



# Gough Bunting



JANUARY 2014

Gonydale



Tumbledown



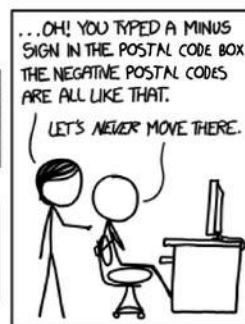
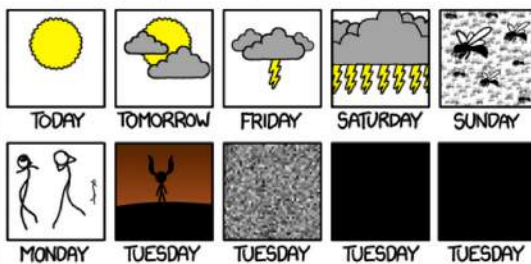
A Letter from the Teamleader



Spending time with albatross



## YOUR 10-DAY FORECAST:



Courtesy of: [xkcd.com](http://xkcd.com)



## Goneydale

Seeing the Island is always very interesting to me. To be on a world heritage site in the South-Atlantic ocean is not a place everyone or anyone can visit, to explore the island is an honour. When we walked from the base and the weather was nice while walking up to Goneydale. After four hours of walking we were on top of the Hummocks. The picture below I took from the Hummocks, it shows Richmond hill, the south of the island



This is one of the most astonishing rocks I have ever witnessed. It is called Gorilla rock and we can clearly see how the rock got its name.

*We tasted some nice berries on the way to Goneydale*





*Yeah I reached the top of the mountain*



This is on Goneydale, the peak you see is called South Rowet, part of a series of peaks in the interior of the Island.



*We finally made it up to the camping site where we would spend the night.*



*Enjoying a well deserved tea " Soos ons in namakwaland sê,  
dit is om die die bloed warm te hou"*



Spending the night in the outdoors was splendid. Hearing the wind and rain on a tent. You cant buy that feeling of excitement. When we woke up the following morning, we were greeted with foggy weather. Our visibility was less than 100m.



Packed up and ready to head back to the Base. I cant wait to go camping again, I really enjoyed myself up there.



By Julian Grace



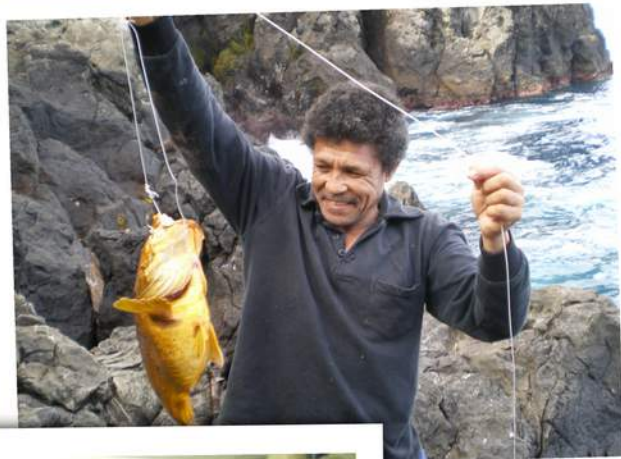
## A letter from the Teamleader

Good-day family, friends and colleagues. On Saturday morning of February the 1st, I accompanied the conservation officer, Trevor Glass, and his assistants to Snoekgat. They had to do Sagina work there and I grabbed the opportunity to go with them. I spent the whole afternoon fishing, while they were busy doing sagina. My first catch was the black devil fish which literally has 2 horns on its head. I was a little bit nervous, but at the end I used the fish as bait. The waters are very rich with different species of fish and I ended up catching 23 Jacopewers. The fish was fried and we enjoyed it very much to have it fresh and tasty that night.

The fish was prepared by Trevor Glass, the conservation officer. Thank you very much and enjoy the rest of the month

Regards

-Steven





## Tumble down

About half way through the month, the Field assistants had to go weigh seal pups at Tumbledown. So Julian Steven and I offered to help the them. I can tell you what, we couldn't have picked a better day to help. The sun was out, blue skies, no wind, but warm, which was not so nice. (For any one who's counting, it was 24°C on the path.) No complains though, we had an excuse to be outside, away from base for a change.

As typical for the time of the year, the vegetation was very high. In places we had to wade through fern bushes as high as my chest. Also out there were a number of albatross chicks. All sitting at attention when you come past, snapping their beaks in warning. You don't even have to be close. I've even seen a chick snapping its warning at an adult which came to close.



*Yes, this is the path*



*Aw sweet.*

*An albatross chick standing at attention.*



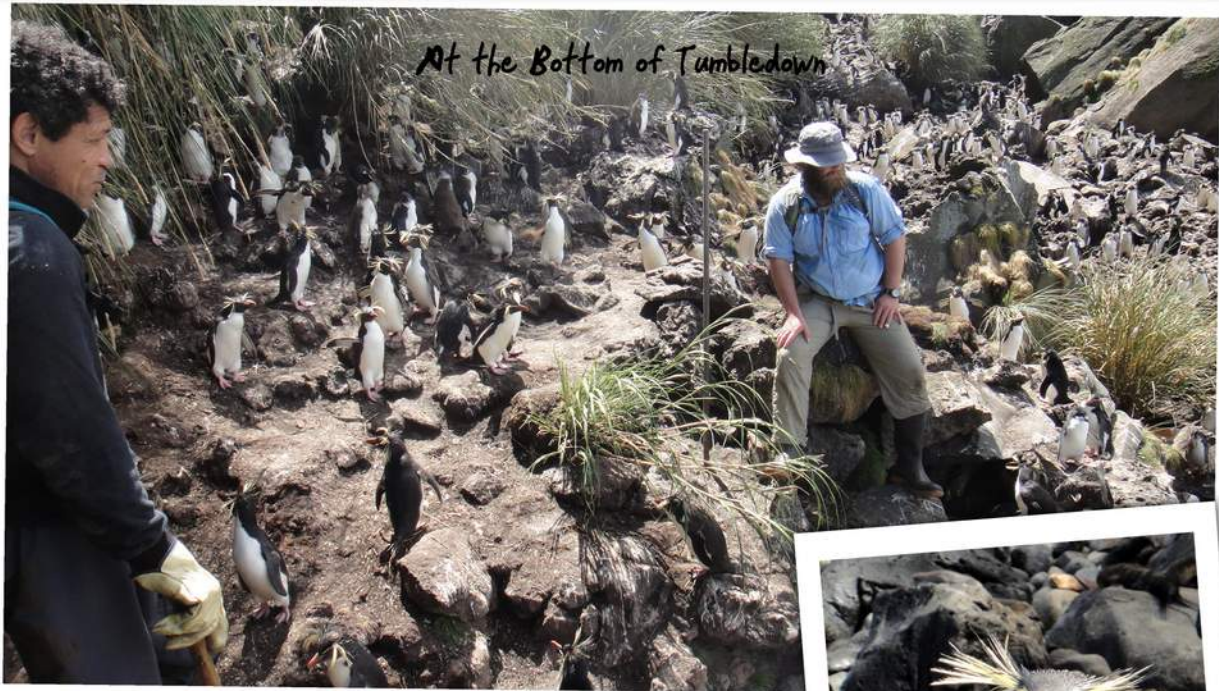
*Proud parent*

*We are going here*



One hour and twenty eight minutes later we finally covered the 1.4 kilometers to get there. Please don't laugh. Another 10 minutes and we were all down into the penguin colony. A cacophony of noise (and smell) signalled our arrival. Penguins standing everywhere, just out of pecking distance of each other. Sometimes, hilariously





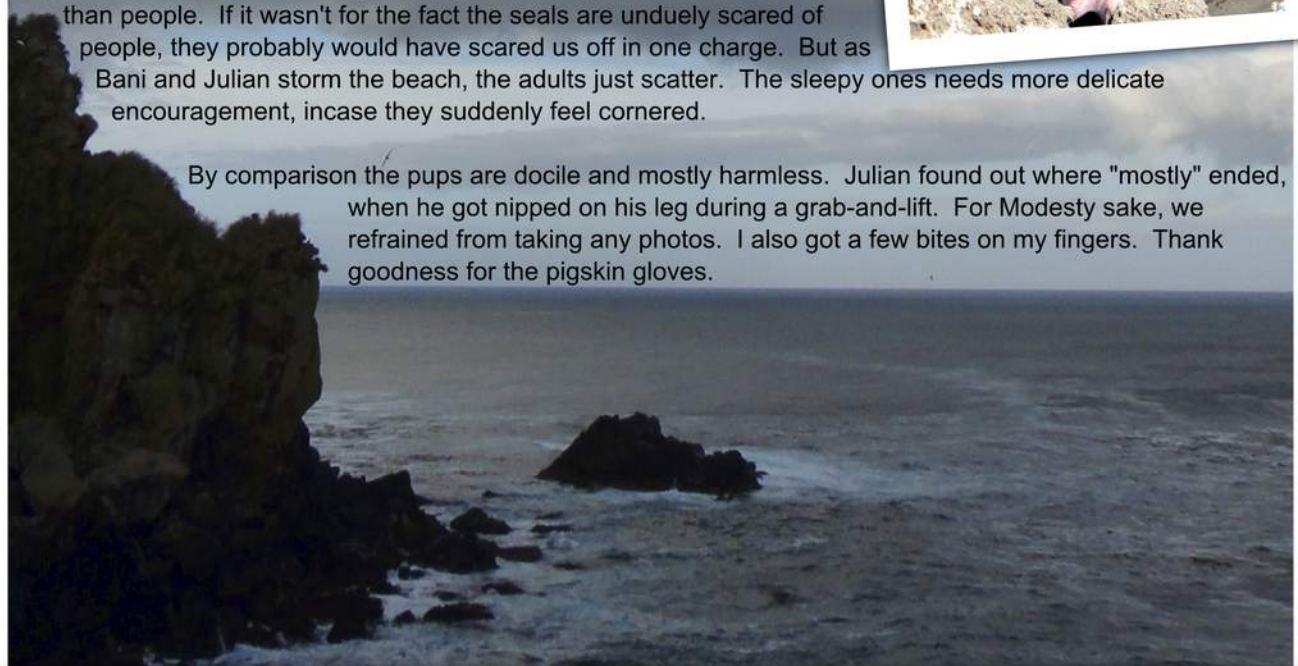
enough, inside pecking distance. As soon as one strays too close to the other they belligerize abuse at one another in a shouting match of note. Pointing their beaks like loaded guns at one another. They remind me of people sometimes. :-)

Anyway, there was work to be done. 100 Seal pups needed weighing. 50 Males, and 50 Females. I got the scales (and an afternoon of arm-curls), Steven got the log sheet (What is it with teamleaders and paperwork?), and Bani and Julian got the sticks. So we set off to round up the seal pups.

Right. ... nothing more than sticks as protection against the adult seals. a Token defence at best. 200 kg of charging fat, rage and teeth makes for a persuasive argument, in any language. And they are faster over rocks than people. If it wasn't for the fact the seals are unduely scared of people, they probably would have scared us off in one charge. But as Bani and Julian storm the beach, the adults just scatter. The sleepy ones needs more delicate encouragement, incase they suddenly feel cornered.



By comparison the pups are docile and mostly harmless. Julian found out where "mostly" ended, when he got nipped on his leg during a grab-and-lift. For Modesty sake, we refrained from taking any photos. I also got a few bites on my fingers. Thank goodness for the pigskin gloves.







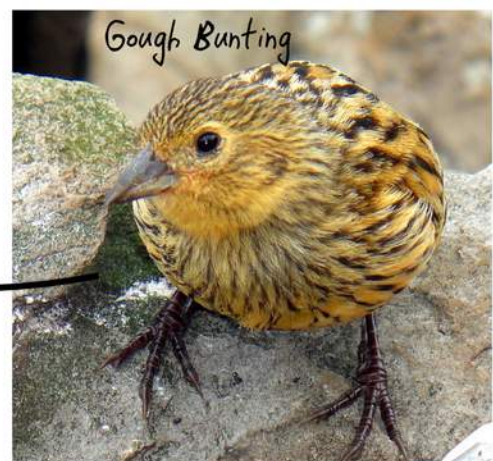
After we bagged no.'s 99 and 100 we posed for the obligatory photos. Patting ourselves on the back, taking turns to hold the camera. We found a seal-free spot on the edge of the colony to rest and fuel up. A conveniently located flat rock served as both table and chair for the 4 of us. While sitting there, a Gough Bunting showed up.

I don't know if it is an official term, but it is described as an "L.B.J." (Little Brown Jobby) It is a tiny bird compared to everything else flying around here. And it is not afraid of people whatsoever. While we were eating, it was calming making its way between us, scrounging around for something to eat. I don't know what it was looking for, because it flatly ignored our crumbs. It gave Bani's boot an exploratory peck though.

We returned home, suitably late. Just before dinner. Then Julian realized, he was cooking tonight. hehehe. But that was another story.

Cheers

-Johan





## Spending time with albatross

Every year on subantarctic islands around the world, researchers and field workers look forward to a new year and a new season for the wanderer groups of albatrosses. Our island, Gough, one of the only homes to the critically endangered Tristan Albatross is no different in the excitement stakes. The Tristan Albatross we affectionately call The Gony.

The elevated interior of the island is now dotted with white birds nested on mounds that hold their ginormous white eggs. Males and females of the species take their turns over a two and a half month stint, sitting on the eggs which are laid in January. It is our mission to stake out nests in a wide valley called Gonydale and determine which individual birds have teamed up as pairs to produce a single egg.

This is a very satisfying task; birds have been banded with unique numbers as early as the first survey group - Gough 1 - in 1956. New birds to the area are given bands and chicks that fledge here in December will also get their individual identifying bands. Most albatross keep to their same partners each breeding season, and live for several decades. One of the birds breeding at Gonydale this year was banded as a fledgling thirty years ago.

So, every week for two to three days, we visit Gonydale and check the bands on the legs of those birds incubating an egg. Its not every year that the same partners will lay an egg and raise a young bird. Since the young ones will only fledge when they learn to take off and leave the island in December and new nests are already being built for the next season, the Tristan Albatrosses are like other wanderers and take a year off between years of attempting to raising a chick.

The walk to Gonydale is initially a slog through fernbush and at this time of the year, the bracken, which still seems to be getting taller, is already at arm tangling heights. Feet have to take their chances on the path up the hill until at 400m the vegetation turns to shorter and spongier types of footing. The smaller yellow-nosed albatrosses that are nesting in the ferns and under the island trees are gone from view, and finally you are on Gonydale when the valley in front of you spreads out and you can see the tall Rowett mountains screening the rest of the island to the North west. The gony nests to check out for the day are in view up the sides of the valley before you can set up the tent and have a peaceful sleepy night of skua cries and gusts of wind tearing down the valley from the west. This year it is our privileged turn to monitor the breeding habits of these amazing birds and we are loving it.

-Delia Davies





Good day Family and Friends back in S.A. At the moment we are having very special guests with us, they are from our neighbouring Island namely Tristan da Cunha. We are lucky to have the administrator of Tristan da Cunha, Mr. Alex Mitham and the conservation officer, Mr. Trevor Glass with Mr George Swain and Ms Kirsty Repetto.

Alex and his team came to the Island to see how the conservation work is going as well as the sagina work that is ongoing on the Island. While the ship is here they have divers that do diving work to check on the lobster population and to make sure that marine environment is still good.

George Swain is a conservation officer on Tristan da Cunha Island. George with his two colleagues came specifically to Gough Island to fight and get try and rid of the invasive sagina plant.

When George is at Tristan he likes to go to the local pub in his free time. He also goes hiking, fishing and motorbiking with his friends.

Kirsty is the a conservation clerk on Tristan. She is incharge of the financial side of the conservation department. She goes to the beach and braais with her friend during her spare time. She also did a diving course and that is part of her work. Where have you seen a clerk doing diving as part of her job. It must be very "cool".

Lastly, the rascal. Senior Conservation officer, Island hopper, Mr personality for 5 years running, Chief sagina chopper and fun guy extraordinaire. The go to guy for everything conservation related, here and on Tristan. Don't forget to include Nightingale and Inaccessable islands. Trevor Glass

Welcome, or should I; say welcome BACK to Gough.  
We enjoy having you here.





## Climate Stats: January 2014



### Pressure

Maximum	1022.4 hPa
Average Maximum	1011.6 hPa
Average	1006.6 hPa
Average Minimum	1001.8 hPa
Minimum	979.2 hPa



### Temperature

Maximum	22.7 °C
Average Maximum	18.1 °C
Average	14.8 °C
Average Minimum	11.5 °C
Minimum	6.1 °C



### Humidity

Maximum	96 %
Average	77 %
Minimum	24 %



### Wind

Maximum Gust	54.8 m/s (197 km/h)
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### Rainfall

Total	232.2 mm
Highest in 24 hrs	75.4 mm
Total days with rain	22 days
Total days >1mm rain	20 days



### Sunshine

Total hours of sunshine	191.9 hrs
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Weather data compiled by Julian Grace

## Gough 59 team members:

Bani van der Merwe - Field Assist. (dep. Teamleader)

Ben Dille - Field Assistant

Delia Davies - Field Assistant

Johan Hoffman - Radiotech

Julian Grace - Snr. Meteorologist

Pathiswa Kedama - Meteorologist

Fanie "Steven" Wellman - Diesel Mech (Teamleader)

Zach Bokaba - Medic

Zanele Mngomezulu - Meteorologist

Gerard de Jong - Radiotech (G58)

Jan Bradley - Field Assistant (Sagina Project)

## Our Tristan Visitors:

Alex - Administrator

George - Conservation Officer (jnr)

Kirstie - Conservation Officer (jnr)

Trevor Glass - Conservation Officer (snr)

Film of the Month:

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

A Special thank you to our sponsors.



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