

GOUGH BUNTING



NEWSLETTER

MARCH

SANAP
2013

MARCH 2013 – TEAM LEADER’S EDITORIAL

Dearest friends, family and sponsors

On the 1st of March:

197 days ‘till ship arrives

224 days ‘till Cape Town

179 days on island

We are over the halfway mark, the food store starts to look empty, there are more empty boxes every week and winter had started to creep up on us. The nights are colder, the hours of day light is less and there is more rain and wind at night. When rain starts pouring down outside and the sky is filled with a grey color, I can’t help but to miss home and thinking of Mom, baking pancakes.

Our fellow islanders on Marion island are busy preparing for take-over that will take place in April/May. One can’t help to feel a bit jealous, however, in six months’ time it will be us who start to pack up our bags, clean the base and wait on the new team to arrive. Time really passes by so quickly these days.

The islanders are in good spirit – especially after another birthday celebration...



The team – dressed up for the occasion

The good thing about winter and bad weather is the fact that I’m forced to spend more time studying. But all work and no play will make me a very dull medic ☺ thus is there plenty of relaxation in between

to ensure the brain stays fresh and happy. I caught up on some reading and of course a few movies were also in order.

During March, a fellow expedition member on Marion Island had to be medevac and the S.A. Agulhas II was sent to help. Our prayers are with the member and we hope for a speedy recovery.

Talk to you soon again!

Marilette & "Happy"

"WE CARE" - PROJECT OF THE MONTH

On the 14th of March, it was **International π Day** and on the 22nd of March it was **World Water Day**.



Swemgat

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

3 March – Tania (Marilette's friend)

5 March – Markus (Marilette's friend)

8 March – Martin (Chris's friend)

11 March – Malcolm (Chris's friend)

15 March – Vuyelwa Guzana (Namhla's aunt)

16 March – Marilynne (Mara's cousin)

18 March – Owez-Kwesi Krakra (Namhla's nephew)

27 March – Mara

27 March – Rita (Mara's godmother)

27 March – Marlise (Mara's aunt)

27 March – Ciccio (Mara's friend)



SANAP

SOME STATISTICS

We are halfway through the expedition and here is just some food statistics on what we have consumed over the past 6 months...

Milk = 496 liters

Cheese = 104 blocks

Simba chips = 37 bags

Eggs = 66 dozen

Tuna = 58 cans

Cake flour = 42 kg

Brown sugar = 36 kg

Potatoes = 163 cans

Ice cream = 130 liters

White bread = 57 loafs

Brown bread = 29 loafs

Carrots = 48 kg

T-bones = 88

A couple of first's for G58...

10 March – First Tristan Albatross chick of the season hatched



SANAP

A WORD FROM THE FIELD ASSISTANTS...

There is Change in the Air

By Chris and Mara

Once again the end of the month has come around...and I reflect on what happened this last month...now, what did happen?



Left: Looking across the lakes area with the Rowetts in the background. Right: Chris walking up Windy Ridge with Edinburgh Peak in the background.

In early March we received that long sought after good weather spell, allowing us a trip to Waterfall Camp. Our objective was to count every single Tristan Albatross (locally called Gony) incubating on the Island. Gough may be a small Island, but it is surprisingly tough going, walking up and down each gully to see into each valley and spy every Gony, is not a task to be underestimated. Our walk out there was our first time crossing the Rowetts in calm clear weather! What a treat. I can only say that the views are magic!!!



Left: Mildred's Mire



Right: Big Gulch

The next day the search began, and just as we searched for the last birds around Triple Peak right on the northern end of the islands the clouds came down and engulfed us in wet mist, forcing us to turn home to Waterfall Camp, leaving Tarn Moss Area for another day. The next morning we woke to heavy mist and light showers making it impossible to even see across the stream. All we could think of was that our boss Richard had once spent four days in his tent at Waterfall camp, waiting for the weather to clear. We just needed a few hours visibility, Tarn Moss (The north-eastern side of the Island) was all that was left for us to survey. I am not sure if it was this fear of spending four days in a tent with only the best food (rusty cans of brown slush and



Above: Chris cooking at Waterfall Camp

sardines) or the fact that I was once again being thrashed at cards that changed the 'Weather-Gods' mind, and gave us the 3 hours of sunshine we needed. Either way, we were very grateful. And by mid-day we had the tent packed and were heading over the Rowetts down to Gonydale and finally to Base in time for Skivvy the next morning! That was how March began for the Field Assistants!

March has also blessed us with our first ever sightings of newly hatched Tristan Albatross chick, I have to say that their food smeared gapes and odd cashew shaped bills reminded me of the Kakapo chicks, which Chris and I once had the chance to work on. These little fluffy creatures seem to be growing at a rapid pace, but they will only leave their nests under Gough 59's watch in December 2013, a full 9 months from now. It is not surprising that successful parents only raise one chick every two years!

Left: Spire Crag



Right: Tarn Moss



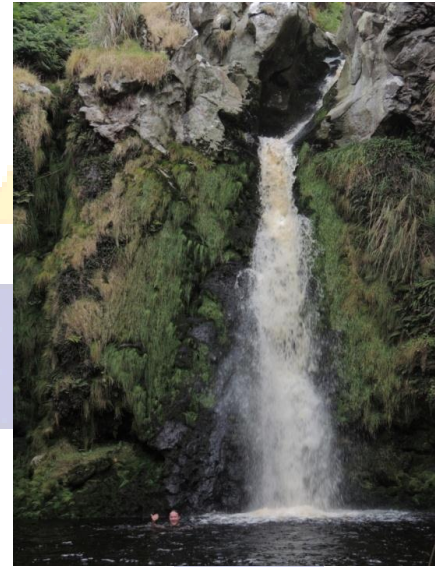
Not every team here on Gough Island gets treated to rare sightings, but every now and then we are lucky enough to see a bird that has come a long way, in the wrong direction and ended up on Gough Island, this tiny spec of land in the middle of the South Atlantic. March has been the month of such sightings. We have been watching a Macaroni Penguin settle in to moult on Seal Beach. Macaroni Penguins are normally found much further south in sub-antarctic territory but have occasionally been recorded from Tristan da Cunha.



Above: Resting Macaroni penguin before starting moult at Seal Beach.

More recently on the 26th of March the day before my 30th Birthday, just as we were resetting our anchors while doing abseils close to Base in search of Sagina, a white bird flew over, it took me a second before calling out 'Cattle Egret!' These little birds migrate long distances, and the odd one gets blown off course, gets lost and finds Gough Island. His time on Gough is unlikely to be as relaxed as the Macaroni's was. This Cattle Egret was attracting the curious and hungry eyes of the local Skua population, who chased him whenever he flew. Fingers crossed he finds enough food to give him energy to make his journey north again. Cattle Egrets are very common in South Africa but are also found in New Zealand, Australia, South America, most of Asia and parts of Southern Europe.

SANAP



Above: Team taking to the water at Swemgat.

As the weather started to change the urgency grew to get the rest of the team wet. We had been hoping to twist the arms of our team members for some time now, and get the whole team down to Swemgat. And as it turned out on the last humid day of the year we packed towels and beers and headed down the ladders. We had a near full team expedition! There were definitely a few water rats among us too, one in particular that just did not seem to feel the cold. Others needed cooling off, with much appreciated beverages!

And so as the Yellow-nosed Albatross are getting mobile and curious about their surroundings, the Sooty Albatross are busy growing more feathers, the Rockhoppers are still moulting and the Great Shearwater chicks are just starting to grow their feathers. One of the last summer birds to take to the big wide world are the Antarctic Terns which nest on rock stacks along the coast, gullies and cliffs as far inland as the waterfalls draining Gonydale. These spectacular bright birds have chicks that look almost like cuckoos, begging for food a long time after their first flights.



Left: Tern chick



Right: Tern parent with small fish.

March was also the month that Chris and I found our first Noddy chick, begging like mad to its parent a few meters away. Sitting on a branch hidden deep within a *Phylica* bush, at the entrance to one of Gough's many caves. The parent preened and took a nap, just out of reach of the chick, but the chick did not give up. It looked fully grown and only missed the bright white eye liner of its parent, but its relentless begging call gave it away. Since then we have identified the Noddy chick calls along most *Phylica* thickets along the lowland streams. Finally this secretive bird has come to our attention.

As the work eases off, there is a little voice growing louder in the backs of our heads... 'soon the weather will turn, and an awful cycle of cold storms will engulf the Island, roaring seas and rain will force you to stay indoors...' And the change is coming. Daylight is noticeably decreasing day by day, and the wind has a bite in it even down here at the Base... But work will go on for the field assistants.

And so the news of the wider Gough Island area has come to an end. Our thoughts are with our friends and families we wish you health and happiness as you too go into winter down under and into summer in the north. With love XXX

SANAP

FROM THE WEATHER OFFICE...

COUNTDOWN IN PROGRESS!!

This has been such an interesting month for me at the beginning, as I had the courage of feeling Gough waters directly on my body when we went down for a dip in Swemgat. So sad for me that I can't swim for being scared of greater volumes of water, even the little training I once did I can't account for it. When I looked at Chris, Jasper and Mara diving and stretching out their legs like frogs, something positive in me said 'let me see if I can't do like they do.. and maybe my little training might help'. In few minutes I dip myself in, it didn't take long before I was crying, drowning and the water was too cold and seem to be freezing my marrow. Quickly Mara grabbed me. Having a walk out of the base is always good and refreshing from the sad and lonely feelings of being here that sometimes dominates and feels like losing half of the mind



(a) Mara giving grab



(b) Nice days at the Island

Just a few days after that refreshing dip, I was so excited getting to wear my lovely white short dress, when there was not even a single cloud in the sky. I know it might sound strange but at the Island it's always those small things that make the biggest difference. It's just a way of feeling like I'm at home away from home. The day was well spent at the court yard in a very nice Island way. As we now almost at the center of extreme Gough mid-year weather systems, it's always not a nice mood going out in the mornings for that 6am synop with head lamp on. It just doesn't end there; the increased southerly winds make no rest to me by shaking up the base. But in all those and the cold, I and Mara always make the use of baking in keeping us and the base warm. Next month it's my Birthday I would love everyone at home to please keep my presents especially those who promised and asked for what I want.

Hope to see you next time.....

Namhla

After getting bitten during the February seal pup weighing I decided to gear up for the March weighing. Two thick jackets on top of a thermal vest. Three pairs of latex gloves underneath a pair of rubber gloves. A pair of jeans and waterproof trousers, as well as a crash helmet in the case of a big male fur seal wanting to go head to head.



Geared up with my trusted weighing partner Jasper.

No matter how thorough the preparations, things can still go wrong. And 2 things did go wrong. Firstly I did not get bitten again, and secondly the layers of redundant protective clothing were smothering my energy levels.

SANAP



Queuing up for the big weigh. Maybe not the little one next to papa bear.

Luckily half way through the weighing Mara took over the catching duties. She quickly lined up 60 pups; and in the process found the energy to chase, catch and free an entangled seal.



Almost free.

During March we also went to Swemgat for an icy cold swim. Jasper was quickly in the water, closely followed by Chris and Mara. Namhla and me were more reserved with our approach into the dark pond, with Thulani remaining on land to ensure the safety of the swimmers.



Chris, Mara and Jasper at the deep end.

Christiaan

SANAP

CARTOON OF THE MONTH

By Christopher Bell

ADAPTING TO CIRCUMSTANCES



CLIMATE STATS

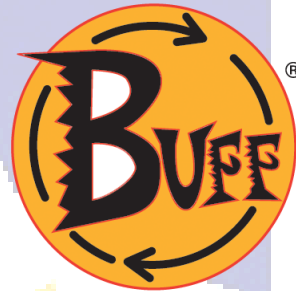
March 2013

Ave. Max Pressure	1014.4 hPa
Ave. Min Pressure	1005.2 hPa
Ave. Pressure	1009.9 hPa
Max Pressure	1027.3 hPa
Min Pressure	983.4 hPa
Ave. Max Temp	17.5 °C
Ave. Min Temp	11.9 °C
Ave. Temp	14.7 °C
Max Temp	23.7 °C
Min Temp	6.5 °C
Ave Humidity	79 %
Max Humidity	98%
Min Humidity	52%
Max Wind Gust	37.4 m/s or 134.6 Km/h
Total Rainfall	243.4 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	47.6 mm
Total days with rain	21 Days
Total days >1mm	16 Days
Total Sunshine	121.2 Hours

SANAP



SPONSORS



GILBERT X RUGBY



Canon

