

# The GOUGH BUNTING

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A fond  
Farewell  
From G66

Gough Makes  
History



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KIM STEVENS



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ROELF DALING



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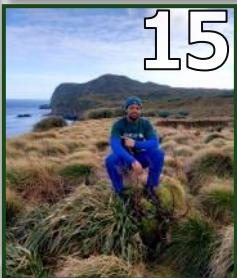
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# From the team leader

Its spring time and that can only mean one thing, yes our expedition is soon coming to the end, not so long ago a brave team of 9 sailed on a ship for a thousand of kilometers into the unknown going to relief another brave team at Gough island, it was an exciting journey sailing to Gough via Tristan da Cuhna and all of us were very excited and looking forward to spending 13 months in isolation. Our 13 months on the island has been filled with a lot of adventure and we were part of history in the making, we accommodated the Geo Searcher crew after they lost their vessel in the sea and got to be part of GIRP.

It hasn't been all fun and games, just like any other team we had our ups and down but I am glad we manage to sort out our difference and get along. Everyone around the base is excited knowing the Agulhas II is finally on its way to take us back home. It has been a great expedition for me, I had the chance to explore the island, learn new things and make new friends. I will forever cherish the time I spent on this island with the rest of G66 team members and all our visitors.

Thank you G66 for making my responsibilities easy.

Ndo livhuwa Ndaa!!

*Jaffter*



# From the editor

Here we are once again, with another final issue of a Gough Bunting newsletter. Only this time, it will be my final issue as editor of the Gough Bunting as well. After spending two years on Gough, through a global pandemic, it has come to a close for me. There is obviously still so much to do and see on this wild wonderland, but that is for future islanders now to experience. From G65 through to G66, and the Gough Island Restoration Programme (GIRP), I am so grateful to have worked and lived with all of you. Thank you G66 and GIRP for the best, and busiest, year this island has ever seen. All that's left to say is; Good Luck to G67, and to team VORK (Vonica, Roelf and Kim) for staying a second year to continue the work for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Thank you all once again, and to all the readers of our newsletters.

**ENJOY THE READ**  
*Dylan*

# THE GOUGH ISLAND RESTORATION PROGRAMME

*Text by Andrew Callender*

*& Pete McClelland*

*Photos by Michelle Risi*



Years in the planning, twice delayed and with Covid making its delivery ever more challenging, the operation to eradicate mice from Gough Island has come to its conclusion. The eradication team is busily packing and tidying the Base at the beginning of August, and the SA Agulhas II has left Cape Town to pick the team up.

For over seven weeks, we have been welcomed onto the South African weather station base, adding capacity to the existing accommodation, ensuring that there is plentiful food and trying not to be too great a nuisance. But we know that a sudden influx of 25 additional people has been at best disruptive, and we can only sincerely thank the SANAP team led by Jufter for putting up with such an invasion! While the eradication team will have left by the time of publication, we leave behind still 8 team members (in addition to the continuing SANAP G66 team), both to complete the aviculture component of the operation but also to ensure that the infrastructure that we brought onto the island is packed away and removed over the coming months (we are taking everything we can now, but the programme has not yet finished). We all know that these remote bases accumulate equipment over the years, and the project team are committed to taking out more than we brought!

The project itself has been truly an international partnership, supported by a host of organisations, suppliers and funders. Gough is, of course, a UK Overseas Territory, and the project could not have taken place without the backing of the Tristan Government and community, and generous financial assistance from the UK Government. But the South African component has also been crucial, especially the support from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and specifically the charter of the SA Agulhas II through AMSOL. This is a first-class expedition vessel, that has easily and professionally accommodated our needs to deliver – and now return – the required helicopters, fuel, bait (now spread!) and team to and from the island.

As we prepare to depart, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the organisation that led the Gough eradication, now looks to the future, and pledges to continue to work hand in hand with South Africa as it moves towards an attempt to eradicate invasive mice from its own territory of Marion Island. We will look to sharing available resources and certainly lessons learnt from this endeavour to ensure that some of the world's premier seabird islands are restored and preserved for generations to come.

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Andrew

I had the privilege of visiting Gough during the 2018 takeover for an initial look as an advisor on the eradication of the mice from the island, but as those that have been through it know, a takeover is not the real Gough experience. Not that being there with 45 other people during the eradication was “normal” either but the 10 or so days during takeover are rushed and you don’t get a chance to really enjoy the island – you are a tourist having a quick look around the base area and snapping a few photos for the record but not truly experiencing it. That said, it was during this all too short visit that I got passionate about the island and decided that I wanted to be actively involved in removing the mice.

I’m a keen birder, which is how I became involved in working on islands as some of the best birding is on islands, and my work (30 years for the New Zealand Department of Conservation and the last 8 years as an eradication contractor) has given me the opportunity to visit a range of islands around the world, often as part of planning or implementing eradications. On most of these occasions I was going to islands which had already suffered the ravages of rats, mice, cats etc. and already had a greatly depleted bird life. In comparison Gough was and is still near the top of this slope with thousands of seabirds of a dozen species visiting the island each night but in 20-30 years with ever decreasing rates of recruitment as the mice eat the eggs and chicks, and in some cases adults, and the remaining adults die off naturally it will be a very different place with the occasional bird call in the night rather than the current cacophony of Atlantic and soft plumaged petrels, prions storm petrels etc.

As captured by the “Jurassic Park” welcome sign Gough has a prehistoric feeling to it as you push through the bog ferns catching a glimpse of a moorhen or having a bunting come up to see you but still keeping an eye out just in case a velociraptor should come around the corner. The SANAP base feels like an intrusion in this special place with a cluster of buildings connected by metal walkways. This was further amplified by the eradication team with our mixture of bright white Weather haven tents and polytunnel moorhen aviaries doubling the footprint of the base.



Personal highlights of my visit, other than hopefully getting rid of the mice and saving millions of birds from a horrible death by being eaten alive by mice, was sitting at Admirals Cove in the evening watching thousands of seabirds of up to 12 different species building up in numbers before they flew inland to wait for dark to go to their burrows and then standing outside the new hut, Guys Hut or G base as we referred to it, on some of the calmer evenings listening to the calls of those same birds reverberating of the hill behind base.

Hopefully in 2023 the monitoring team will be able to confirm that the mice are gone and that Gough again belongs just to the birds.

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Pete

# THE GOUGH ISLAND RESTORATION PROGRAMME ...continued

Text by Amy King

Photo by Roelf Daling

Ever since my pal worked on Gough Island, it had been a place I had hoped I would one day be able to visit, especially with a love for seabirds being at the root of a lot of my work. With my background in island eradication and aviculture this project was the perfect opportunity to achieve this, and upon arrival as senior aviculturist in 2020, the island did not disappoint! This truly is one of the most incredible places I have ever lived and worked, with a landscape I never tire of as it changes through the seasons, and the most awe-inspiring wildlife spectacles surrounding us.

Having witnessed first-hand the destruction the mice were having on the albatross chicks, and seeing an empty cave where it should be filled with breeding prions, the postponement of the project was a devastating blow. This affected me to a degree I hadn't anticipated feeling when having to return to the UK. However, this made me more determined to return to be part of this year's effort to restore the island back to its former seabird safe haven!

Arriving as part of the first team on island I have been lucky enough to experience all stages of the process in 2021, including constructing the temporary avicultural and baiting facilities, capturing the safe guard population of endemic Gough moorhen and buntings, assisting with monitoring wild birds, and, most importantly, my main focus being the daily care of the captive birds before, during and after the bait team was undertaking the drop across the island. There is so much to keep us busy the time has flown past! The aviculture team has been working incredibly hard to ensure the best possible care is provided for our birds, with a love for the two species growing on a daily basis. It is hard not have a few favourite individuals as each



From left to right: Rhiannon Gill, Megan Dalton, Amy King, Katie Wells

bird has certain preferences, or provides us with new challenges and we get to know them through their time in captivity, although one common factor for each bird is the amount of cleaning and feeding we must undertake for each. Who knew such a small passerine could produce such a large amount of poo each day?! I am very proud of my team, and various volunteers along the way, for all the hours and hard graft put in to ensure this area of the project is a success, and for the care and attention they give each and every bird we have under our watch.

As the bait drop phase was completed, it was a huge milestone for the project, and as the baiting team left the island in August the aviculture team waved them goodbye, carrying forward the baton to continue the final phases of the project on island, and complete the work to safeguard the endemic land birds.

It's been quite the journey so far, and one I will never forget,

working as part of a team with some of the most hardworking and inspirational individuals in my career so far! We still have a few months to go, and the moorhens and buntings in our care continue to do well, so we are looking forward to the day we can release them safely back into the wild. It will be a privilege, and I am sure a somewhat emotional moment, to see the first chicks for both land and sea birds reared on what we now hope is a mouse free island (although we will not know officially for at least another two years). This is a project everyone involved should be truly proud of!

## Fun Facts:

- **13 500:** mats scrubbed.
- **37 440:** Bunting food D-cups washed & filled.
- **350 km:** walked during Moorhen feeding.
- **2 °C:** Coldest day of feeding
- **161 km.h<sup>-1</sup>:** Strongest gust during feeding.
- **140 mm:** Most rain in 24 hours during feeding.

# Farewell from Jufter Munyai

**What have you missed the most from home?**

I miss my family.

**What will be the first thing you do when you get home?**

Relax with my family.

**What will you miss most about the island?**

Fishing trips down at diesel cove.

**What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough island?**

I've picked up some new cooking skills which will sure come in handy back at home and as for hobbies it has to be fishing.

**What are your plans for the future?**

I'm not sure what the universe has in store for me.

**Give one piece of advice for future islanders?**

Research about the place you going too and mostly have fun when you are there.



**What is your most favourite animal on Gough island?**

Yellow nose albatross.

**What is your least favourite animal on Gough island?**

None.



# Farewell from Catherine Mbazwana

**What have you missed the most from home?**

My family, especially my kids.

**What will be the first thing you do when you get home?**

Drive.

**What will you miss most about the island?**

How peaceful it all is.

**What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough island?**

Making yogurt.

**What are your plans for the future?**

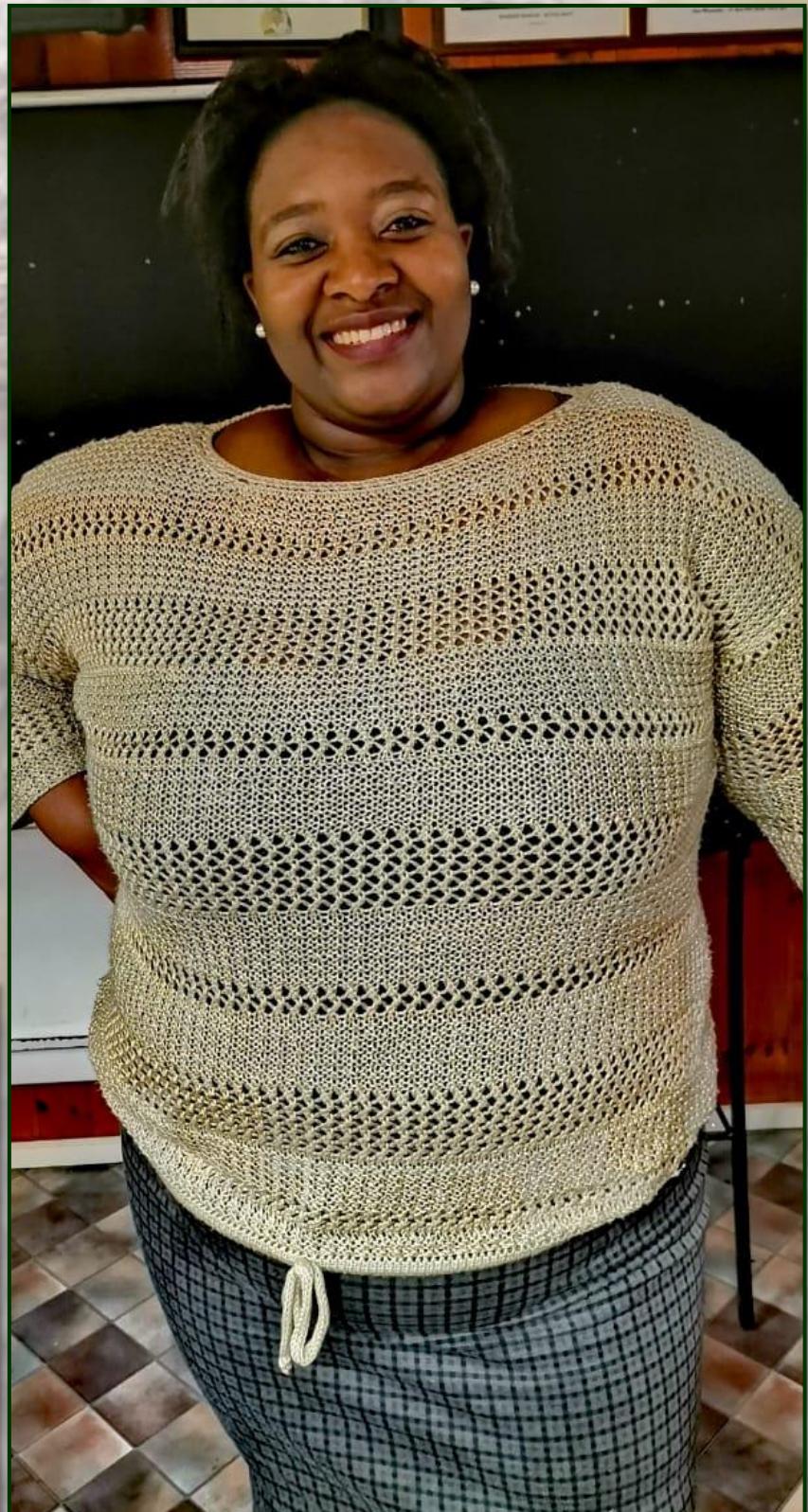
Take it one day at a time.

**Give one piece of advice for future islanders?**

Enjoy every minute.



GOUGH BUNTING



**What is your most favourite animal on Gough island?**

I am not much of an animal person.

**What is your least favourite animal on Gough island?**

Like I said, I am not an animal lover.

# Farewell from Gert Benadé

## What have you missed the most from home?

With the bio-security firmly enforced as well as the long duration of the over-wintering expedition here on Gough Island, I miss fresh salads and foodstuffs the most. Nothing like a potato with fresh sour-cream on it!

## What will be the first thing you do when you get home?

As you know, humans live with their Cat Masters and not the other way around. I will therefore try to win my two cat's affection back after not seeing them for more than a year!

## What will you miss most about the island?

Having built up great friendships and had awesome conversations over the many late nights - it will certainly leave an empty void not having that in the same setting.

## What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough island?

Zen.

## What are your plans for the future?

Trying my utmost best to appease my Cat Masters...

## Give one piece of advice for future islanders?

Do It!



## What is your most favourite animal on Gough island?

My most favorite animal on Gough Island is the lesser spotted Feral Nightcrawler (the lonely night-shift team member or night-owl whom one meets in the kitchen after midnight - best impromptu chats ever!)

## What is your least favourite animal on Gough island?

My least favorite animal on the Island is <REDACTED!>

# Farewell from S'celo Ndwalane

**What have you missed the most from home?**

My family and my car.

**What will be the first thing you do when you get home?**

Spend time with my family.

**What will you miss most about the island?**

The quietness of the island and the remote work.

**What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough island?**

Cooking different dishes from different traditions.

**What are your plans for the future?**

Start farming.

**Give one piece of advice for future islanders?**

Don't overdo things on the island, and try to be open with your fellow team members.



**What is your most favourite animal on Gough island?**

The Rockhopper Penguin



**What is your least favourite animal on Gough island?**

The Skua

# (Not yet) Farewell from Kim Stevens

## What have you missed the most from home?

Mostly my family and friends... and also fresh fruit!

## What will be the first thing you do when you get home?

If I was going home, I'd definitely have a traveling holiday to visit my family and friends.

## What will you miss most about the island?

If I was going home, I'd miss waking up next to nature on my doorstep every day.

## What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough Island?

When I had time I really got in to watercolour painting, loom knitting and photography.

## What are your plans for the future?

To spend another year on Gough, on G67!

## Give one piece of advice for future islanders?

You don't have to go far from base to see some amazing creatures—make the most of living in a World Heritage Site!



## What is your most favourite animal on Gough Island?

A tough one, because Gough has so many incredible animals, but I think the Atlantic Yellow-Nosed Albatross.

## What is your least favourite animal on Gough Island?

The many flies in Summer time.

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# (Not yet) Farewell from Vonica Perold

**What have you missed the most from home?**

Family, friends and fresh fruit & vegetables.

**What will be the first thing you do when you get home?**

Eat fresh fruit & vegetables.

**What will you miss most about the island?**

The beautiful birds and the wilderness

**What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough island?**

I learned how to loom, which is a form of knitting.

**What are your plans for the future?**

I am staying on Gough for another year.

**Give one piece of advice for future islanders?**

Time flies—make the most of it.



**What is your most favourite animal on Gough island?**

The Gough Bunting.

**What is your least favourite animal on Gough island?**

The invasive house mouse, but hopefully we've seen the last of them!

# (Not yet)Farewell from Roelf Daling

## What have you missed the most from home?

Swimming and surfing in the ocean.

## What will be the first thing you do when you get home?

The first thing I'd wish to do, after greeting the family, is to go for a surf with Vonica. After that I'll make a giant fire and braai a whole chicken, along with some fresh sweet potato, baby spinach and asparagus.

## What will you miss most about the island?

The privilege to gaze upon and explore one of earth's untouched and pristine landscapes.

## What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough island?

We had an incredible busy year with the eradication, so time for hobbies was limited. On the work side of things, we got a tremendous amount done. I never dreamed it would be possible to achieve so much in one year, from field-science to construction to baiting to aviculture—I did it all. Two key things I learned is: how much can be accomplished in one day and the more you get done the more you want to do. On the hobby side of things, here is a list of topics that I spent my free time on: Linux, photography, photo editing and printing, videography, entrepreneurship, permaculture, body weight exercising, hiking and navigation, kombucha brewing, yogurt making, bread baking and electronics.

But most important of all I learned that everyone is capable of way much more than they tell themselves, and that you yourself is the only limiting factor.

## What are your plans for the future?

I'll be spending one more year on Gough in which I aim to follow the same trajectory that I'm currently maintaining. After that I'll buy an acre of land and build a modest house and live more sustainable lifestyle.



## Give one piece of advice for future islanders?

Never let yourself be seduced by the trap of least resistance. These are the things that brings you short term satisfaction. Habits that leave you empty and stagnant. They will keep you away from your true self and your deepest dreams. Being on the island is one of the best opportunities you will get to develop yourself mentally, spiritually and/or physically. If you fail to start doing so here, you will probably never do it.

## What is your most favourite animal on Gough island?

The Great Shearwater. Although this bird makes a sound that might sound like a crying baby, it's an absolute master of the flight.

Each year they return to Gough in great numbers from their astoundingly long journey, where they visited four continents.

## What is your least favourite animal on Gough island?

The elephant seal. Spotting one of these usually results in a chaotic scene where others also try to get a glimpse of this beast. But it always disappears quickly and swims back to the Glen, a special beach I haven't yet found the time to go visit, but will do so soon.

# Farewell from Zinhle Shongwe

**What have you missed the most from home?**

My entire family, particularly my son (Siyamthanda).

**What will be the first thing you do when you get home?**

Spending quality time with my son.

**What will you miss most about the island?**

The beautiful scenery, it is peaceful and all the amazing moments I have shared with my team.

**What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough island?**

I have enhanced and refreshed my Geographic Information System skills, and I would like to thank the GIRP GIS team for all the GIS lessons offered. Moreover, my cooking and baking techniques we elevated, and today I am a fisherwoman, special thanks to the team.

**What are your plans for the future?**

I plan to pursue a MSc degree in Hydrometeorology and hopefully participate in other SANAP expeditions. I might get to tick SANE Base off my bucket list.

**Give one piece of advice for future islanders?**

The Island can either destroy or develop you, hence chose the latter option and always prioritize your mental health.



**What is your most favourite animal on Gough island?**

Atlantic yellow-nosed albatross.

**What is your least favourite animal on Gough island?**

It has to be the mice.

# Farewell from Dylan Seaton

**What have you missed the most from home?**

Bananas! And my dog, Nelly.

**What will be the first thing you do when you get home?**

Eat a banana!

**What will you miss most about the island?**

The natural wonder and pristineness of it all.

**What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough Island?**

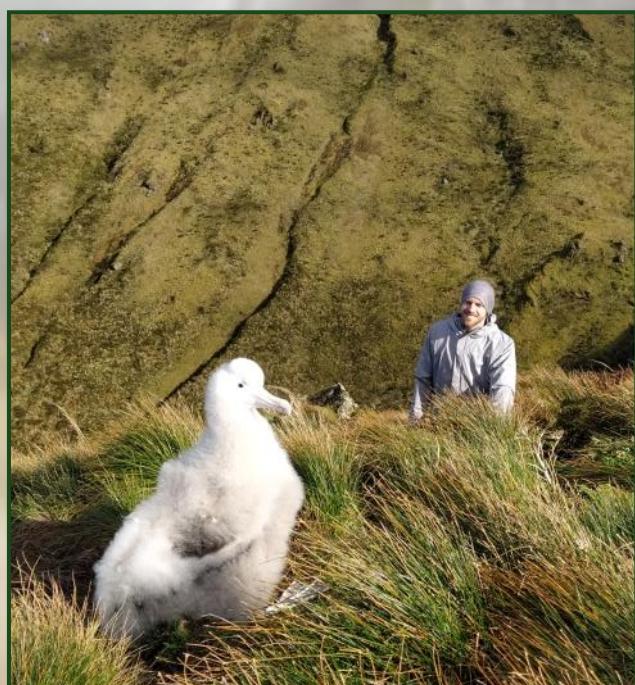
I did a little bit of woodworking, a lot of cooking, as well as learning a lot about the birds here on the island.

**What are your plans for the future?**

Hopefully Marion Island, but I just plan on going with the flow.

**Give one piece of advice for future islanders?**

Get out there! This island and its wildlife is amazing!



**What is your most favourite animal on Gough Island?**

The (Super) Sooty Albatross.

**What is your least favourite animal on Gough Island?**

The flies, although there weren't that many this year.

# Farewell from Asavela Somaxaka

**What have you missed the most from home?**

My family and friends.

**What will be the first thing you do when you get home?**

Hug my dog.

**What will you miss most about the island?**

The gentle noise of the birds and the beautiful mountains that becomes so fascinating when covered by winter snow.

**What new skills or hobbies did you learn while at Gough island?**

I learnt how to fish.

**What are your plans for the future?**

To become better than I was yesterday.

**Give one piece of advice for future islanders?**

Future islanders must reset their mind when they come to the island ad adjust accordingly to the environment of the island.



**What is your most favourite animal on Gough island?**

The Rockhopper Penguin.

**What is your least favourite animal on Gough island?**

The mice, but the good news is that they are gone now.



# From the METKASSIES

**July**

	Average	Maximum	Minimum	Average Max	Average Min
Temperature	10.1 °C	16.4 °C	3.7 °C	12.6 °C	7.5 °C
Pressure	1007.2 hPa	1030.5 hPa	984.9 hPa	1013.1 hPa	1001.5 hPa
Humidity	77 %	96 %	50 %	-	-

**August**

	Average	Maximum	Minimum	Average Max	Average Min
Temperature	9.0 °C	16.5 °C	2.0 °C	11.4 °C	6.6 °C
Pressure	1012.5 hPa	1026.7 hPa	978.4 hPa	1017.6 hPa	1007.8 hPa
Humidity	76 %	94 %	50 %	-	-

**September**

	Average	Maximum	Minimum	Average Max	Average Min
Temperature	9.3°C	17.1 °C	2.0 °C	11.5 °C	7.0 °C
Pressure	1010.7 hPa	1035.8 hPa	968.4 hPa	1016.9 hPa	1004.6 hPa
Humidity	79 %	97 %	47 %	-	-

**July**

Max Wind Gust	44.6 m.s <sup>-1</sup>
Total Rainfall	460.0 mm
Highest rainfall in 24 Hours	139.5 mm
Total days with rain	31 days
Total days ≥ 1 mm	26 days
Total Sunshine	65.1 hours

**August**

Max Wind Gust	43.0 m.s <sup>-1</sup>
Total Rainfall	200.6 mm
Highest rainfall in 24 Hours	55.4 mm
Total days with rain	29 days
Total days ≥ 1 mm	24 days
Total Sunshine	91.8 hours

**September**

Max Wind Gust	31.7 m.s <sup>-1</sup>
Total Rainfall	207.6 mm
Highest rainfall in 24 Hours	41.0 mm
Total days with rain	25 days
Total days ≥ 1 mm	15 days
Total Sunshine	83.2 hours