

The Wanderer

AUGUST 2018

Women's Month



Volcanic splendour

Meet the ECOs

Cape Davis: hut of the month

Giant Petrels and other species

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COVER IMAGE:
Ladies of Marion
by Mike Voysey



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

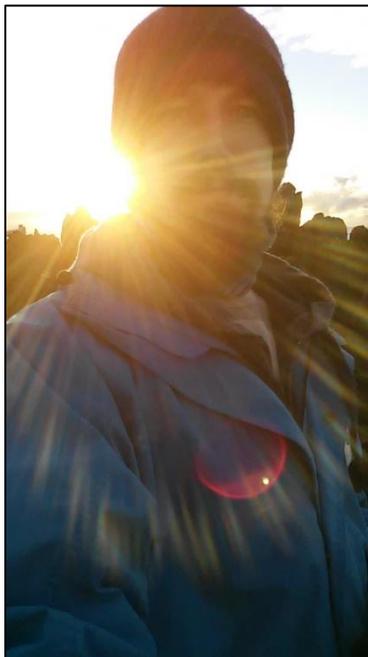


letter from the *editors*



Women's Month. A month filled with more unpredictable weather than any of the previous months that M75 has experienced on this beautiful Island. Round Islands were accompanied by countless blizzards and memories were definitely etched into the hearts of all Marionites. August kept everyone on their toes and a great THANKS goes to our families and friends who support us from afar. I sincerely hope that this edition of *The Wanderer* will give all readers an idea of how grateful we are to have the opportunity to work and live on this truly amazing island.

Despite the hectic weather we have seen throughout the month, August has been a very busy month for field workers and base personnel. As breeding season approaches in earnest, the field workers have been spending more and more time outside and at base we have been trying to keep everything from freezing up with the chill. The team is still strong and united despite the pressures of work and I hope we have captured some of this in this edition.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elsa van Ginkel'.

Elsa van Ginkel
Editor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Burns'.

James Burns
Co-Editor

Interview with....

Team ECOs



Charlotte Heijnis

Monica Leitner

As the Environmental Conservation Officers, these ladies play a crucial role in minimising and managing the effect we as humans have on the island's vulnerable ecosystem. Both of them are very hard-working and dedicated to making sure that our legacy on the island is one to be proud of. Their jobs are extremely varied: ranging from trapping mice in the interior as part of preparation for the mouse eradication, monitoring the Wanderer albatross colonies, Lesser sheathbill husbandry, assisting with other bird and seal-related activities to monthly hut inspections, making for a very busy but interesting schedule. These women are both soft-hearted, gentle souls that have crept deep into the other team members' hearts. Keep up the great work guys, your dedication and enthusiasm are contagious!!

Briefly describe your position on the M75 team

ECOs (Environmental Conservation Officers) are traditionally responsible for the management of conservation issues: aliens (vegetation, vertebrates and invertebrates), pathway degradation, pollution, aerial anti-collision devices, oil spills and leaks with concomitant reporting on these and other issues. This year the work has been broadened to include pre-work for the potential mouse eradication project (including mice density surveys, toxicity trials, reproductive monitoring and sheathbill husbandry trials) and some long term bird monitoring.

The Assistant ECO position basically entails trying to minimise any environmental impacts that we as humans have on the island plants. This ranges from picking up litter/debris and appropriate waste management around base to controlling invasive alien plants and inspecting the huts around the island. We are also lucky enough to be involved with the albatross and Giant Petrel monitoring work which is fantastic, and help out with the other research projects whenever we can.

Academic background

Bit of a smorgasbord: BSc (Oceanography & Zoology), Hons. (Marine Biology), MSc (Conservation Biology), MBA with a brief stint at medical school at some point in between the last two.

BSc Environmental Sciences, BSc (hons) Zoology and MSc Zoology. My research projects have focused on savanna ecology – quite different to the Marion system.

Favourite part of your job

The variety.

Being involved in a range of activities which involve different team mates and getting to explore the island in the process.

Have you always wanted to work on Marion and why?

For a long time. It started after Honours while spending three months or so on an Agulhas I summer cruise with stop-overs at the old SANAE base and grew in fits and starts since then.

Why? Very remote location with spectacular natural beauty. Doing conservation related work which adds value. Living outside of normal life for a while – sans some of the conveniences, intricacies and hurly-burly of modern life - in a simpler more basic existence.

The first time I heard about Marion was during a 1st year lecture, and I remember so clearly thinking “Wouldn’t that be amazing to see”. I never seriously considered it though until last year – and here I am. Funny how things just work out sometimes.

Favourite animal and/or bird on the island

On Marion, from a character perspective, the Sheathbills (Paddies). Probably because I’ve spent the most time with them and not only do these birds play the vital role of the island’s cleaners, they are resilient, highly individualistic, clever tough little birds with a complex social structure. And they seem to have a sense of humour (yep probably a little too much anthropomorphising). From an aesthetic perspective – the Grey-headed albatrosses.

Killer whales: they are just spectacular apex predators that travel the oceans. Nothing beats the first time you see that fin and white eye marking moving through the crystal clear waters. We joke about how people crave fin, and man I am a sucker for it!

Describe the island’s weather to the people back home

Unpredictable. You often live through ten years of weather in one day – revolving from summer through spring, winter and autumn back to summer. All these seasons vary within a non-wind temperature band of about 5°C. Adding wind widens the band by about 15°C. Usually very, very windy. We love near gale days... and more or less consider them calm ☺.

More wind, rain and cold than you can imagine. But those wind-still moments in sunlight take your breath away with views.

Most challenging day on the island so far

Once the ship left after take-over, probably my first solo wandering albatross colony monitoring expedition. The weather was atrocious, I struggled to find the nests and made the rooky mistake of taking a notebook and not a slate – the notebook’s pure intent was to turn into a solid block of paper mache. I didn’t take enough food and was quite frozen, and feeling extremely sorry for myself. Something which now takes two hours or so took me six... now it’s funny.

My first hike up to Katedraal hut. It felt like I was climbing Everest in a blizzard! Thank goodness for amazing teammates and together we made it through the wind and snow and had an incredible experience in nearly a metre of snow.

Plans for when you go home

Currently in formulation but foremost is spending loads of time with my wonderful peeps (who I miss very much). Followed by vast quantities of fresh vegetables, fruit, milk and cheese. Lots and lots of cheese.

No set plans for future endeavours yet, but first thing will be some quality family time for sure! Then hopefully some travelling to the bushveld before making my next career move.



LEFT. Charlotte busy in the interior doing elevation studies on the mice population in preparation for the future mouse eradication programme.

RIGHT. Monica busy monitoring the Wanderer albatross colony at Goney Plain. Here she checks up on one of the chicks!





Charlotte and Monica saying 'hi' to an adult male Southern elephant seal on Boulders Beach

Would you like to work in other remote places?

Yes.

Where and why? Not sure. I love being in real nature, spending time outdoors in the elements, exploring new places, learning new skills, coming to grips with and taking up new roles and responsibilities, and doing them well.

For sure!

Where and why? I have a real love for remote areas (particularly the Kalahari) and I guess most of it comes from growing up and then studying the ecology in such areas.

Advice to future Marionites

Bring more stuff than you think you will ever need. Come with a sense of wonder and curiosity, and come strong – physically, mentally and emotionally.

Bring a waterproof camera, a good sense of humour and get ready to toughen up!

Interesting places where you've worked

UK, Georgia, Namibia, Azerbaijan, Indonesia.

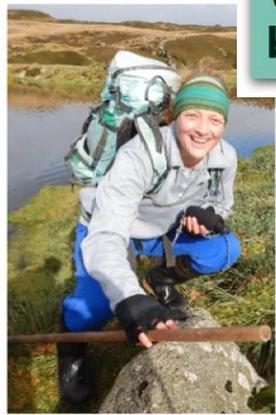
You joined the team a bit later... tell us more

The previous assistant ECO resigned during the takeover period in April and I was lucky enough to be offered this position when the Agulhas II made the second voyage to Marion in May – I thank my lucky stars!

Favourite quote

"The mind is everything. What you think you become." – Buddha -

Alice: "This is impossible!"
The Mad Hatter: "Only if you believe it is." - Alice in Wonderland -

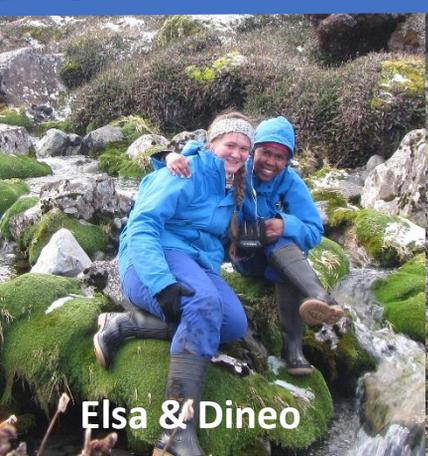


Both of these ladies LOVE exploring the wonders of the island!



Ladies of Marion...

Women's Month



Elsa & Dineo



Bongi



Dani



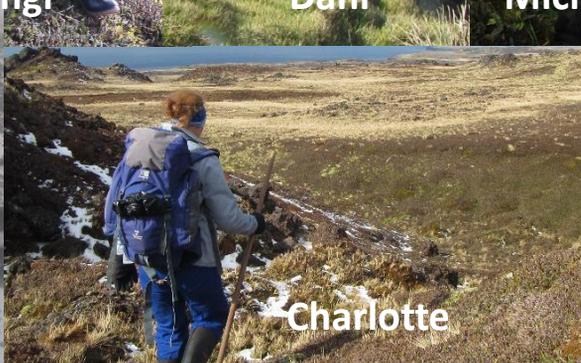
Michelle



Liezl



Monica



Charlotte



Marike



Mavis



Oyena



Zinhle

CAPE DAVIS

Hut Stop # 2

- Elsa van Ginkel

Hut of the month: Cape Davis

You can only start your journey to Cape Davis (or to any hut for that matter) after you have done a full check-up of your current hut. This includes making sure that both water canisters are relatively full, the kettle is filled up, the gas has been switched off, the windows are properly closed (for rain and mice!) and both the bootroom and hut have been mopped!

Route to Cape Davis

The walk from Repetto's to Cape Davis is a very short one and, depending on your level of fitness, it could take you between 40 – 90 minutes to walk. You'll head in a north-westerly direction, past Storm Petrel Bay towards Lou-se-Kop. If you have a brilliant day without mist, you'll spot *Boot Rock* to the north, where it protrudes from the sea, resembling a giant boot as the name suggests. This route is quick and easy and you will reach Cape Davis before any thoughts of tiredness enter your mind.



Route to Cape Davis

The Hut

Cape Davis (Beer and Buoy) is located on the northern side of Lou-se-kop. To the north you can hear the crashing sound of the waves and towards the southwest you can see the tip of Bomkop – the route leading towards the 'feared by all' Azorella-kop... Cape Davis Hut is well situated and seems to be a favourite to many of the field researchers.



Cape Davis Hut



Above: Hut door, window view and Boot Rock

Water

The river supplying Cape Davis with water is located south of the hut: 10 – 20 metres from the hut. The river is seldom in flow, thus you usually stroll along the river bank until you glimpse a puddle large enough to make any effort to fill the bottles worthwhile.



Hut recipe: Hut Pizza

Ingredients:

Dough

- 250g self-raising flour
- 2tbl spoons of oil
- 2tbl spoons powder milk
- 2tbl spoons condensed milk
- luke warm water

Topping

- 1x packet soya mince **OR** picnic ham **OR** bacon (from base)
- dried onion flakes
- dollop of chutney
- water
- CHEESE (from base 😊)

Methods:

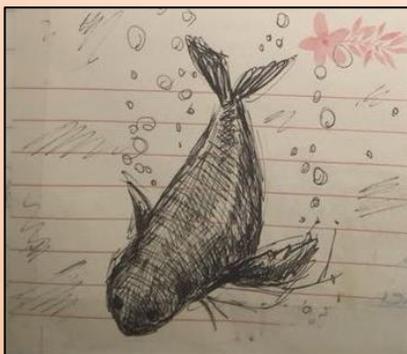
Dough

1. Mix all ingredients together
2. Add water slowly until dough forms a ball which doesn't stick to the sides.
3. Roll out the dough to form a circle which will fit in a pan.
4. Fry in a pan to brown both sides.

Topping

1. Add all ingredients in pot and cook until sticky (except the cheese 😊).
2. Add on top of fried dough and add cheese on top and put lid on pan and fry for about 10 minutes again.

Hutbook entries



107/07/2018
Two birders, three Inyangas, one sealer off to base! 10h45 → base.
- Marika, Elsa, Dimeo, Sean, Michelle + Liezl.
↳ Sealer was here, now going again. Inx to these awesome peeps for an incredibly successful & FUN pup weighing! - Liezl (MFS Sealer)
↳ Sean was here "  What an amazing group of people! So enthusiastic, dit was great! → SKA

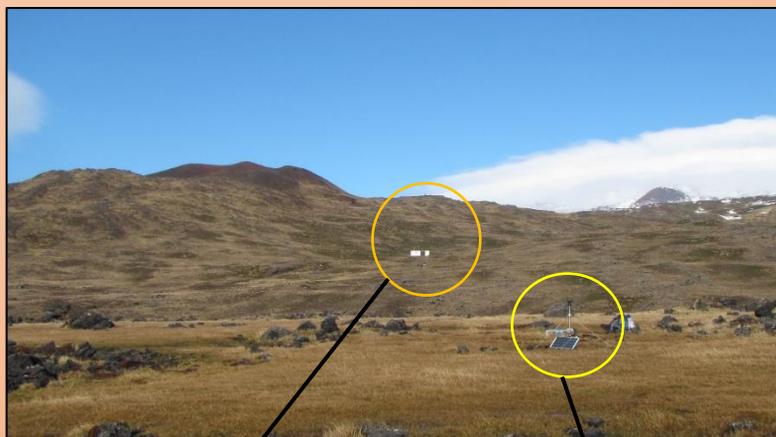
♥ Oyster 
-- I woke up to a new of Bootrock " I mean!! Whaat!?"

Work in the area

Winders: Wind-station 6 is located at the coast.

Birders: Several birds are monitored along the coast (Sooty albatross, Sheathbill, Crozet shag and other...).

Sealers: Occasional pup-weighing, scat-collection.



Cape Davis Hut

Wind-station 6





August – Month of Snow



Experience the Natives

...species of the month...

Kerguelen Cabbage

Pringlea antiscorbutica

- Elsa van Ginkel



This cabbage-like plant was discovered by a surgeon and naturalist William Anderson during the first voyage undertaken by the British explorer, Captain James Cook, in 1776.

P. antiscorbutica was named after the Kerguelen islands, where this plant was first discovered.

'*Antiscorbutica*' refers to the high amount of vitamin C in the fleshy leaves and, in the early 19th century, both sealers and sailors boiled and ate the peppery leaves of the Kerguelen cabbage, particularly for warding off scurvy.



KERGUELEN CABBAGE

- Leaves: thick and fleshy, forming a dense rosette
- Height: 25 – 70 cm
- Growth period: the diameter of the rosette can grow to 50cm during first four years and the Kerguelen cabbage only flowers during the third or fourth year.



- Inflorescence occur on long stalks which extend from the base of the rosette and lengthens considerably during the flowering season. These stalks can persist for several years.

- Flowers are greenish-yellow and give rise to short, inflated seed capsules.
- Seeds can be up to 2mm in size.





Fast facts:

- Brassicaceae family
- Native to the Prince Edward Islands
- Self-pollinates
- Habitat: prefers disturbed but sheltered areas.

Distribution:

- Marion Island, Prince Edward Island, Crozet, Kerguelen, Heard and Macdonald.

Possible threats:

- An introduced slug (*Deroceras panormitanum*)
- A possibly self-introduced moth species (*Plutella xylostella*).
- Both species feed on the leaves.



Kerguelen cabbage distribution map



Deroceras sp.

Wikiwand



Diamondbacked Moth
Plutella xylostella

mothphotographersgroup.msstate.edu

Subantarctic fur seals

Arctocephalus tropicalis

- Liezl Pretorius

- Breed on temperate and Sub-Antarctic islands
- Prefer rough rocky or boulder beaches
- Weight
 - new-born pups: 4 – 5 kg
 - adult females: 25 – 55 kg
 - adult males: 70 – 165 kg
- Females start breeding at around 5 years of age
- Males aggressively defend their territories with vocal and postural displays as well as fighting
- Pup births peak around mid-December
- Females spend some time with their new-born pups and mate before starting their foraging trips in order to obtain enough energy to maintain themselves, their pregnancy and lactation
- Foraging trip durations increase from 6 – 10 days to 20 – 30 days over the course of lactation, with short periods ashore to suckle their young
- Pups born on Marion Island have one of the longest inter-suckling intervals of any mammalian infant and endure some of the longest fasts of any physically active mammal
- Pups are weaned in mid-October



A very young pup catching some sun while waiting for his mom to return



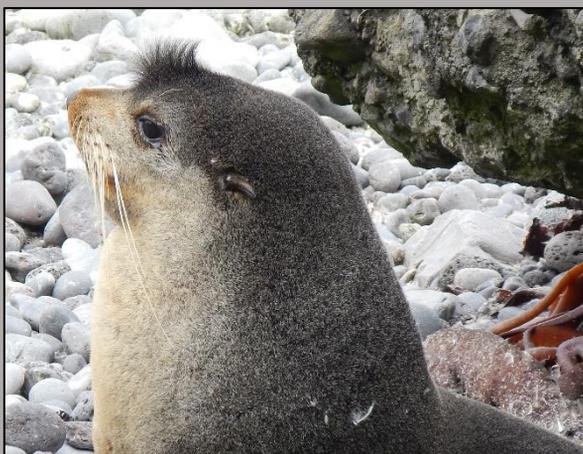
An adult female suckling her pup



The pups' fur changes from black to silverish-grey the older they get.



Pups love swimming and playing in rock pools and rivers



The characteristic mohawk of adult males



Pups are very inquisitive and love to investigate new things

Meet the GPs!

Northern and Southern Giant-Petrels

- Michelle Thompson

These large, carnivorous birds are quite widespread throughout the Southern oceans, preying mainly on penguin and seal carrion, as well as krill, offal and fish discards. Their massive bills, made up of a number of horny plates, are designed to rip and tear flesh from bone and are incredibly powerful, and as a result the weak and wounded stand little chance.

Like most seabirds, due to the amount of seawater they drink, a salt gland above their nasal passages helps get rid of excess salt by excreting a concentrated saline solution, which is why GPs always have “runny noses”.

The two species are distinguished from one another mainly by the colouration of their bills; Northern giant-petrels have a reddish-brown tip to their bill whilst their Southern counterparts have a greenish bill tip. Both species are robust in flight and here on the island are fondly referred to as Pterodactyls, due to their prehistoric appearance and their piercing calls that dominate the skies.



Northern giant-petrels generally like to build their nests in rocky areas.

The plumage of both species is also variable, with both white and dark morphs, which makes age determination of adults difficult. Now that the breeding season has arrived the NGPs have already built and laid their eggs (6 weeks earlier than the SGPs), with some individuals hybridising with SGP partners. Both GPs only start breeding at an average age of ten. We have been pleasantly surprised to find that these otherwise terrifying predators are unexpectedly placid on the nests, making them everyone’s new favourite!



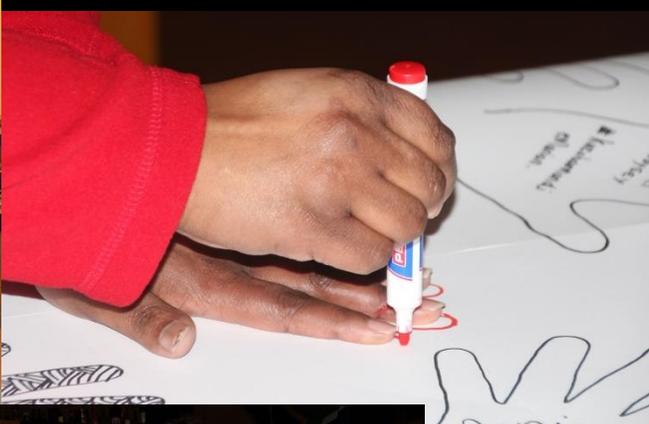
A hybrid giant petrel pair. The female in front is a Northern GP with diagnostic reddish bill tip, with the southern GP partner sitting behind with the green bill tip.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS



**The Show Must Go On...
Elsa's Birthday Show!**

We had an eventful night with seven very entertaining items and a surprise act by the birthday-girl! 😊



Monica's Kiddies' Party



END OF TAPS...

- Liezl Pretorius

TAPS (Tropicalis Attendance Patterns Study) refers to the pup attendance cycles of lactating adult female Subantarctic fur seals; i.e. how often and how long the moms feed their pups. This required the sealers to visually observe and document all tagged seals in the fur seal colony close to base, twice daily from 15 May to 14 August. During this time we got to know the tagged females and their pups quite intimately and we made some friends along the way! In a few months' time these pups will have to brave the open seas to start foraging for themselves, but for now they are playfully honing their swimming and predator-evading skills in the rock pools and river!

On the 16th of August we celebrated the end of this winter's TAPS cycle with lots of good coffee, food and games in the Old Mammal Lab, with the company of many of our teammates! Thank you to each person who made the effort of walking up the hill in the windy coldness to share in this big moment with us. You are all legends!

To the fur seal moms who work SO hard to provide for their puppies: you are phenomenal! And to the puppies: may you live long and prosper little ones!



PENCILS TO PAPER

Letterkunde Afdeling/ Literary Section

the life of an albatross

- James Burns

Once upon a time there was an egg. This was a large egg, not the largest, but comparatively so. When considering the size of its occupant, however, it did seem rather small, perhaps even a little cramped. And so, after some time and a little coaxing from outside, the temptation of stretching her unfamiliar limbs becomes too much.



The egg begins to vibrate as cracks web across the surface and finally a beak emerges, chipping away at the protecting yet limiting walls of the too-cosy cocoon. Once she is free from the fragments of her previous home, she takes in the world; blinded by the dazzling light and shivering at the biting wind. Quickly, instinctively, she takes control of her immediate surroundings; using everything in reach, almost selfishly she builds, fixes, improves her nest, her castle where she reigns as queen, defiantly snapping at all who would challenge her.

Time passes and, whether from curiosity or boredom, she rolls, stumbles and waddles from her perch to explore her kingdom. She never wanders too far though, not wanting to miss that precious delivery after days of hungry isolation.



Excitement when the deliverer drifts into sight. Impatient when they take their time getting to the nest. (Oh the disappointment when the delivery is destined for a rival over the hill)

The cycle repeats itself for many months as the once littler bird changes colour and grows, stretching her wings a little further every day until she has shed all her youthful fluff and realises she can soar and find her own precious cargo.



The skies beckon and, exhilarated, she glides effortlessly between the vast blue expanses. An ever present hunger keeps her low above the waves, and she learns to appreciate the deliveries of her childhood as she flies around the world in search of her next meal. One fine day, drifting lazy and content on the breeze, she glimpses a white speck above the distant horizon. The speck grows into a magnificent specimen and, in an instant, a lifelong bond is formed. On a sunlit plateau, vows are exchanged and the two circle one another with wings raised in a graceful dance. And so, soon after, another story begins with an egg.

PICK OF PICS

Feathered beauts



**Gentoo penguin
chicks**
Pygoscelis papua

Abuyiselwe Nguna

In the eye of the beholder..



**King Penguin
chick**
*Aptenodytes
patagonicus*

Abuyiselwe Nguna

Roaming the Seas



Monica Leitner

Sooty Albatross
Phoebetria fusca

Rocking your field gear

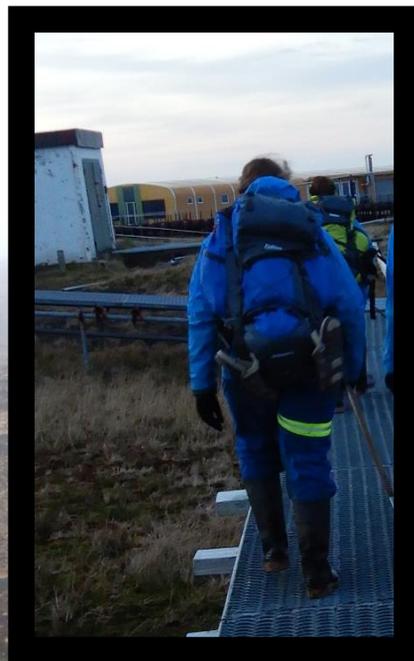
... we're sexy and we know it...

- Liezl Pretorius

...The Cat's in the Bag...

Well, luckily not literally as cats were eradicated from Marion quite a number of years ago! However, field assistants carry a wide variety of equipment around, more often than not, over many kilometres per day in bad weather conditions. As we almost always have a backpack on our backs, the importance of a good-fitting backpack can't be overstressed. It needs to be well-balanced and adjusted to your specific body type, otherwise you get more tired and can easily hurt your back.

Different people have different preferences with regards to the size of the bag. The most commonly used are the 65L (+10L) and the 55L (+10L) bags. However, for short day trips the 35L daypack is often more than adequate. We have basically become like snails; carrying our lives on our backs. We just move a little faster!



THE MISADVENTURES OF AN ISLAND DRAMA QUEEN

- Bongekile Kuhlase

Several months on the Island, I finally feel like a Marionite. Armed in my Zola 7 beanie, team buff and my blues - I feel like an island explorer with a touch of fair because of my giant Paris Hilton type sunglasses. The adventure continues, with my travels to the various parts of the island to do my vegetation work. I ventured out in the knee high snow to Watertunnel.

Marion is a chapter straight out of *Alice in Wonderland*, kind of strange. Heading down the devil's staircase, to my bewilderment, the small waterfall was actually falling in the wrong direction... yes falling up. The laws of gravity are not quite as powerful as the gale force winds and watching the two clash is spectacular.

Down the rabbit hole, to the land of seals... trotting past the seals,

they don't even notice my presence or rather they don't acknowledge it with the expected bark.

I feel completely in tune with the land, as if I too was one of the indigenous species. But as expected, I was so wrong. As I am happily walking back, a mother seal actually starts chasing me. At every turn, she was ready to attack me. With my short legs and heavy boots, it was a short lived battle. Exhausted, I had finally given up and I just talked to her women to women. So I said to the mother seal: "Lady, I can't do this, pick a side". And to my surprise, it worked. She retreated back to her pup and that was it.

Having conquered the seals, I really felt the spirit of the old sealers, down to my lilac painted toe nails. I too was part of the Sub-Antarctic explorers.



My favourite piece of equipment...

Electrocardiogram (ECG/EKG) is my favourite medical equipment - it was invented in 1903 by Dr. Willem Einthoven, a physiotherapist. It measures and records the electrical activity of the heart. It gives different types of rhythms, shockable and non-shockable, and even though I say it's my favourite piece of medical equipment within the medical field... the most important tools are your brain, senses and your hands as "we don't treat the machine, we treat the patient" (meaning: the machine can give you a false reading and that is why we believe in looking, listening and feeling).

- Mali (Team Leader and Medic)



Probing Radio Intensity at high-Z from Marion (PRIZM)

One of the greatest challenges in probing cosmic dawn at low frequencies is terrestrial radio frequency interference (RFI), which swamps the cosmological signal even when the nearest RFI sources are hundreds of kilometres away. PRIZM experiment is designed to measure the globally averaged sky brightness, including the expected red-shifted 21cm neutral hydrogen absorption feature arising from the formation of the first stars. PRIZM addresses the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) research priority area of radio astronomy antennas and receivers. An important goal of PRIZM analysis is to quantify Marion RFI levels in comparison to other radio-quiet sites in the world.

- Vhuli (SANSA space engineer)

There are many pieces of equipment that not only make my killer observations possible but also comfortable. Indeed, my many layers of clothing, plethora of gadgets to remember and to charge, and the packing and cleaning of my crossbow and equipment in general, sometimes make preparations for a killer observation feel like an achievement in itself. In lieu of the numerous items of equipment that accompany me in the field, I think of most of the items without any tremendous fondness, but rather with necessity in order to get the job done well. Nonetheless, some of them are rather charismatic: my crossbow makes me feel rather manly, my SANAE Suit (standard issue for Antarctic expeditions) keeps me really warm (although it is not very waterproof), my GoPro – which sits on my forehead to video any passing killers – makes me look like a human-sized glow worm, my ginormous DSLR camera gives me an air of officialdom, and my big green boots, that are typically used on the French Bouvet Island, ensure that my feet are well insulated. However, of all the items, one that does strum on my emotional heart-strings is my Stanley flask; nothing helps ease the oppressiveness of the icy, cold air and warms my belly like a good cup of rooibos tea. Time and time again, this item of equipment brings me joy by keeping the liquid I hold so dearly, piping hot.

- Mike Voysey (Killer whaler and sealer)

What! Another one?

- Mike Voysey

Leopard Seal Sightings



Each year on Marion Island, a few people get to spot a vagrant leopard seal that has strayed from the Antarctic seas that it usually inhabits. Leopard seals specialize in hunting all forms of fast moving prey, including penguins, squid, birds, and other seals, and are second only to the killer whale as Antarctica's top predator. This expedition has been lucky with five leopard seal sightings so far (and still counting). Leopard seals really are mystical creatures and seeing them in the flesh has let our imaginations run wild as to the superb life and vastness of our oceans, especially the remote oceans surrounding Antarctica. Here are some photographs of a sighting made at Killer Whale Cove, along Marion Islands south coast.



Mariké Louw



Liezl Pretorius

Taste of the Island life



Monica Leitner



Monica Leitner



Elsa van Ginkel



Elsa van Ginkel



Liezl Pretorius



Elsa van Ginkel



Liezl Pretorius

Volcanic splendour

- Marike Louw

Marion terrain Part 4:

“Pahoehoe?” you ask uncertainly.

“Pahoehoe,” an experienced Marionite confirms, and a chilly sub-Antarctic breeze snatches up the seemingly out-of-place Hawaiian word and sweeps it out across the southern seas.



Pahoehoe, pronounced ‘Pah hoyee hoyee’. Also known as ‘toffee lava’.

You are staring at a mass of convoluted, ropey black rock under your feet. It’s easy to imagine that a giant had dropped a thick, black pudding which solidified in rather mesmerizing ripples. But it’s a volcanic eruption that happened within the last 10 000 years that caused this intriguing terrain, and the tropical word is the name of this type of basaltic volcanic rock. We also call it “toffee lava” and field workers are familiar with crossing over it on our various missions on Marion Island.

Field researchers of the M75 expedition also encounter two other forms of black lava rock on the island: *a’a* and the less exotic-sounding *block lava*.

A’a type lava is perhaps aptly named, for this crumbly, unrefined black rock that covers so much of Marion has you stumbling with surprised cries of “ah-ah!” despite your best efforts at being a lithe nature-ninja.



A’a lava

Block lava is slightly more robust than *a’a*, but crossing over large swathes of it can be time-consuming.



Block lava

Black lava (a term which entails all three types) often forms some of the trickiest stretches of the walks on Marion, especially during spells of piercing horizontal rain and unruly wind where trying to balance on rocks that are jagged, not dependable for boot placement and unfriendly to un-gloved hands is a challenge! But black lava is certainly a very characteristic feature in our walks and will forever be etched in our memories of hiking and working on this truly magnificent piece of heaven on Earth.

BEARDS OF MARION

- James Burns

It's time, once again, for an update on how the beards of Marion are doing. It feels strange writing this, because while these pieces are intended to show how the beards are progressing, we here on Marion are so often oblivious to the subtle changes which are happening continuously. The changes, for us at least, are no longer as dramatic as they once were and, when we look into the mirror, it is not so easy to recall the smooth shaven visage we sported prior to our departure.

These last few months have definitely tested the warming capabilities of our thickening beards which have proven their worth without a doubt on many occasions. Not only have they been acting marvellously as windbreakers, preventing that chilly breeze from sneaking down your neck, but they also stop the icy rain and drizzle from doing the same. August has seen some impressive portraits, comparable to those of Shackleton and the other Antarctic explorers, with eyes peering out above the white, snow-caked beards and moustaches.

For some, they still feel a bit coarse or unwieldy and there are one or two longing glances in the direction of a razor or at least a pair of scissors but what can I say ... they're growing on us.



Stephan Keys



James Burns

Sean Morar

Mike Taunyane

Mike Voysey

What's up with this Weather?

... sea-surface temperature and swell ...

- James Burns

As unpredictable as ever, the weather on Marion this past month has done its utmost to banish all hopes of an early summer (if it ever arrives). Unsurprisingly, the winds have been relentless (often reaching speeds of over 40 knots) and there has been a substantial amount of rain. The snow, however, has by far been the most significant weather feature of August. Pellets and flakes, flurries and showers, the snow has piled up and M75 has woken up to blanketed surroundings on countless occasions. Oh and let's not forget the handful of sub-zero nights where the water has frozen in the pipes.



But now, moving on to our next piece of apparatus/duty we perform on a daily basis: measuring the sea-surface temperature with a specially designed thermometer. This is done each morning from Crane Point, just next to old base. Whatever the weather - rain, snow, wind – the metkassie on duty will make their way along the catwalk passing the deserted ramshackle buildings of old base, sometimes having to focus especially hard to avoid slipping on the overnight icing. When we get there, we gauge from the sea state whether or not it's safe to lower the thermometer. Although the sea is calm enough on most mornings, there are days where the swell and waves are just too big splashing right up to eye level and attempting to measure the surface temperature would just result in the thermometer being smashed against the rocks or ripped out to sea.



What's up with this Weather?

When conditions allow, we attach the thermometer securely to the rope using a buckle and winch it down until it is just below the surface. We leave it down for 10 minutes or so, to allow the thermometer to stabilise and then, almost like reeling in a fish, we bring it up again and read the temperature quickly, before it changes from exposure. During the 10 minutes while waiting, we observe the swell direction, period and height, which we also need to report. After determining the swell, we are left with a couple of minutes to appreciate the spectacular view from the point.

From Crane Point, we have a good view of the new base to the north and a wide expanse of ocean below a rising sun to the west; the rays of sun breaking through the clouds are a truly breath-taking sight. To the south, we look down onto Boulder's Beach where the occasional elephant seal can be seen among the louder and more active Gazella fur seals (one morning even saw a leopard seal drifting lazily in the water just below the point). Many of the local birds like to bath here and also enjoy swooping low overhead, curiously eyeing this unlikely fisherman.

SAWS MONTHLY WEATHER STATS – August 2018

TEMP	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	AVERAGE LOW	AVERAGE HIGH
	-3.2°C	9.4°C	3.5°C	0.8°C	6.3°C
PRESSURE	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	HUMIDITY	AVERAGE
	9978.1hPa	1029.8hPa	998.3hPa		81%
RAIN	TOTAL	DAYS WITH RAIN (>1mm)		MAX IN 24 HOURS	
	103..6mm	28 (22)		18.8mm (18 th August)	
WIND	MAX	DIRECTION	SUNSHINE	TOTAL	
	105km/h	NW		109.6 HOURS	



M75



Thank you to our sponsors!!!



Once again we would like to acknowledge our sponsors; i.e. AfricaOrganics, Pure Beginnings and Afriearth/The Hospitality Brand. Although subtle changes are in the air with approaching springtime, we are still experiencing rather dramatic weather conditions changing between gale force winds, snow/ice pellet squalls, rainstorms, snowstorms and sometimes even a few hours of sun... often all within one day! As our bodies take a lot of strain while working outside in these conditions, it is great to use personal products that are gentle not only on our hair and skin, but also on the environment! Thank you for the great products, we are truly grateful.

