

Marion Island newsletter

THE WANDERER

November 2015



A few small words from the editor



Time on the island is flying by! Without really realizing it, November came and went. I guess that's what happens when you are having fun and believe me, we are having an absolute ball on the island.

I hope everybody enjoys the November edition of *The Wanderer*.

Until next month,
Tegan Carpenter-Kling

FROM THE TEAM LEADERS OFFICE:



Hi Everyone,

“My Epic Journey...”

Every year during the end of November into early December the Team Leader and Food Store Manager has to travel to all huts to check the food stock and general condition for a year-end report which will include maintenance and restocking of all huts. This task happens during takeover where the old team has a chance to fly to the huts restock and fly back...weather forbidding. So this part of the year is a hectic time for me but I always make time for the team and events like the “Are you a Sealer or a Weaner” party and our diesel mechanic’s (AJ) birthday. My maiden round island trip after training my knees to avoid the infamous ‘Marion Knee’ was not alone. The base engineer (Moses) accompanied me on my journey heading South, starting with Kildalky and ending at Repettos. The final leg of my journey was with Nkoane to Katedraal.

I used the good weather time frame to plot my trip as the photos will tell more of my story...Let’s start with way from KildalkEy to Watertunnel...



This was a good climb testing the knees to the limits



The view from the peaks of Black Haglet



"At last the white spec (Hut) in the centre



The two visitors awaiting visits at Watertunnel



The climb down the hill after leaving Watertunnel



A morning grunt from an onlooker at the bottom of the hill



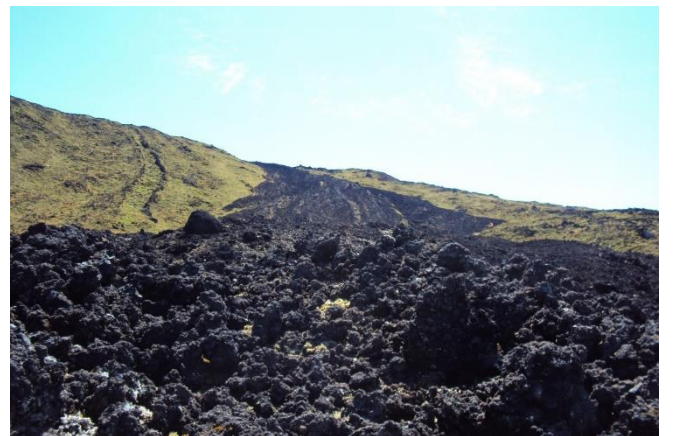
Pit-Stop and break time



Wiping down Harrismith's sign and dreaming of freeways



Saying 'good bye' to Rooks



A Lava freeway as we start our climb up to descend on Swartkops



Amphitheatre is always a welcoming sight...



Yeah we made it!!



'X' marks the spot!



The infamous Mixed Pickle surrounded by Azorellakop



Till next time MP



A true boot test...this place rocks!

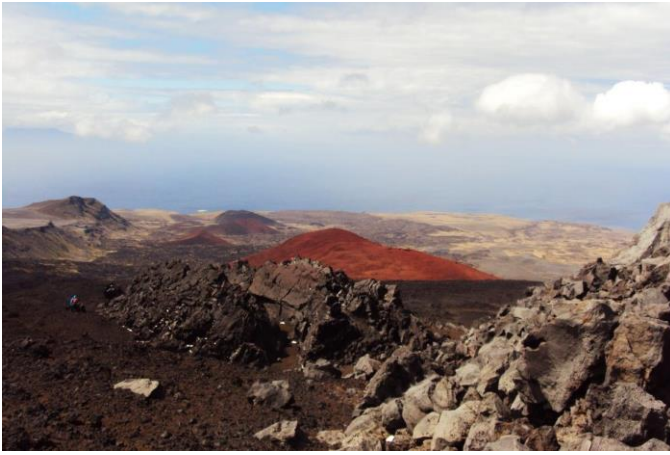


Cape Davis with a perfect sea view



'Boot Rock'

Then it was off to Katedraal with Nkoane Mathabatha



Getting to the top of Katedraal



A time for a smile..



Time for a thumbs up and...



Placing a rock on the pile at First Red Hill



A view from the top of First Red Hill plotting our route back...



This is a wind carved feature at the base of First Red Hill



A Halo over base on our return from Katedraal

Mpho – Environmental control officer



What do you do on the island?

"I am the Team Environmental Control Officer, my job entails monitoring of all activities with reference to environmental management and conservation on the island, while ensuring that legislation and regulations that govern the PEIs is adhered to at all times. I am sort of the "Marion Police"."

What has been your worst experience on the island so far?

"One thing comes to mind...my face getting slapped and exfoliated all the time when out on the field, the wind and ice pellets here really have no mercy."

If the ship could bring you three things from home tomorrow, what would they be?

"My mother, mom, Mma (All the woman she is!).... I miss her so much."

Describe your experience on the island so far in one word

"Fantabulouslyawesomeadventure! (Yes it is a word)"

What do you plan to do when you return home?

"The coming year will be a year to pursue my honours studies while looking for another job opportunity. All this after catching up or rather trying to catch up with all that I have missed out while on this expedition, with that said, I would not trade this experience for anything else on the Universe."

Why did you apply to come to the island?

"Besides being unemployed at the time, it was curiosity and the need to explore the non-conventional work environment. I wanted to be able to get sort of a "working gap year" so that by the time I have to settle into a normal working environment, I would have had an opportunity to get to know myself better professionally – which is what the Marion experience provides as you get to work at your own time and pace (flexible hours)."

Where is your favourite place to walk on the island and why?

"Walking from Mixed Pickle to Swartkop vice versa (dependant on the direction coming from base) is always bliss for me. I get to listen to ME and just take in all the beauty that is nature"

Is life on the island what you thought it would be and why?

"No, but not in a bad way. When one hears island, automatically the mind switches to exotic kind, white sandy beaches and clear blue waters but this is one is different, a research island where you can make every corner of the island your study area. It has been a way better than one can imagine kind of life as we get to work, play & appreciate nature from every angle."

What is your favourite thing in the whole world?

"Me (vain I know)....It has to be between cooking, more cooking and whole lot of cooking – creating mouth-watering dishes."

What has been your greatest thing you have cooked this year?

"The team would probably answer this one best...ribs and more ribs!"

Nasipi – Assistant Environmental control officer



What do you do on the island?

"Assistant Environmental Conservation Officer."

What has been your best memory on the island so far?

"Seeing my first killer whale up close"

What are three things on your bucket list before you go home?

"Know the most common plant and bird names, do at least one 3 hour killer observation, get as many team members as I can to go on a picnic with me."

Describe your experience on the island so far in one word.

"A-mazing"

What do you miss most about home?

"My daughter."

What did you do before you came to the island?

"Worked on an alien eradication project in Cape Town (Hout Bay) with SANBI."

What are you most likely to run out of before we return home?

"Ginger tea(my mom bought it for me)"

What is your favourite animal on the island and why?

"Killer whale, they are just awesome. I like everything about them."

Is life on the island what you thought it would be and why?

"I didn't imagine it to be like this, it's far better than I had imagined. This place is just gorgeous and its serenity is priceless."

What do you plan to do when you return home?

"I am hoping to further my studies."

The sealers' hut at Mixed Pickle Cove

*By John Cooper, Antarctic Legacy of South Africa,
Stellenbosch University*



When R.W. 'Bob' Rand, M8 biologist, became the first team member to walk round Marion Island during the summer of 1951/52 he came across a small wooden hut with a corrugated iron roof at what was named on a 1952 map by fellow team member J.J. 'Hannes' La Grange as Mixed Pickle Cove. The well-constructed hut contained sealing equipment as well as canned and bottled food (including the eponymous mixed pickles) that was still edible and even a couple of "penny dreadful" romantic novels from the beginning of last century—as revealed by two photographs of its contents taken in 1954 by Sergeant W.J. Deysel of M11.

Names and dates carved on wooden planks found at the site revealed the hut was utilized during the period 1909 to 1921, probably by sealers arriving from Cape Town. Several team members in the 1950s had added their names to those of the sealers.

The hut's comprehensive contents of equipment and canned and bottled food have all been taken away by team members over the years as souvenirs. By 1965 the hut had collapsed and very little visible now remains, save for a coiled steel cable, a few half-buried wooden planks and glass and porcelain fragments, despite an archaeological dig in the 1980s. The odd glass bottle is still spotted in hollows among the fur seals but following rules must now be left untouched.

An axe head (left of the rifle in a photograph shown here) and a number of glass bottles are the only items on view in the early photographs that has been saved for posterity. These items are now in the Iziko Museums of South Africa's social history collection. What happened to the ceramic jars, the stove, the large pot, grinding stone and other items photographed by Louis Triegaardt (M24) in 1978 is unknown but the anchor may well be the one now on display in the central hub of the new base. My own guess is that these bulky – and heavy – items had to be removed by helicopter and not on foot, probably in the early 1980s, as they were not present when I first visited the site in 1984.

Souvenirizing of sealers artefacts at Marion Island robs all of us of an important aspect of South Africa's Antarctic legacy and should never be condoned.

With thanks to Jaco Boshoff, Brian Huntley, Louis Triegaardt, Eduard van Zinderen Bakker Junior and Wilhelm Verwoerd for information and photographs.



The Mixed Pickle Cove Sealer's Hut, photographed by Sergeant William Deyssel (Medical Orderly, M11) in 1954



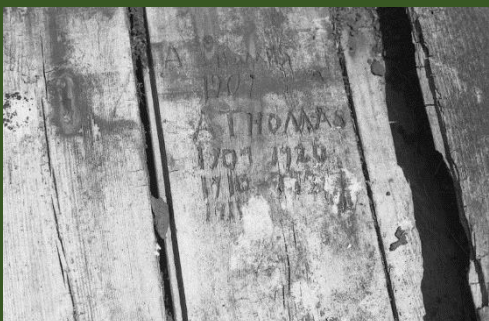
Large artefacts were still present in 1978, but had all been illegally souvenired within a few years, photograph by Louis Triegaardt (Senior Meteorologist, M35).



The Mixed Pickle site, the hut now collapsed, in November 1965, photograph by Brian Huntley (Botanist, M21 & M22)



The Mixed Pickle site, the hut now collapsed, in November 1965, photograph by Eduard van Zinderen Bakker, Jr (Ornithologist, M21&22)



(left) A plank from the hut engraved with names and dates by sealers, photograph by Eduard van Zinderen Bakker, Jr

(Right) Some of the contents of the Mixed Pickle hut: sealer's equipment, canned and bottled food and two paperbacks, by Sgt Deyssel



Ready for take-off

-Text and photos: Stefan Schoombie

For the past nine months we have had the privilege of following the lives of the wandering albatross chicks that hatched in April 2015. Any newcomer to Marion Island is instantly fascinated by the sheer size of the wandering albatross adults sitting on their nests. The chicks have now reached this size and replaced all their downy feathers with black feathers except for a snowy white face. Equipped with a new set of feathers these chicks have started braving the wind in the last two months. At first only flapping in the wind was possible but after a while they started jumping into the air with extended wings, often resulting in a short flight and a very excited looking chick (if you can interpret albatross facial expressions). During December the short flights for some evolved into a decision to trust their wings and fly off into the vast Southern Ocean. Most of the chicks will have left by the end of December, spending several years on the ocean before returning to find partners and breed, continuing the cycle.



Janine Versteegh

PHOTO CORNER



ANTARCTIC TERN CHICK



NORTHERN GIANT PETREL



**WANDERING ALBATROSS
FLEDGLING**



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



SUB-ANTARCTIC SKUA



KILLER WHALE



**MOM AND PUP ELEPHANT
SEAL**



**CLOUDS THAT HELP YOU
THINK**



KI NG PENGUIN



MOM AND BABIES



PUP ELEPHANT SEAL



SKUA CHICK



**SOUTHERN GIANT PETREL
AND CHICK**



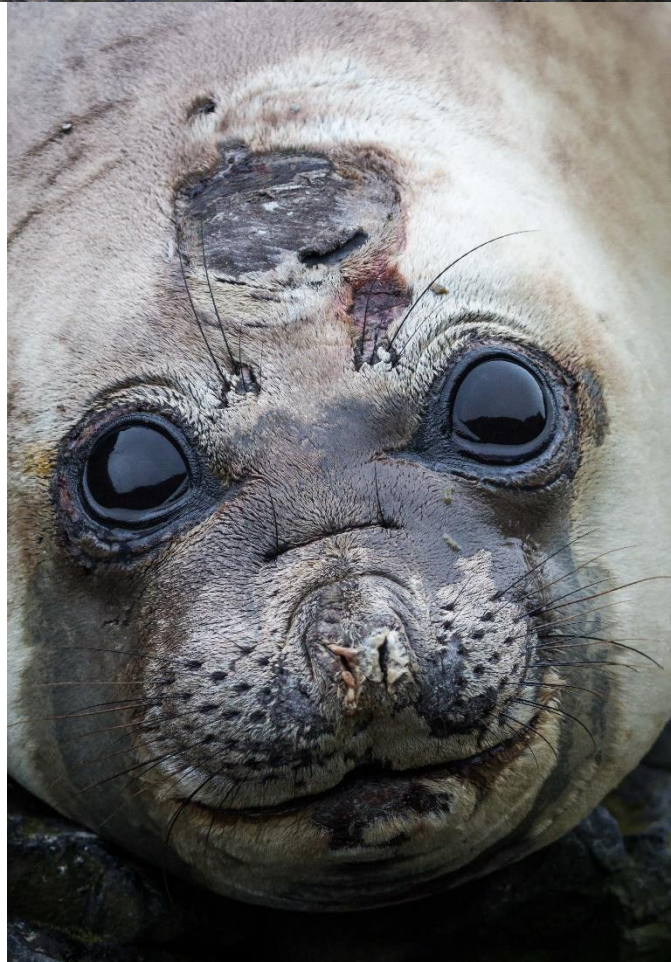
KERGUELEN CABBAGE

Selso came back!



Remember back to a story in a previous edition of The Wanderer when we introduce an elephant seal named Selso. As you will remember, this seal is particularly famous as he likes to visit the sunny coast of South Africa. Unfortunately when he came to visit the island he stayed for such a short period of time that only one lucky team member was able to see him.

During November, to everyone's surprise, this famous seal came to visit us again. Fortunately this time he stuck around long enough for the sealers to get his satellite tracking device back. However he soon vanished again and more team members were, again, not lucky enough to get a glimpse of him.



NOVEMBER CLIMATE STATS



Max Temp	12.9 °C	Total Rainfall	118.2 mm	Total Sunshine	150.2 hours
Min Temp	-1.1 °C	Highest in 24 Hours	25.8 mm	Max Wind Gust	36.6 m/s 131.8 km/h
Ave Temp	5.2 °C	Total days with rain	18 days	Average Sea Temp	5.9°C

By Jerry Ramonyai

Interior explored by team members for science related reasons ;)



People



Rugby World Cup 2015 winner...a box of chocs, sweets, Coke...not Skip ☺

