

GOUGH BUNTING



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER

SANAP
2012

NOVEMBER 2012

Dearest friends, family and sponsors

It's been over two months now since we've arrived on the island and every morning I still have to remind myself that this isn't a dream. The view from the front door still takes my breath away – doesn't matter how many times I see it.

A very strange phenomena has started to show its face in the Gough House. At first I was convinced that the water had something to do with it and my second option was to investigate the washing powder we use. Still it was inconclusive... Our clothes keeps on shrinking! (well, okay...mine do...) After an in-depth investigation, I found that the reason for this strange phenomena **MIGHT** be due to the fact that dessert can be consumed any day of the week and not only on the traditional Sunday. The study is still inconclusive due to external factors...

While the investigation is still ongoing, I've sought the help of two very familiar friends of mine – Mr. Treadmill and Ms. Spinning. They offered some great advise and it wasn't long before I got my groove back and start hanging out with them on a daily base. (I just have to mention that this intervention is purely as precaution to ensure that I will not become "short and fat") Hopefully by Christmas I'll have a detailed report on the topic and will be able to give feedback.



In November the first islander celebrated his birthday, and now Jasper doesn't need to sit at the kids table anymore and can have a beer since he is "legal" now... Happy Birthday, Jasper!

Talk to you soon again!

Marilette & "Happy"

“WE CARE” - PROJECT OF THE MONTH



For November we've supported Testicular Cancer Awareness. On the 1st of November, the guys decided on what kind of mustache to grow for the month. Of course not everyone was a natural beard person, thus we gave Jasper some credit for his effort so far since arriving at the island (remember – he only start shaving before we departed Cape Town☺) however, for those “older” men in the group, the challenge was on.

On the 30th of November, the guys had a chance to show off...



And the winner is...

The boys put in a great effort to show that they care – therefore, no winners, just caring guys... ☺

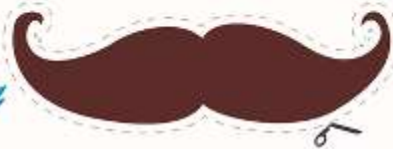
HAPPY NOVEMBER

GUYS,

GET YOUR "MO" ON

GALS,

CUT IT OUT & STICK IT ON



STYLE GUIDE



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

15 November – Ben (G58 Chaplain)

21 November – Nadia (Marilette's cousin)

24 November – Michael & William (Marilette's twin cousins)

27 November – Jasper

27 November – Xavier (Mara's nephew)

26 November – Abby (Chris's sister)



A couple of first's for G58...

5 November – 1st fitness challenge

17 November – 1st islanders to swim in Swemgat

25 November – 1st signs of life – other than the islanders (The Edinburgh arrived in Gough waters)

27 November – 1st islander to celebrate a birthday (Jasper)

29 November – 1st time to cut the grass in the courtyard

AWARDS OF THE MONTH

This month there is a lot of awards to give away. It just shows that the team has started to become more relaxed and adventurous. And maybe a bit more crazy since we are so far away from home.

Jasper – Lifesaver Award

Jasper rescued a petrel after the little fellow flew into the mast outside the house during Jasper's weather/cloud observation.

Chris & Mara / Christiaan – Darwin Award



This month the Darwin Award nominees really made it tough to decide on a winner...

Chris & Mara for going on a two day field trip that involved a sleep-over and forgot to pack a knife/tin opener. Luckily there was the Low Hump food store to dig into and cans with peeled lids to rescue them from starvation...

Christiaan for installing a door hook in the kitchen, then realising it was upside down and having to remove it and turn it right side up. He'd done it in such a way that no-one even realized it, but true in Trevor spirit, he admit his moment of weakness...

A WORD FROM THE FIELD ASSISTANTS...

Lord of the Penguins - An update from the Field Assistants

Back in the British summer of this year, while preparing ourselves for a year on Gough, we read that typically one day in three was without rain. For us the sun had been a stranger for months, seen only dimly through a damp grey haze of Scottish mizzle at the best of times, and so the climate of Gough sounded like a bargain! Even these modest expectations have been exceeded by a bounty of bright warm days, and in lieu of any other evidence, we're taking it as proof positive that the Metkassies are hard at work!



Base from Richmond Hill on a sunny day.

But as we make hay when the sun shines, this has meant big days for us out in the field, and there is always lots to see and do on Gough.



Michael's Ridge, the scary route to The Glen.

Our usual routine this last month, was broken early on by a trip to The Glen, one of Gough's scenic treasures; a deep, lush valley on the islands east coast, surrounded by sharp mountain ridges and towered over by the dark castle of Hag's Tooth, a fearsome volcanic plug. The Glen has a romantic place in Gough's history as the site of the original met station begun back in the 1950's, and as it is a mere 3.5km as the crow flies from the current met station it would be a pleasant excursion. There are no crows on Gough, and the way was a torturous trek of a full day, including one very precarious ridge for the descent. But it was a beautiful place, and the remains of the old base are still very much in use...by several hundred fur-seals.



Chris and Mara setting up camp for a night in The Glen, with Hags Tooth in the background.

Our objective in the Glen had been to count Rockhopper Penguins while they still sat on eggs, and we only just managed it as a few days later the very first chick was seen pipping its way out into the great wide world.



Rockhopper Dad with a 4 day old chick.

This was the signal for the penguin phase of our work to begin in earnest, as this year we are taking a special interest in the foraging behaviour of these guys while they raise their chicks...crucial when you consider that they are an endangered species whose population falls a little more year on year.



Sun set at Seal Beach, with seals in the surf and Penguin work to be done.

A part of the study is to attach GPS devices to foraging penguins to see just where they go in search of food. Though every chick doesn't make it and the skuas are always ready for an opportunity, we've been amazed by how fast the chicks have grown in only a few weeks.



Chris weighing the Rockhopper Penguin chicks as part of our chick growth rate study, monitoring the health of the population.

And not only the Rockhoppers are growing up fast, this month we revisited the colony of Giant Petrels, a month after we saw the first chick pipping...to be confronted with an army of huge fluffy chicks more than capable of looking after themselves. No-one had thought to warn us that they defend themselves with a projectile stream of smelly fish-oil vomit, but we learned fast.



A young Giant Petrel still hiding under its' parent, but don't be fooled, its' projectile stinking oily vomit can reach 2 meters!

A true highlight of the month was the chance to take Metkassies, Jasper and Christiaan for their first trip up Tafelkoppie. As we were stopping to count Moorhens every 200m it gave the perfect excuse for an easy climb, though even the strong wind couldn't hide all Jaspers muttered curses during the toilsome climb. Christiaan coped well with the relaxed pace, until at the summit he smoked his last cigarette, after which he was strangely anxious to get back to base as quickly as possible!



Marilette at Tumbledown with a steep climb ahead...

While the boys were up the mountain, Mara was assisted by our chief, Marilette with more Moorhens on the way to Tumbledown. A detour took them down the long rope to the Rockhopper colony to check out the Penguin chicks! It was a slippery descent; even at the best of times the Tumbledown hand line is steep and very fairly named Tumbledown, so after the nights rain which left the rope and soil wet and muddy... it was a challenge. On return the sun was high and hot and they stopped in wind sheltered Swemgat and refreshed themselves in the rather 'fresh' (i.e. freezing) water.

FROM THE WEATHER OFFICE...

It has been two months since the S.A Agulhus has left. We are happily enjoying the early sunshine and late sunset days, and no longer going out with headlamp on for that morning observations. On the first days of early sunshine, one morning and me on day shift....things nearly started bad. I woke up late 10minutes after normal time, rushed to the office, to screen outside. Immediately when I finished walking down the steps from the door, I lifted my eyes to the position where Stevenson screen is....Ohh big two Skuas (dominant Gough Birds) on top of it. I quickly went back inside in search of something to scare and chase them away, and on my way, back they were gone.

So calm was the day, one could even spot an eagle high up the sky. The morning after this is what we had.



These are times where observing become more interesting, spending lots of time up at the observing point, seeing the beautiful clouds and all. If clouds were manufactured materials and to be transported somewhere, I would say the South Atlantic is the manufacture of those. Nothing much I did this month I've been watching people taking long walks but for me I think that is still not "my cup of tea"...as our diesel mechanic says when he's not into something. We are patiently waiting for Edinburgh to arrive and enjoy that moment of opening parcels...I believe it is going to feel like those old young days when you get a Christmas present. Till next time when I will be coming with two written pages...!

"open your wings- it's a soaring time"

Namhla

SANAP

There are quite a few hiking destinations on Gough, and during November I visited 3 very nice spots. Firstup I joined Gerhard and Thulani as well as Chris and Mara to Sealbeach on different occasions. In both cases we unsuccessfully checked whether we could find a previously spotted entangled seal.



Sealbeach

Sealbeach is about 15 minutes walk to the west of the base, and as one might expect is inhabited by many seals...



...as well as the occasional unexpected elephant seal.



A 15 minute walk to the east of the base, and also keeping close to the ocean brings to sight Admirals. I joined Namhla, Thulani and Gerhard for my second visit to the small cove with its dramatic vegetation covered rock formations, which remained as impressive as the first time I went there.



Admirals

Finally me and Jasper joined Chris for a more challenging 2-3 hour inland hike up Tafelkoppie to do a Moorhen count. Our efforts were rewarded with a top-down view of the base and beautiful views of the atlantic ocean...



The base from halfway up Tafelkoppie

...as well as pictures with the impressive Tristan Albatros.



Hope everyone enjoys the holidays.

Christiaan Crous (Metkassie)

I have absolutely no idea what I'm going to write about for this month's newsletter.

I could, perhaps, have started earlier. Instead, I'm staring at an hour's deadline and practically writing about the first things that pop up in my head. I think my English teacher warned me once about taking such a perilous voyage across the blank expanse of an A4 page. But this captain is unperturbed!

Now that I think about it, I believe it was the same teacher who warned me about the dangers of overextending a metaphor. To its breaking point.

Just shows how little he actually knew.

The truth is, I feel a need to write something for this month. You see, this month was the month of my birthday. And there was no way I was willing to let November slide by without my scratch on this news post.

Most of this month passed by pretty much as usual. Christiaan and I had the opportunity to make the trudge up Tafelkoppie with Chris, during one of his Moorhen counts. It's quite a steep climb and there were loads of boggy patches up near the top. You frequently find yourself sinking up to your thighs in mud. I think I might have a permanent brown stain on my overalls that I wore up that day. There was one Tristan Albatross chick on the slope just before you crest Tafelkoppie. I've never seen a Tristan up close and it provided ample opportunity to unsaddle the camera and take a few pictures.

It's about thiiiis big.

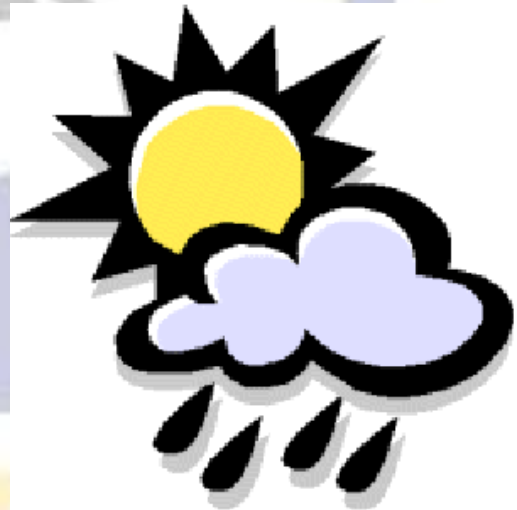
With November's conclusion, we've reached our second month on this island. Habitat of G58.

-JJ Stone



CLIMATE STATS

Ave. Max Pressure	1013.7 hPa
Ave. Min Pressure	1001.1 hPa
Ave. Pressure	1004.9 hPa
Max Pressure	1024.5 hPa
Min Pressure	981.7 hPa
Ave. Max Temp	15.4 °C
Ave. Min Temp	9.3 °C
Ave. Temp	12.4 °C
Max Temp	19.6 °C
Min Temp	4.7 °C
Ave Humidity	78 %
Max Humidity	97 %
Min Humidity	50%
Max Wind Gust	29.6 m/s or 106.5 km/h
Total Rainfall	156.0 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	31.6 mm
Total days with rain	25 days
Total days >1mm	18 days
Total Sunshine	188.5 hours



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