paths split and as they moved slowly and surely to the nearest river. They met so many lost and confused droplets of water and soon they made new friends in their new system of being. They passed through the valleys, great and big and what once seemed small to them from up there in the sky is now a mountain before them while they cruise through the valleys, but it was not all pleasant and comfortable. They had to dodge thirsty plant roots and had to endure big waterfalls and lets not forget the thirsty mice once again. They neared the ocean, they could hear it roar, there was hope.

Word travelled through the river system of the great big fall, the final big one before you reach the ocean, fear rattled "H2" and "O" both as it's another tumble into another crazy system. By the thousands the droplets plunged down the waterfall; the two rivers have finally merged into the well known pool called Swemgat (swimming hole). "H2" and "O" endured the last bit of the ride together and stayed together until they once again watched the earth from way up in the clouds. [Hewk]

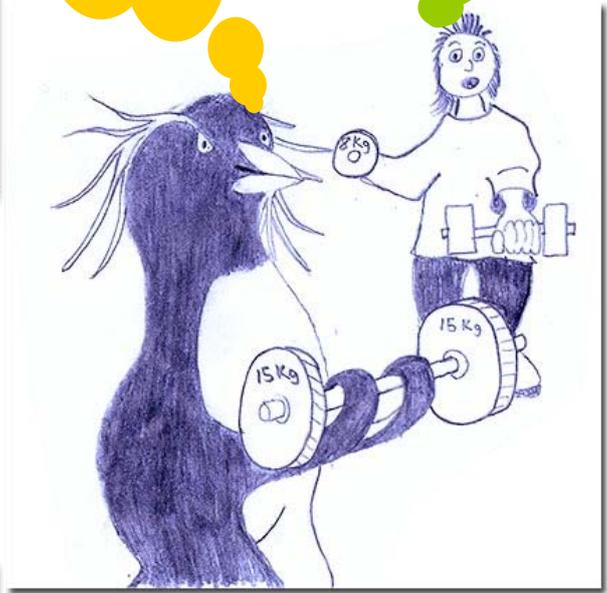




A Shark (blue) bullying Tom at Snoekgat...

Rocky: "believe I can fly..."

Paul: "I believe I can score a try..."



Vincent Clubbing with seals...

Rupert doing an Upper Air ascent...



by Vince...



The Tristan Albatross...

It seems that this month's newsletter concentrates a lot on the aggressive alien house mice, so I saw it fit to include this article to support the seriousness of the situation.

Description:

With an enormous wingspan up to 3.5 meters, the huge Tristan albatross is well adapted for gliding the ocean airs. They were previously considered a member of the wandering albatross, and are probably indistinguishable in the field, but the Tristan albatross is generally smaller, darker and slower to acquire the white adult plumage.

Range and Habitat:

Breeding populations are restricted to the Tristan da Cunha group island group in the Southern Atlantic Ocean. Extinct on the main island of Tristan, the chief colony now exists on Gough Island, with two to three breeding pairs on Inaccessible Island. The annual breeding population on Gough Island varies from year to year, but is estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,400 pairs. Outside of the breeding season, the Tristan albatross disperses to South Atlantic and South African waters, with numerous recent records from Brazilian waters and one from Australia, showing that these birds travel into the Indian Ocean .

Biology

As with other albatross species, fidelity to partners and to the breeding colony is high. These albatross have a slow reproductive rate, producing just one egg every two years. Egg-laying occurs from December to February, and the chick fledges the following November to February. Young birds return to the islands after three to four years (four to five years old) and usually first breed at eight years of age, but some breed as young as six.

This albatross feeds in the open ocean on fish, squid and crustaceans and probably follows ships and trawlers for offal and galley refuse.





Threats

The Tristan albatross is in grave danger of becoming extinct in the foreseeable future, with numbers having decreased by 28 percent over 46 years on Gough Island, disappeared almost entirely on Inaccessible Island and already become extinct on Tristan da Cunha. The dramatic decline in numbers on Inaccessible Island is attributed to predation by feral pigs (now absent) and humans, while the extinction on Tristan was probably the result of human exploitation, in addition to predation by rats. On Gough, storms have caused peat slips that have buried and killed nesting adults, although this is likely to be only a very rare occurrence. Furthermore, if one parent is lost at sea due to injuries caused by long line fishing, the other cannot cope with the food demands of their chick and the chick will most probably die.

Recent research has also shown that invasive, introduced house mice, three times the size of those in Europe, are devastating seabird populations on Gough Island by preying upon chicks. The chicks are up to 250 times the weight of the mice but are largely immobile and defenceless, the species having evolved over millions of years on an island with no natural predators. Approximately 1,000 Tristan albatross chicks are thought to be killed each year by these seemingly unlikely predators. A recent survey has shown that, in 2008 the number of Tristan albatross chicks that have gone on to fledge is five times lower than it should be.

Conservation:

A study of the predatory mice conducted by The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and funded by the UK government's Overseas Territories Environment Programme has shown that their eradication from the island is feasible. Unfortunately, however, until the conservation initiative receives adequate funding, the Tristan albatross will continue to be driven towards extinction. Gough Island is widely recognised as having one of the most diverse bird colonies in the world, including four endangered species, and every effort should therefore be made to protect it and the rich biodiversity it hosts.



References:

- IUCN Red List (December, 2008) <http://www.iuncredlist.org>
- Save the Albatross (December, 2008) <http://www.savethealbatross.net>
- BirdLife International (December, 2008) <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/species>
- Ocean Wanderers (December, 2008) <http://www.oceanwanderers.com/Tristan.Alb.html>
- Ryan, P.G., Cooper, J. and Glass, J.P. (2001) Population status, breeding biology and conservation of the Tristan Albatross *Diomedea [exulans] dabbenena*. *Bird Conservation International*, **11**: 35 - 48.
- Cuthbert, R., Hilton, G., Ryan, P. and Tuck, G.N. (2005) At-sea distribution of breeding Tristan albatrosses *Diomedea dabbenena* and potential interactions with pelagic longline fishing in the South



Photo Competition...

The February Photo of the Month produced a tie!



Bunting silhouette...

This is a great capture of the Gough Island Bunting at sunset.

Photographer:

Paul Visser... taken on one of their many field expeditions to Tafelkop...

Beauty and the Beast...

This photo of the base with Mount Zeus in the background was taken just after sunset...

The base is quite old with a lot of "character", hence the title...

Photographer:

Chantal Steyn...





March Photos...

1



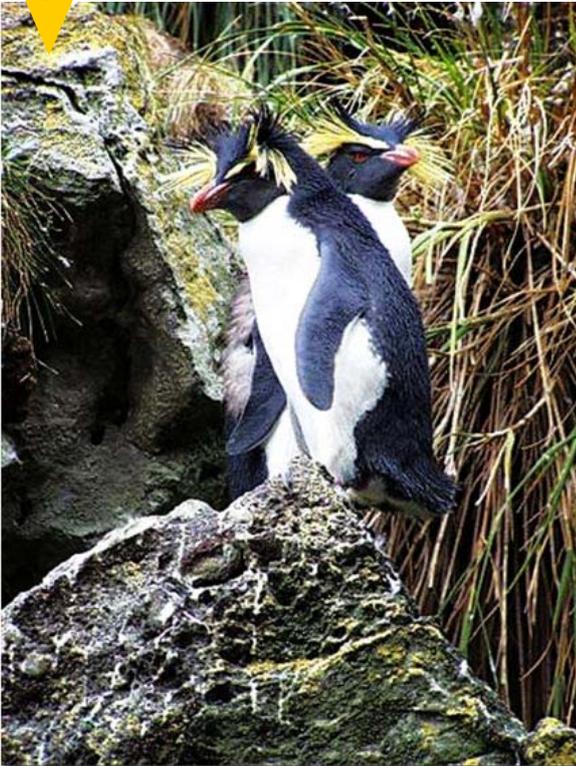
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4



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5





6



Please vote for your favourite foto:

Email: gough@sanap.ac.za

Phone: 021 405 9470

Fax: 021 405 9474

7



8



9



For more photos of Gough Island, please visit our websites:

www.gough.co.za (Team's personal website—see how we cope with island life...)

www.sanap.ac.za (Official Sanap website—learn more about the island and the Marion Island and Antarctic programmes...)



Weather...

Pressure

Ave. Max Pressure	1013.6 hPa
Ave. Min Pressure	1005.5 hPa
Ave. Pressure	1009.3 hPa
Max Pressure	1027.3 hPa
Min Pressure	986.4 hPa

Temperature

Ave. Max Temp	17.3 °C
Ave. Min Temp	11.9 °C
Ave. Temp	14.6 °C
Max Temp	22.1 °C
Min Temp	9.1 °C

Humidity

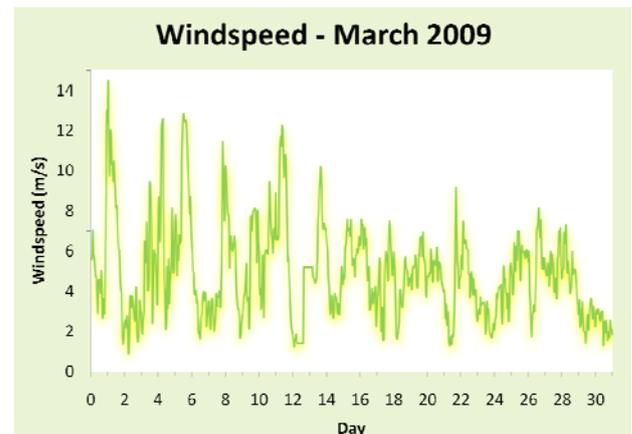
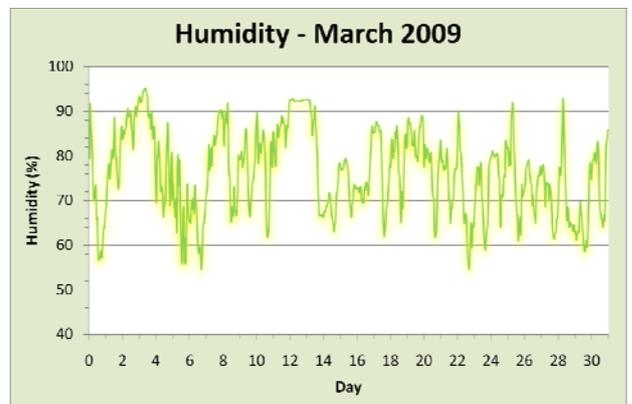
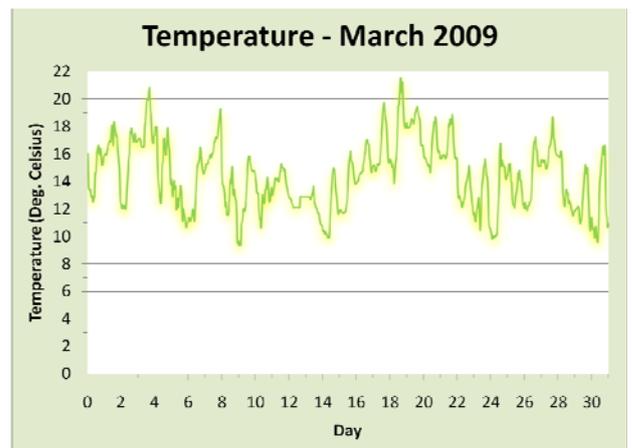
Ave Humidity	76 %
Max Humidity	95 %
Min Humidity	51 %

Wind

Max Wind Gust	28.6 m/s or 102.9 km/h
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Rainfall

Total Rainfall	120.0 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	35.0 mm
Total days with rain	19 days
Total days >1mm	11 days
Total Sunshine	153.9 hours





Sponsors...

Sponsor of the Month:

~Luddite~

Finest wines from finest vines situated on the Bot Rivera (aka Botriver).

Keeping in the Ludite spirit: Picked by hand, perfected by taste!

Technology & Mechanization will never be a substitute for passion.

(luddite@telkomsa.net)

