

GOUGH BUNTING



NEWSLETTER

MAY

SANAP

2013

MAY 2014 – TEAM LEADER’S EDITORIAL

Dearest friends, family and sponsors

On the 1st of May:

136 days 'till ship arrives

163 days 'till Cape Town

240 days on island

On the 19th of the month we had some visitors (something that doesn't happen very often). It was great to see some new faces, have a few laughs and had the opportunity to entertain our guests with a truly South African braai and hospitality.

Most of us also start to spend some more time in the gym (particularly on the treadmill) to prepare for our big challenge to run the Comrades Marathon on the 2nd of June. In the next Bunting, you will be able to see whether we've achieved our goal to complete the marathon or not...

It is almost time to start ordering equipment, food and other supplies for the team that will follow us up and take-over arrangements are in the made...

Talk to you soon again!

Marilette & "Happy"

“WE CARE” - PROJECT OF THE MONTH

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On the 1st of April it was **Workers Day**.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

3 May – Tannie Ems (Marilette's aunt)

21 May – Anneke (Marilette's cousin)

26 May – Tracie (Marilette's friend)

28 May – Vera (Mara's sister)

30 May – Lynn (Chris's aunty)



A couple of first's for G58...

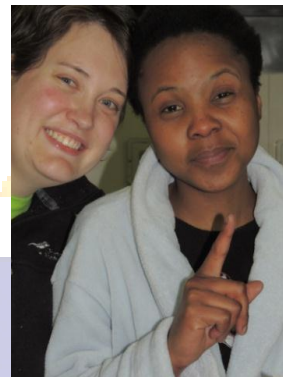
4 May – 1st movie festival

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Here for the Month of May

Featuring: New Zealand, English and Irish films

Grand opening: The screening of 'The Ring', SANAE's entry to the Antarctic Short film competition 2012 (Gerard as Gandalf) presented by Gerard himself!



Saturday 4th of May: Lord of the Rings; The Fellowship of the Ring

- starting at 8pm, intermission from 9:30-9:45
- speciality of the night: [Chocolate ice cream Sundaes](#)

Sunday 5th of May: The King' Speech

- starting at 8pm
- speciality of the night: [Amarula pancakes](#)

Saturday 11th of May: Lord of the Rings; The Two Towers

- starting 8pm, intermission at 9:30-9:45
- speciality of the night: [Iced coffees](#)

Sunday 12th of May: Boy

- starting 8pm
- speciality of the night: [steamed pudding](#)



Saturday 18th of May : Lord of the Rings; The Return of the King

- starting 8pm, intermission at 9:30-9:45
- speciality of the night: [Gough Island ice cream Sundae](#)

Sunday 19th of May: Billy Elliot

- starting 8pm
- speciality of the night: [Cake](#)



Saturday 25th of May : Sione's Wedding Two ; Unfinished Business

- starting 8pm
- speciality of the night : [Giant chocolate chip cookies](#)

Sunday 26th of May: The Guard

- starting 8pm
- speciality of the night: [Martini & Koeksisters](#)



A WORD FROM THE FIELD ASSISTANTS...

Are we now Zoo-keepers?

By: Chris and Mara

Setting up the
big Aviary!



Once again it is time to write monthly reports and an article or two for the Gough Bunting. Life this past month has taken some drastic changes for Chris and me. At the end of April we started building and setting up aviaries to house Moorhens.



Above: Chris and Mara using the Twizzle sticks!! We will not tell you how many m of mesh we twizzled!!!

As you all will know by now, Gough is plagued by mice. These house mice are thought to have jumped ship some 200 years ago and have since become a lot bigger than the house mouse you have at home. All mice are opportunistic carnivores, meaning that they will eat eggs and live chicks if they have the chance. Here on Gough there is a food shortage for the mice over the winter months and so they turn on the birds, and most traumatising for us humans is to see them eat their way through one of the world's most beautiful and special birds the Tristan Albatross.

Left: GDA26



Right GDA55



This year Chris and I are recording footage of these mice attacks and hoping to shed some light on what eventually kills these chicks.

Going through the footage is horrendous, seeing the images as a chick turns, stands, shakes and tries to bite the mice that are slowly eating their way through the chick's skin and into its flesh. The mice often attack the rump of the chick. Probably because the chick can't lift it off the ground with its short legs and so even when turning frantically in circles the mice just hold on and continue to eat. This will continue all night, exhausting the chick, who then sleeps all day.

Left: nest GDC53



Right: nest HMC60



The mice don't just eat albatross chicks but they predate on all winter breeding species on Gough Island and possibly also on some summer breeders, though to a lesser extent. In New Zealand, mice, rats and mustelids (stoats, ferrets) also eat native birds. Because the birds there have evolved over thousands of years without mammalian predators and have little or no defence against these recent immigrants. It is the same here on Gough, even though a chick will react to the pain and act very unsettled the parent will just stand there. The parents understand that something is wrong and wants to brood the chick, but this just immobilises the chick and the mice come in and eat the chick while the parent broods it. Brooding is a defence that the Tristan Albatross have learnt to protect their chicks from Skua and Giant Petrel attacks, who will try to attack from the air.



Left: A mother with her recently dead chick nest HMC79, Right: Mara setting up a motion sensing camera

The loss of so many birds every year is why there is a big interest to try and work towards eradicating mice on Gough Island, this has been achieved on other Islands in the world. A lot of research has been done on island eradications especially in New Zealand where many native birds are restricted to mammal free offshore islands. But mice are extremely hard to eradicate from a large and wild island such as Gough, where the mice live from the mountain tops all the way down to the boulders lining the coasts. A lot of planning and trials have to be conducted first.

An eradication of mice means a poison drop on the whole of Gough Island and so species such as the Gough Island Moorhens whose diet includes scavenging on carcasses, will have to be safe guarded in captivity. Most poisons can kill through secondary poisoning, so a poisoned mouse carcass has the potential to kill a Moorhen.



Left: Bluebell a juvenile in Aviary A, Middle: Rosie, Right: Zeta, both females in Aviary C.

So this is why Chris and I now have Moorhens in aviaries this winter. We are hoping to find out what size aviary, sex ratio and age and stocking density best suits the Moorhens. These birds are wild and very territorial in nature so are not well suited to confined shared space. We will let you all know how they are going next month. Though the mouse eradication is some years away, what we learn now will help keeping Moorhens when it does happen. Naturally all the Moorhens are named, and have shown us that they have very distinct characters!

We wish you all a brilliant southern mid-winter Yuletide next month or a very joyous longest day for you lucky northerners!

With love Chris and Mara



A map of Gough Island!!!

Chris and I wanted to share with you all this fantastic map of Gough Island we recently received from our friend Kit (6yrs old from the Yorkshire Dales, UK)

Thank you so much Kit!!! We love it! We especially like how you remembered that some of the terns breed inland while most breed along the coast, and the waterfall and the brilliant crests on the Rockhoppers!!!

Big hugs to you and your family from Gough 58!!!



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A Visit from the Outside by Chris

We don't get a whole lot of visitors to Gough Island and it deserves its status as one of the most remote islands in the world. Perhaps 2013 has been an unusual year though, when in February we had not only the familiar fishing ship *Edinburgh*, but the Canadian vessel *Sorlandet* at anchor in Transvaal Bay.



And now came a visit to make 2013 a very memorable year, a visit from the *RSS James Clark Ross*, one of the British Antarctic Survey's two research ships. We had advance warning of her arrival, and Christiaan swears he spotted her on the evening of 18th May. However we think he either saw the *Marie Celeste* or had drunk too much coffee.

We all awoke on the morning of 19th May to see the *Ross* coming fast from the south, though perhaps we were unprepared for how much she looked like our beloved *SA Agulhas II* which stirred up memories of home. The *Ross* is on the sea for much of the year, mostly in the deep south, and she was lately come from a brief respite in Port Stanley, the Falkland Islands. Her mission was an oceanic survey backed by the Darwin Initiative and Pew Environmental and she positively bristled with scientists eager to learn all they could from the ocean floor on their voyage.



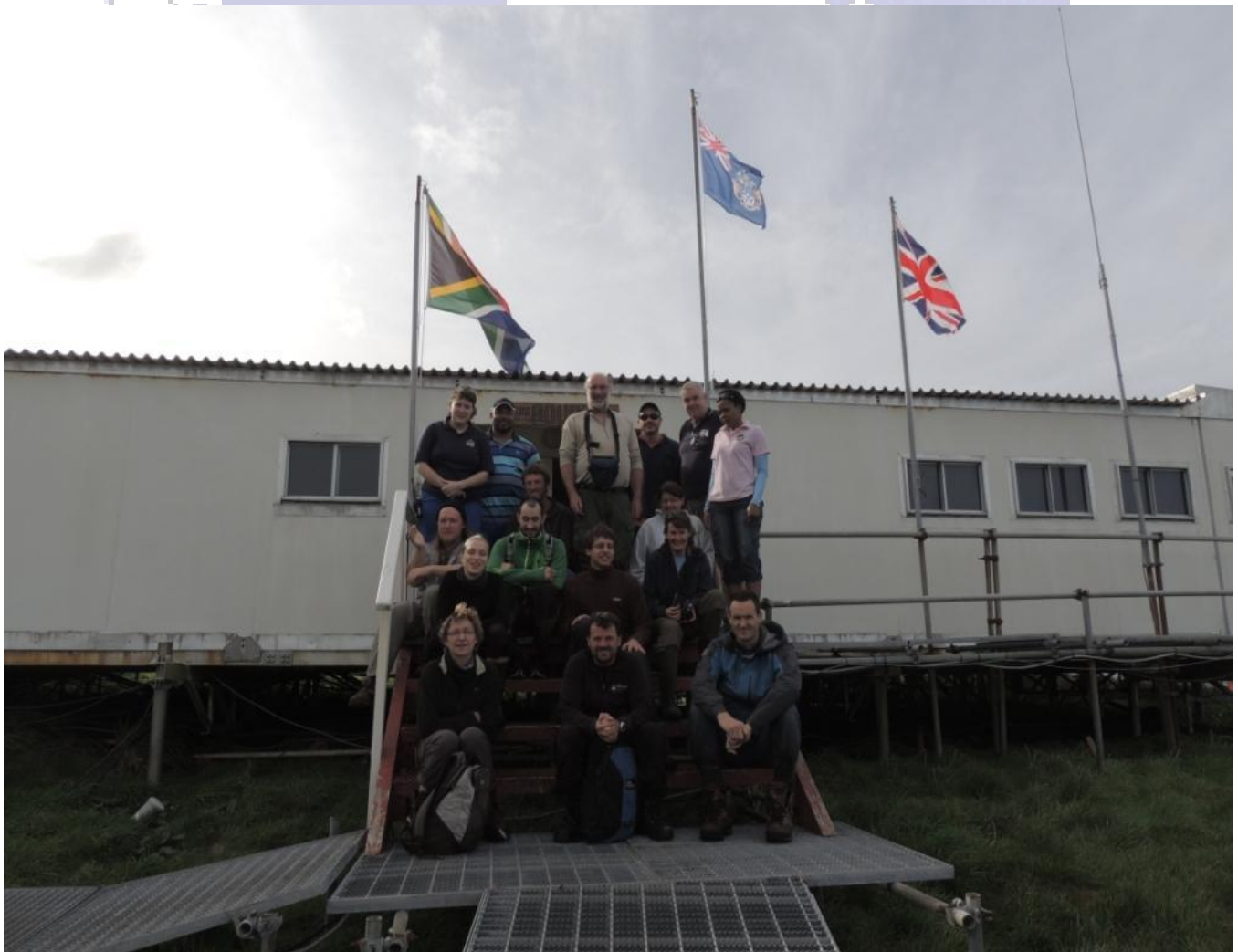
In her two days spend around Gough, many of her scientists were very keen to come ashore and take advantage of a rare opportunity to collect some terrestrial samples. On the island we didn't get our hopes up too much as good timing for winter landings on our island are usually few and far between. However, Gough was at her most welcoming and a flat sea and sunny sky meant that the *Ross'* boats were soon powering over people to Crane Point. Thulani and Gerard manned the crane and gave our visitors the unique experience of being lifted onto the island.



Seeing new faces so deep into our isolation was a big occasion, and for a few hours of the day we were part of the wider world again. Peter Convey and David Barnes led the group, and after a brief quarantine procedure of boot-washing we welcomed the newcomers to the island. Of course they were eager to make the most of their time, and so we split up, with one group visiting Seal Beach with Chris and Christiaan, and another inland headed by Mara and Jasper.

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Meanwhile the rest of the team were making preparations to treat the visitors in best South African style...with a braai of course! And just like that the day was over and it was time for our guests to leave again. The *Ross'* luck held and we later heard that they had reached Tristan in similarly brilliant weather, and been treated to the world-famous Tristanian hospitality.



FROM THE WEATHER OFFICE...

Jasper's

This article will no doubt follow shortly on the heels of last month's. We had email issues throughout the greater part of May. (A major pain in the backside, as you can probably imagine) Sooo this month you get not one, *but two* brand spanking new Buntings™! Aren't you the lucky one!

Well

The temperature is a droppin' and the flies are a hoppin' and the seals are a squealin' from that groundless feelin'.

Me and Christiaan paid a visit to Tumbledown for yet another seal weighing extravaganza. Except. It wasn't as bustling as it once was. The seal pups can now easily be identified on the rocky beaches, as most of the overbearing adults have since left. This improved our time/seal ratio considerably.



-JJ Stone

Chronicles of Christiaan

Even on a beautiful island with lots of exploration on offer the sedentary base-dwelling lifestyle can become common practice. That was the case with me the last couple of months.

With lots of apprehension about interfering with recent habits, I asked Jasper to join me to weigh the seal pups at Tumbledown. Halfway en route to Tumbledown, at the Tumbledown – Gonydale crossroad we took an elongated break, obviously chatting away about anything but the ton of weight waiting to be lifted.

After eventually arriving at Tumbledown we gathered our strength and focus – ready to start the heavy lifting. The pups have gained a substantial amount of weight since the previous weighing in March, and have almost doubled in size since I started weighing them in January. Their fur-color is also in the process of changing from black to a lighter combination of grey and black – they are in all manners starting to resemble their parents.



Left – the pups in January. Right – the pups in May.

It was very good to get out and enjoy the beauty of Gough again. I had a very good time at Tumbledown, and it was probably the highlight of May for me. However, one should not underestimate the value of spending a lot of time at base. Apart from having the unique opportunity to completely overindulge in movie watching, there is also the opportunity to

observe and study the co-inhabitants. I am of course referring to the notorious Gough mice. It is my task to make their stay uncomfortable. I do so by using the common peanut butter scented snap – trap. They find the combination irresistible, and competition to get caught is fierce.



Competition to get caught is fierce.

Christiaan

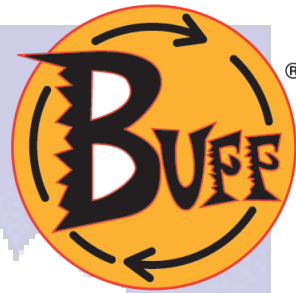
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CLIMATE STATS

May 2013

<i>Ave. Max Pressure</i>	1010.9 hPa
Ave. Min Pressure	1002.2 hPa
Ave. Pressure	1006.5 hPa
Max Pressure	1022.9 hPa
Min Pressure	982.4 hPa
Ave. Max Temp	13.8 °C
Ave. Min Temp	9.5 °C
Ave. Temp	11.7 °C
Max Temp	18.7 °C
Min Temp	5.6 °C
Ave Humidity	82%
Max Humidity	96%
Min Humidity	51%
Max Wind Gust	31.1 m/s or 111.96 km/h
Total Rainfall	266.8 mm
Highest in 24 Hours	57.6 mm
Total days with rain	25 Days
Total days >1mm	20 Days
Total Sunshine	75.9 Hours

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