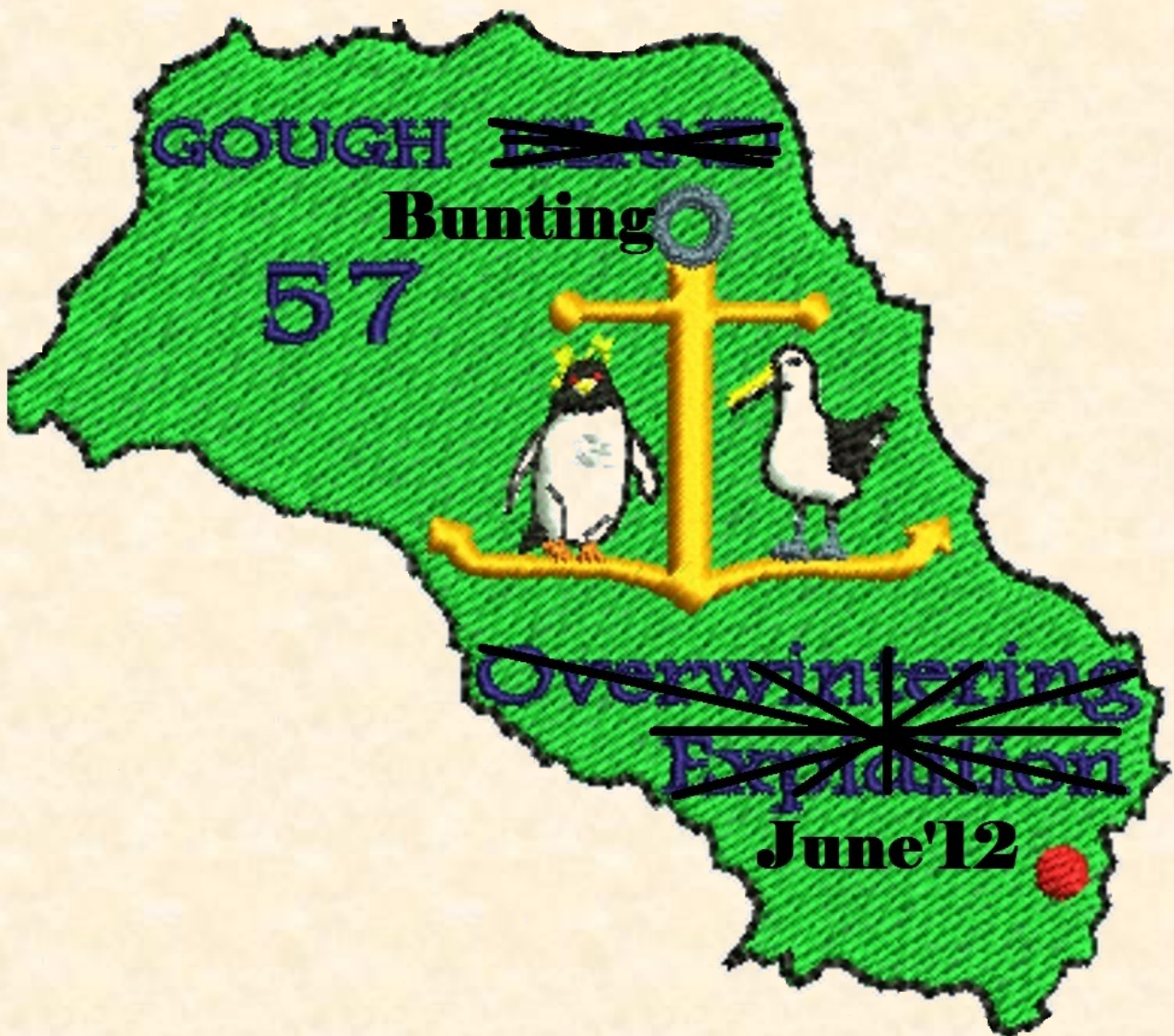


# Gough



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## Freshly brewed Coffee

One early morning sitting in the small room that is home to the fridge's generators. Drinking freshly brewed coffee and enjoying a smoke. I thought about the walks (or I'd rather say falls and slips) exploring the island, taking photo's, laughing at each other is all coming to a end. It made me a little sad but on the other hand it's not so long then I'm back home spending time with my family and friends. It is strange having these conflicting emotions.

I would like to say happy mid-winter to all. We had a small get together a nice social evening. Having pizza, playing games and good conversation is a good recipe for a party. I thank the Administrator and his wife for the lovely bottle of sparkling wine, It's a good start to a social evening.

That's all folks

Sunette





## Island Life

This time I have to start off with some sad news. I received a message during the month that one of our Tristan Island friends tragically passed away after being washed off the rocks on Tristan da Cunha, our closest neighbours. I want to express my deepest sympathy to all his family and friends for their loss.

I was standing down at crane point the other day watching a Tristan albatross as it was skimming over the waves almost closely hugging the water and only when I saw its silhouette in the water did I realise that it might be following its own reflection in the calmer parts of the water. Skipping one wave after the next only to resume its search for himself on the other side. It made me think of us islanders. Maybe we are also just roaming around the oceans trying to find ourselves. Trying to figure out who and what we are and for what purpose we were delivered onto this earth. That is why some islanders keep on returning to these inhospitable environments which were actually only meant to be a habitat for seabirds and mammals. Some of these birds are even lucky in finding a life partner throughout their roaming and maybe some are not.

Or maybe we are like these opportunistic island mice. Now there is an example of tenacity. Being hunted and hated we will use any opportunity to try building a home and a nest wherever we are temporarily safe from the cruelty of mankind. They will nest in the back of electronic apparatus after gnawing up a dictionary book to use as fodder then they will gnaw through electric cable to get to their destination. I had this hair rising experience the other day when I tried to block a mouse entrance with a pot scourer. Not a good Idea as the cable insulation was already eaten away and the scourer flashed into a ball of flame.



We might even be like the Island flies being able to live in the harshest conditions. Nowhere in Africa have I seen the likes of them. I read somewhere that a house fly can only fly in winds up to 15 Km /hour. Not these ookes. You can be sitting outside in a 40 knot wind. A big fat blue brommer will pass you in a flash, do a Cuban eight then do a vertical upward roll ending in a stall-spin and end the display with a wheels up belly landing right in the middle of the glass of refreshment you only recently topped up. Yaagh. Has anyone ever thought of doing a thesis on these pests. I heard somewhere they are called the Lesser-housefly. Superman fly would have been a better description. Not even the harsh Gough winter can deter these flies. Not to talk of the flying tics. Another kind of fly you get here. You can hit them, pinch them even jump on them. They are indestructible and they bite. (Luckily we islanders have not reverted to that tactic.....Yet!)

Well it is now mid winter, the shortest coldest wettest windiest time of the year and I am mostly confined to Gough Kantoor. Why do I call it Gough Kantoor? I will explain in Afrikaans... *"Party mense dink omdat jy hier aangestel is om instandhouding te doen moet jy ook kan TOOR!!!"*

I hear that some of the team want to go to Swemgat for a quick midwinter dip. I just hope they take along anti-freeze and magnifying glasses. I am sure there will be some pictures forthcoming from this event.

So I wish you all a Very Happy and Cosy Mid winter party in front of a fireplace if possible or even in the sunny part of your houses with a bit of biltong and brandy at hand while the dog and cat lay snoring on the carpet.

Leo.



## THE GOFF'S

Mid winter has come and gone, but the hibernation continues on the little island paradise. On the island rain and strong winds is normal during the winter months, but some work still needs to be done, even though the Goff's would rather be in their warm rooms.

Tall, Short and Mop continue discussing the different clouds and differences between rain and showers. In the evenings they go outside, even while it's raining and totally dark to determine the cloud cover. Techie always wonders how they can see the clouds when he can't even see his hand in front of him on those dark evenings, but we all know by now they are better than the fortune tellers at the carnival.

Even with the rain and strong winds Princess and Zoom have been busy removing the naughty Pearl Gina plants from the cliffs near the house. They are doing really well, removing so many that it looks like the Pearl Gina's will be gone soon. They also went to check up on their feathered friends again at Gonydale, Princess said it would be sunny and warm the weather was terrible and they got back wet and cold, but after a nice hot shower they looked and smelt normal again.

Techie and Redcross have been keeping busy with their gym routine and fixing things around the base. They had real fun and laughter when the water pipe got damaged during a storm, carrying up a new length of pipe and a bag full of fittings and clamps on a muddy overgrown little path had them slipping and sliding all over. Techie laughed so much at Redcross that he ended up falling just as much as her. They repaired the pipe in knee deep water, but ended up being soaked from head to toe and covered in mud. Redcross found one of Princess's feathered friends that had fallen into the river soaking wet and shivering with the cold.





Techie put the feathered one in his jacket to keep him nice and warm and then they headed home with a bounce in their step knowing the Goff's could shower again (you don't want to smell a Goff that has not had a shower in a few days). At the house Techie gave the feathered one to Princess, who dried him off and kept him nice and warm till he could go home that evening. Techie says he always feels nice inside when he can help the feathered ones and thinks Princess has the best job in the world and enjoys listening to the stories she tells about herself and her feathered friends.

It may sound as though the Goff's are so busy that they can't take time off, but with mid-winter they really enjoyed themselves by having a party and playing games. Some of the Goff's enjoyed the party so much that they only woke up late the next day and very thirsty, but the smiles on all the faces showed it was a wonderful evening.

Till next time

M



## From the Lab - by Karen & Sylvain

Now we are sometimes really surprised by the quietness of the island during the day. As we already said, the white dots of Yellow-nosed albatrosses disappeared as did the noisy Rockhopper penguins. Almost all Sooty Albatrosses are gone and we hear only rarely their particular call. Even Fur seals are less noisy and numerous along the coast. Terns also left the island... However, the various Moorhen calls continue to punctuate days, as the more discreet vocalizations of buntings. Grey Petrels can be seen coming to feed their chick and offer sometimes a flight so close to us that we can admire the ashen patterns of their upside feathers.

We found that even Tristan Albatrosses are less active as courting birds are rarer. So Gonydale and Albatross Plain are quieter as their vocalizations punctuate days much less frequently. However, we observed several feeding events with chicks calling with a voice closer to the one of adults. Some of them compete with each other for the best decorated nest, adding leaves or twigs of *Carex*, *Scirpus* or *Uncinia* species in their nest cup. Chicks also started to move quite a bit, leaving their nest to go for a walk (one was found about 12 m away from its nest!) and building a new nest about 2-3 m away. We hope that this behaviour will help them to avoid mouse attacks... We saw two chicks which have been attacked, exhibiting wounds on the rump or on wings. Giant Petrels were waiting around them and when we passed around one of the nest 2 hours later they were cleaning the chick carcass. Two further neighbouring chicks of the latter disappeared in a week time. That suggests how quick chicks can be decimated! In total, we recorded about 20 further failures this month, more than the half occurring in the Hummocks.



Tristan Male feeding its chick

Tristan Chick taking a walk



Tristan Chick in its new nest ( the old one in background)



While the seabird life decreases on the island, vegetation gets brown as the bracken dies and mosses ripe. However, *Sagina* is still growing and we have been busy with this invasive plant control as during previous months. We checked for plants the highly infested areas (Snoekgat, Diesel Cove, Crane Point) as well as cliffs along an about 400-m long coastal area around the base. We removed thousands of plants from seedling size to more than 12 cm in diameter. We sprayed herbicide and stripped soil to prevent the spread and to reduce the distribution. However, this is a long-term job and it is sometimes a little bit discouraging to find new plants where we spent a long time to remove them one to three months ago...

Sagina plant in bud



Sylvain stripping soil at Snoekgat



Calling Gough Moorhen



Adult Bunting



## Une question de temps / *A weather issue* - by Karen

Le vent souffle à 35-40 nœuds, averses et rayons de soleil se succèdent à un rythme effréné, un arc-en-ciel apparaît et disparaît de-ci de-là, l'océan moutonne et tourbillonne... On essaie de se réchauffer avec un bon chocolat chaud ou une soupe. Drôle d'impression en ce mois de juin quand on est une « nord-hémisphérienne » et qu'on a vécu près de 30 ans au bord de la Méditerranée... Le vent, je connais, avec le mistral et la tramontane. Les grosses averses aussi. Le froid, un peu... Mais certainement pas en juin ! C'est la période de la mise en route des piscines ou des premières journées à la plage, de la sortie des lunettes de soleil, T-shirts, shorts et crème solaire...

*Wind blows at 35-40 knots, rain showers and rays of sunlight follow each other at an unbridled speed, a rainbow appears and disappears here and there, ocean is covered in white horses and whirls... We try to get warmer with a hot chocolate or a soup. This creates a strange impression in this month to someone from north hemisphere and who has lived almost 30 years by the Mediterranean Sea... Strong wind, I know, with mistral and tramontana. Heavy rain and showers, I also know. Cold, a little bit... But not in June! This is the period when swimming pools are cleaned and started up, when first days are spent on the beach, when sunglasses, T-shirts, shorts and sunscreen are get out...*

Les prévisions météorologiques jouent un rôle important pour les biologistes de terrain. Partir pour un comptage d'albatros et ne pas pouvoir compter les oiseaux à cause du brouillard, ou marcher en montagne avec un vent trop fort qui empêche d'avancer à une allure correcte ou qui risque de nous souffler des crêtes, ou faire des suivis sous une pluie battante rendant la prise de note difficile, le terrain glissant et nous trempant jusqu'aux os (les vêtements « imperméables » ne marchent pas si bien que ça !), ça n'a pas de sens... Alors les sites web de prévisions sont peut-être ceux que nous visitons le plus, quasiment sur une base quotidienne.





*Weather forecasts are important for field biologists. To go to count Albatrosses and not be able to count birds because of the mist or to walk in mountain with wind blowing so strongly that you cannot go ahead properly and that it can blow you from a ridge or to perform a monitoring with driving rain that makes difficult to take notes, makes field slippery or soaks you (waterproof clothes are not so waterproof!), that does not make sense... So weather forecast websites are maybe the ones that we visit the most frequently, almost on a daily basis.*

Ceci-dit, Gough est une île plutôt montagneuse en plein milieu de l'océan. Quand les prévisions disent « pas de pluie, peu de vent », il faut bien souvent comprendre « brouillard et crachin voire pluie en montagne, sommets venteux ». Les montagnes de Gough « attrapent » tous les nuages du coin à moins de 900 m d'altitude et « être dans un nuage » n'est pas exactement pareil qu'« être sur un nuage »...

*However, Gough is an island quite mountainous in the middle of the ocean. When forecasts say "no rain, little wind", you often have to understand "mist and drizzle or even rain in mountain, windy summits". Gough mountains "catch" every cloud in the area at an altitude of less than 900 m and "to be in clouds" is not exactly the same as "to be on clouds"...*



### *In memoriam...*

As our stay is ending and everyone is talking about our way back on the brand new ship, I am thinking about what will remain about this astonishing experience in a few years and further? Of course we have got a lot of videos and photos, several audio records from different birds, and some feelings in the diary. But even if we can accumulate a huge amount of souvenirs, they will not be replenished. As soon as we will leave the island, our memory will start to replay that loop as we do with the playlist on a music player. But unlike this latter, some "tracks" will fade while others, by dint to be recalled and related, will take a greater place in our memory as they are worth such a place. That is why we should have regular meetings to revive all of them! But anyway, everyone will have got his own memory, but what about the team G57? Because a team is more than the addition of its members and has got its own life, it is worth having its own memory. Nobody except us will remember it. Except a photo left behind us for the successors, nothing will recall the existence of our team. That is why I suggest that we leave another mark. But first have a look on the **Degree Confluence Project**:

"The goal of the project is to visit each of the latitude and longitude integer degree intersections in the world, and to take pictures at each location. The pictures, and stories about the visits, will then be posted here: <http://www.confluence.org/>"

As you can see on this website in the country index "Saint Helena", the closest confluence from Gough (40°S 10°W) has never been visited as it appears as a grey dot on the map. This location is laying 31 kilometres North off the island, exactly on the way to Tristan. So I suggest, in memory of G57, that we undertake a proper visit to this confluence. In addition to a clear weather, the only thing we need is to slow down near the location in order to get a picture with the accurate position on the GPS: S 40°00'00.0" W 010°00'00.0". If all the G57 team members agree, it only remains for us to convince the Captain of "*Agulhas II*"!

*Sylvain*



### June, wet and cold with lots of hot drinks

This month I thought it was time for a change in lifestyle. I finally found out that it was not the water shrinking my clothes rather that I am getting a bit big. I started to hit the gym again with some new workouts and fast pace exercises. I hope that by the end of the expedition that is just 3 months away I might look like part of myself again.

One the other hand I found a new and fast way to improve my Japanese. I found a website online that you can actually learn and communicate with people from Japan and a lot of other countries also learning languages. I found that some of them are very helpful and would spend a lot of time with you to make sure you understand. I also thought it might be interesting to take some other languages. I do not know why I got that bright idea, but now I am doing French and Arabic also. I find French and Arabic very difficult. Arabic I find difficult because of the writing and French I find the pronunciation difficult. I am having lots of fun with my new found hobbies.

I cannot remember when was the last time I touched a pencil and drew any new pictures; it is not that I do not want to. Sometimes when I hear certain music I get the urge to draw again but I need something to inspire me again.

For the moment the weather seems to be turning much colder and wetter so I have resolved to nice hot drinks in the late afternoon and before bed time. I do not mind the rain or it being cloudy most of the time the thing that is really the issue is the wind. It feels like a knife cutting right through you. I almost got blown off the catwalk once coming out the door so that is saying that it is very strong.

I am still having a good time, looking forward to going with the birders soon. They invited me to go with them to Gonydale. Hopefully next month I can write about my journey and show some nice pictures.

Till next time.

Saiyonara - Goodbye

Au revoir - Goodbye

Ilal-liqa'i - Goodbye

Gerard

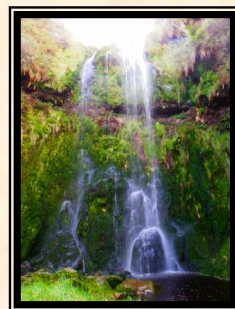
## Retrospection

Time flies when you are having fun, no doubt about that. Or you can put it like Boy, 'time's fun when you are having flies'. It's so hard to believe we've come so far. It feels like yesterday when we arrived here, people asking how it feels to be back and my reply was, it feels right, feels like nothing's changed.

Then in December we were saying to the guys at Marion Island, 'enjoy the last few months of your stay.' Now it's us, and when I heard those words I realized that indeed there are just few more months left and we will be saying goodbye to this beautiful island.

Now I look back and ask myself if I've achieved any of the things I aspired to this time around and realized there will always be more things to do, more places to go to and the island will always look amazing. Back then when I got home my wish was to come back and fortunately that wish was granted and I am so grateful. I got to go to the Glen, done some hand line fishing and actually caught fish several times. In overall I've seen more of the island but not as many trips to Gonydale, Tafelkop and South Peak like my last stay here. I've been to Albatross Plain, seen Low Hump and Green Hill. I've climbed 960 a few times and been to Tumble Down several times. Well, I'd still like to summit Edinburgh Peak, check out Richmond Hill before I leave.

When the team leader asked everyone to share their highlight or most special experience since arriving here when we were celebrating midwinter, I was thrilled to share my account of the first attempt to the Glen. That day was the best experience for me. The scenery, negotiating our way through fern and Phyllica, finally admitting that we were not going to make it and then the sheer power of the wind the following day when we retraced our steps back to South Peak but then opted for Gonydale instead of Tafelkop.





I've been out only once this month with Sunette and Marius. We went to check out two of the many beautiful waterfalls here on Gough Island. The best part about these two is that they are not so far from the base. The irony here is that Sunette and Marius were taking me on a tour to places I've never been before. They have seen the most amazing spots. Places I have not seen before, despite this being my second expedition. I guess I've mostly wanted a reason for going out, always following a path to where other people have been before.

We are now fully experiencing winter and it feels so weird when one is doing the first and second observations in the dark. Some days the second one, at seven in the morning it seems darker than it was at six especially if it's totally overcast and/or it's raining. It has come to a point when we can no longer report swells in the morning. We had about five days without rain around the middle of the month and few days later the red light indicating our water is running low was on but it was raining that very same day. Then a couple of days later we were blessed with more rain than I've ever seen here on Gough Island. I could hear by the sound between four and five before my first observation that it was heavy rain. When I got to the office 1 hour rain between 04:00 and 05:00 was standing at 14.2mm and that was only the beginning. It was followed by 29.0mm between 05:00 and 06:00 and it carried on with almost the same intensity. Now here is the flip side of this coin. While we were thrilled by the amount of rain falling within a short space of time, part of our water supply pipe got washed away. This forced our diesel mechanic and the team leader to go work in wet and cold conditions to make sure that we have our most valuable resource. It took them a couple of hours and within an hour after their return the red light switched off, no more worries. A big thank you to Marius and Sunette! "Give these guys a Bell's"!!!

So long!

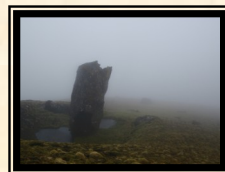
Nkoane

### Another one ticked off.

It's been another interesting month. A fair bit has transpired and we are basically in the home stretch. We have gone past mid winter and now we watch as the days lengthen and nights shorten. Over time we will actually be able to see what we are doing without the head lamp, when we head out for our first morning observation. But that bothers in the least. I'm more excited about the fact that I can get the shorts and slops out again. Yes, I know it's strange. But it's always the small things that make the biggest difference. It's my way of feeling like I am in my tropical happy place. I'm Beach-Bum at heart. So what was I doing coming out to Gough to freeze my rastafarian nini's off. Well, remember what they say: "A change is as good as a holiday." This is my holiday from the monotony of self. A chance to experience something so different and to gain a new appreciation for the alternates in life. To never just settle for what is on offer but to push yourself and challenge yourself and experience all that has been offered in this beautiful world.

Which brings me to my story for this month? Taking a holiday and a break away from the monotony of life around the base.

This month it was a fantastic hike to the north of the island with Karen and Sylvain. Was a bit of a rough start as we made our way and were in contest with a light drizzle and gentle wind. This seemed to be working on a steady curve however. As we climbed the gradual rise upward to Gonydale the drizzle increased in intensity as did the wind. Would have been able to plot us perfectly onto a graph of wind and rain and placed us on the trend line. Once we reached Michaels Col just above Gonydale we sat for a team meeting and had to decide if we were to continue or not. It was rather hard to tell if anyone was serious about turning back when we all had massive grins on our faces. Not sure what it is about this place. It's almost intoxicating and leaves one with a feeling of euphoria as you trek across the varied landscape. Even in the worst of conditions. Looking past the smile and unmasking what lay behind it was clear that we were all a little disappointed with the weather and more so by the fact we had to return.





Now that was on the Monday. But of course we were all too lazy to unpack, and so it was that we decided to give it another go on the Wednesday. Quick and easy, bags were already packed and off we went again, hoping for a better result. Pleased to say it was indeed a little bit better. We made our way in sunshine for the most part. But soon we walked into the cloud base and were caught up with a chilling wind. This time we pushed forward. We camped out at Waterfall Camp which lies at the base of Edinburgh Peak, which is the highest point of the island. We were hoping to hike to the top and experience the 360 degree panoramic which is on offer from up top. Sadly the cloud base never lifted and we couldn't even catch a glimpse of its peak. There is plenty to see out this end, so we just took a walk as far north as we could and took in the diversity of landscape and the momentary glimpses we caught of the ocean when the wind occasionally blew open the cloud to treat us to a magnificent view of the large glens that have been carved into the island like scars that tell a story of years past, and open out into the vast blue of the South Atlantic. So many incredible sights to behold! Yet as we take them in and behold all the beauty before us we start to feel the island take hold of us. It offers so much to us and in return it wants to take us. Sadly we have to tear ourselves away and our time will come where we have to watch our home fade into black as we sail away and the sun sets over Gough. We will eventually be gone physically but the island has taken hold of our thoughts and emotion. At the end it will win and get away with us. It has taken hold and never let go. And I am sure I will never let go. We had a great time on our holiday to the northern end and were all feeling fresh, rejuvenated and the grip of cabin fever has abated for now. Let's hope we can keep it that way.

Till next month, where we find out if we have been successful in maintaining sanity, I wish you all well and want to express thanks again for all the love and support.

Take care and God bless.

Bren.



## Mid-winter





## CLIMATE STATS: June 2012

<b>Ave. Max Pres- sure</b>	1016.4
Ave. Min Pressure	1007.5
Ave. Pressure	1011.9
Max Pressure	1026.0hPa
Min Pressure	983.1hPa
Ave. Max Temp	14.3°C
Ave. Min Temp	9.0°C
Ave. Temp	11.7°C
Max Temp	19.5°C
Min Temp	5.9°C
Ave Humidity	82%
Max Humidity	92%
Min Humidity	70%
Max Wind Gust	42.9 m/s or 154.44 km/h
Total Rainfall	374.0 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	96.2 mm
Total days with rain	24 days
Total days >1mm	21 days
Total Sunshine	53.2 hours

This past month we observed a drastic increase in rainfall- about 100mm- despite fewer rainfall days. Adding to this, more than a quarter of the total recorded rainfall fell over a period of 24 hours. It must also be added that we experienced thunder storms this past month, which are rather unusual for Gough Island. The monthly average in rainfall does appear to be in accordance with historical data and shows very little deviation from the norm.

Temperature also appears to have fluctuated minimally since last month, with a rise of less than half a degree over last month's average. So all in all it has been relatively stable this winter. The stable temperature combined with the small increase in humidity has seen the base remain rather comfortable inside whilst outside it does carry a slight chill with the wind. However, the chill is negated and it becomes surprisingly pleasant when the sun breaks through the clouds to provide that little extra warmth.

That little bit of extra warmth was considerably more over last month as we experienced 35 hours more sunshine this month as opposed to May. The greater amount of sunshine and fewer rainfall days allowed the team to spend more time outside going on hikes and permitted good opportunity for the biologists to get their field work completed sooner owing to the much improved conditions.

The weather was however not all sunshine and warmth, as we had to take the good with the bad, and saw some howling winds towards the end of the month. The strongest gusts reaching over the 150 km/h. mark. Definitely living up to their name as the "roaring forties"

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