

GOUGH BUNTING



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER

SANAP
2012

DECEMBER 2012

Dearest friends, family and sponsors

It is almost time to say farewell to another year and I can't believe that time has passed by so quickly. It's almost as if we are on a run-away roller-coaster. It's already been 3 months since we arrived here.

We've faced a month full of challenges but we never allowed it to dampen our Christmas spirit. Even though we haven't been exposed to all the ads on TV and radio and had to listen to "Jingle Bells" until you feel like choking a reindeer, the Christmas tree was set up in the dining room with presents from friends and family – we started to feel the festivity in the cool island breeze.

As promised in the previous newsletter, I will give feedback regarding the issue we face here on the island over shrinking clothing. I was determined that the water (or the lack of it sometimes) isn't to blame. Instead, the blame will be shifted to the freezer that keeps the ice cream frozen.

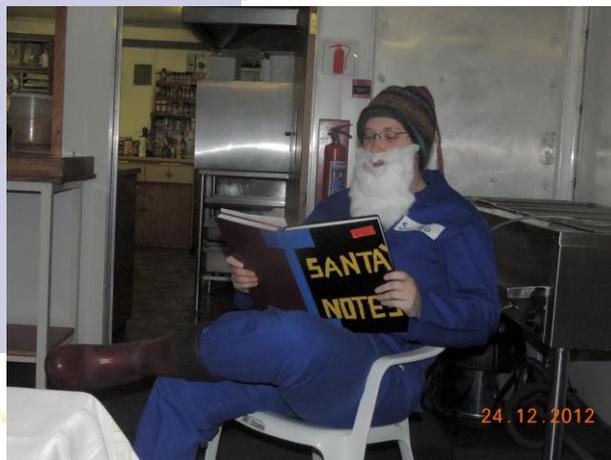
The reason for our tight fitting clothing is due to the consumption of ice cream, freshly baked cake and/or other yummy stuff. Thus, I shall continue to visit my dear friends, Mr Treadmill and Ms Bike for the remainder of our visit here on the island to ensure that we keep the waist line to a moderate measurement and who knows...just maybe we'll surprise the scales as well ☺

I received confirmation from the Comrades Marathon Committee that they will support Gough 58 in our attempt to run the full length of the Comrades (on the treadmill) on the same day thousands of runners in South Africa will attempt the race between P'Maritzburg and Durban.

I also want to use the opportunity to thank our friends and family back home. Thank you for the cards, the presents and the good wishes.

Talk to you soon again!

Marilette & "Happy"



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

8 December – Gerard



A couple of first's for G58...

- 2 December – 1st Monopoly game played
- 15 December – 1st 100 days on the island
- 24 December – 1st island Christmas party
- 31 December – 1st island New Year's party

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AWARDS OF THE MONTH

Sportmanship Award – Jasper & Marilette

For staying in the game (Monopoly) and refusing to give up – even after they had to mortgage all their properties...

A WORD FROM THE FIELD ASSISTANTS...

Life On The Wild Side (Chris & Mara)

We doubt there could be a month more filled with life and diversity than December on Gough Island. As mid-summer approaches every species of bird (and even mammal) seems to be in a crucial part of their annual cycle in the most spectacular manner. Every afternoon we see gathering rafts of Great Shearwaters a mile or so out to sea, and as dusk arrives they come in their thousands and tens of thousands to shore, swirling around base and crying their weird cry. This has been their return from their 'honeymoon' flight, and they have come ready to reclaim their burrow and lay their single egg. We have had the chance to get very intimate with these creatures, having now checked hundreds of their burrows with our industrial endoscope ('burrowscope') to look in on their progress.



The Rockhopper Penguins literally got the jump on us this month. We had been visiting daily to deploy and retrieve GPS devices that were telling us heaps about the foraging habits during breeding. But very suddenly things changed in the rookeries when the chicks, now getting really big, began to form crèches while their parents dedicated almost all their time to being at sea in search of food. Not knowing when we might see a penguin again to retrieve its GPS, we had to end this phase of operations, and instead just admire all the fat and healthy chicks that we had played godparent to.



Left; Yellow-nose Albatross chick



Right; Sooty albatross and its chick

While Rockhopper chicks are almost grown, and Great Shearwater eggs are only being laid, the chicks of our two lowland albatross species were busy hatching. First came the Yellow-nose chicks, small bundles of grey fluff, vocal before they have even pecked their way out of the egg. Shortly after, the Sooty Albatross' in their cliffside nests were also hatching, and chicks of both species began to grow fast from the start. Already now, at the end of December, Yellow-nose chicks are left alone while the parents forage out at sea, the chicks standing tall in their nest and snapping angrily at any passing intruder.



Above; A Giant Petrel feasting on a fur-seal carcass Below; A newly born fur-seal pup

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The beaches around the Island have been changing too, as time has passed they have become more and more crowded, and even Seal Beach is now home to some 500+ Seals. Males are fighting for their rights to females who are gathering on the beaches to give birth to their pups. Seals do not do things by halves and a fight between two males often ends with some nasty wounds, and sometimes death. The Giant Petrels make the most of this abundance of meat and fight for their turn to feast, while close by yet another Seal pup sees the world for the very first time.

Being very preoccupied with happenings close to base, we got a very great shock when finally hiking out to Gonydale on our epic trek with Christiaan and Thulani mid-month. It wasn't that Thulani had finally made good on his threats to go camping at Gonydale that shocked us, though it did take us aback; no, since our last trip many of the Tristan Albatross chicks had fledged, and now the valley plain was filled with returning adults preparing to start the cycle again and take their turn to breed.



Left; *Thulani on a mission!*

One of our favourite birds from back home in the UK is the Arctic Tern, and so it's been with a lot of pleasure that we have watched their Antarctic counterpart making their nests and laying eggs in the last few weeks. Quite a few have taken to nesting in Snoekgat, our top fishing spot and also major Sagina hotspot. Sagina is of course our big weed on Gough Island and we've been active once again in trying to eradicate it, especially important right now as

it loves the summer sun just as much as everyone else, and is flowering like mad and has started to spread new seeds.



Left; Flowering Sagina plant



Right; Antarctic Tern

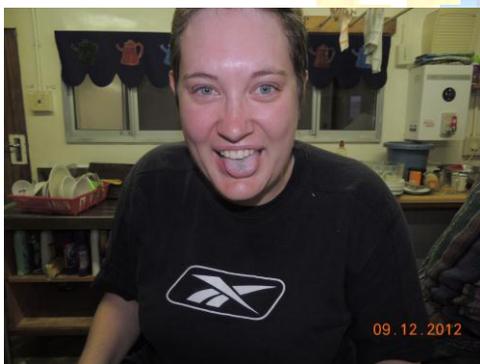
The biggest thrill of all this month was the amazing surprise visit of Old Nick, erm, I mean Saint Nick! Not only did Santa manage to find us on Gough, but he was good enough to bring the Naughty List to keep us on the straight and narrow. Though we were admonished for bothering the penguins too much, there is little we can do about that...but as for picking on the Metkassies (Chris), I can only say that I'll try to change my ways.



St Nicholas Day - Baking

We may not have got the date quite right but we had the specially imported Swiss 'Lebkuchen' spice, loads of colourful icing and 'Zupfe' dough to make our St. Nicholas breads or 'Gritibenz'. It was just like when I was little and my Mum spent ages getting things ready for us kids to play with icing, Gough 58 found their creative side and let loose, just have a look at the outcome!!!





And yes...there is always one that eats all the icing!!! Check out Marilette's blue tongue



Happy New Year !!!!
(Mara)

FROM THE WEATHER OFFICE...

December: What didn't break?

This month saw the destruction of our RM Young wind sensor. A midnight collision by roaming Softy (Soft-Plumaged Petrel) completely sheared off one of the blades on the sensor's propeller. While both the bird and the sensor had to be retired, only the sensor had a twin on standby.



The Hydrogen generator also decided to conk out this month. Despite what the team thinks, I had no hand in this issue! Sometimes these things just happen...



**GOODNIGHT
SWEET
PRINCE**

2011-2012

Further AWS, COMS and base water problems also plagued the end of December. Let's hope they don't follow us into January.

At least we had a decent Christmas celebration, with all the really tasty treats and meats making their appearance. Delicious!

It made me wonder. Perhaps we were too parochial in our religious views. We should embrace the rites and celebrations of the multifaceted cultures on this planet! I hear there's a great ritual to Ba'al Hadad - glory to his name - coming up in February. We just need a worthy sacrifice, and more of those festive marzipan cookies.

Pardoning of course our most illustrious bull horned god, but what the team is *really* looking forward to, is the New Year's celebrations.

The booze has been hoarded.

The Hi-Fi is on standby.

Soon.

-JJ Stone

The highlight of December for me was a hike to South Peak with Chris and Mara on Boxing Day. After ascending Tafelkoppie and mounting South Peak ridge, the view from the top exceeded expectations I had from Chris and Mara's accounts of a previous visit.



Climbing South Peak

I was surprised to see stonewall formations on top of South Peak, which on first impression looked manmade.



Stonewalls and glimpses of the north.

Descending South Peak brought Gonydale to sight. Chris, Mara, Thulani and me visited this area earlier in December. On that occasion we stayed the night in Gonydale, and were treated with a beautiful sunrise the following morning.



Sunrise in Gonydale

Hope everyone has a good year.



Gough 58

Christiaan

With my fear of the so many birds in this Island I have decided not to go to any trips that people take...but then what can you say when people come and tell lot of interesting stories. This day I left my cowardice, the way was to Tumbledown with Christiaan and Thulani, I cannot remember the number of times I was falling on our way. I think now I have made a final decision...no more..! I was crying and praying when we had to pass next to the Skua nests...they were flying just on top of our heads...I blamed myself for going, that I should have stayed in the base.



(A way back, from the scary scene of Skuas).

In few minutes we got back at the base...tired like hunting dogs without a catch. Everything went back to normal.

The Xmas bells were already started to ring...Oh....what a nice time it is back at home and now for the first time and maybe not last we are going to celebrate it the Island way. We all have our own areas of specialization in the kitchen and in preparation for this Xmas celebration each of us did what the Islanders know him/her best. I and Mara have become the bakers of the day Our menu was: three types of biscuits, and two types of cakes, one of coconut and one an ice cream cake. The baking started very well and easy with the help of the Edmonds cookery book where we took few biscuits recipe from. Thanks to Mara's mom who sent it down to us...it is so helpful.



Following Edmonds instructions

Baking in progress....

We really had a nice time with our baking. In few minutes Christiaan came in as he smells the saw the table full of baking ingredients he couldn't wait for everything to be done. Whlie Mara was talking with me there is Christiaan at her back tasting the doughFor the dough was so soft, lifting the X-mas tree dough was not an easy job as they lose shape with lifting from the table to the baking tray. You can see how Mara is focused as she tries not to destroy them.



But if you want something to be done...plans and ideas come in bulks..From our written menu came these delicious deserts.



The biscuits



the coconut cake



The ice cream cake



Party time

After everything done, the fun began, with me wearing a dress that I have been told to wear it on the day. I didn't expect all the fun and crazy moment we had, it just wiped away the sad feeling of thinking about home. But definitely on March I'll start getting home sick again. I nearly let my cousin Lwandle, Nanda(Pebbles) and Prof. Nel, down by not having an article for this month newsletter until such a time I received a call from home alerting me that if I don't have an article they won't send me anything I requested to be sent on January. Mara kept persuading me to write as well but i ignored her until such time of the call.....!

"Smile at people....it takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 to smile...."

Namhla

CARTOON OF THE MONTH

By Chris Bell

LOW LEVEL CUMULUS

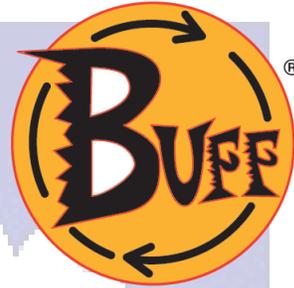


CLIMATE STATS: December 2012

Ave. Max Pressure	1008.5 hPa
Ave. Min Pressure	998.9 hPa
Ave. Pressure	1004 hPa
Max Pressure	1023.4 hPa
Min Pressure	981.3 hPa
Ave. Max Temp	17 °C
Ave. Min Temp	10.8 °C
Ave. Temp	13.9 °C
Max Temp	20.5 °C
Min Temp	7.1 °C
Ave Humidity	77 %
Max Humidity	97 %
Min Humidity	51 %
Max Wind Gust	35.6 m/s or 128.2 km/h
Total Rainfall	285.6 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	51.6 mm
Total days with rain	23 Days
Total days >1mm	17 Days
Total Sunshine	190.8 Hours

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