

# Gough Bunting: G61

## *October 2015*

### **A Welcome from the Team Leader:**

#### **G61, the journey so far!**

G61 began their voyage on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2015 on The SA Agulhas II. It was a sunny day back at the DEA Cape Town offices, filled with joy and anticipation by the team members who could hardly wait a second longer to embark on the beautiful ice crusher as she would begin sailing on the evening of that eventful day. A ceremony was held to see off and wish the team well on their voyage and their stay at Gough Island for the next thirteen months. One cannot express in words the overwhelming presence of the Honourable Minister of Environmental Affairs, Mme Edna Molewa, as she came to see us off and wish the team an enjoyable, safe and fruitful expedition. That will be for a long time to come, a highlight of the G61 expedition, a day we will forever cherish.

Fast forward to the voyage itself, we sailed across the Southern Ocean until we reached Tristan Da Cunha Island. There we stayed anchored for thirty six hours, for cargo operations and passengers being flown over. We then made our way further south towards our destination. After being on the ship for almost a week, I was beginning to wonder if we were ever going to reach our destination? Little did I know that we were about to encounter what the G60 referred to as “The Mountain in the sea”!

We were flown over on the same day, with the warm welcome and introductions done in the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of September. Operations were to start the next morning. A lot took place during takeover, cargo operations, skills transfer, base maintenance, skivvy duties, team sessions as well as other events and activities. However, the takeover function was another highlight, the old team G60 officially handed over duties to the new team G61. There were a lot of tears for a lot of reasons, one of them being the presence of Mr Harold Green. It was a smooth takeover and the ship left on Monday, 28 September 2015.

As a team we want to thank everyone who ensured a smooth sailing throughout. We want to thank the Department for showing faith in our team and giving us an opportunity to be here. We accept our big responsibilities and we shall do our best not to disappoint. We shall fly the South African flag with pride. We also thank the SA Agulhas II Captain and his crew, the NDPW team, the Scientists and last but not least, Tom Mc Sherry and the entire G60 team.

To the G61 team, so much faith has been displayed towards us, let us not disappoint. Let us demonstrate to the world that we are also capable — the baton has been handed over to us, let us run with it!!!

**Lehlohonolo Rakoteli—Team Leader**

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*Gough 61 Team members after rope rescue training morning*

# Team logo for G61



This year's team logo contains a number of elements, representing the various research and activities on Gough Island.

At the heart of the island are the **South African flag and the Union Jack** representing the longstanding cooperation on the island between South Africa who manage the base and carry out meteorological research on the island and the United Kingdom who owns the island as part of the UK overseas territories. The two flags also reflect the mixed nationalities of this year's team, with seven South African members and two British scientists.

The other elements of the logo represent the importance of the island for its scientific and ecological interests. The **blue cold front** stands for the long-term meteorological observations that have been carried out on the island by the South African Weather Service. These observations are helping to forecast the weather that affects the country. The **Sooty Albatross** is one of the many endangered species of seabird that make Gough their home. The bird represents the international importance of Gough to seabirds and the threats they face. Gough Island is one of the most important islands on the planet for its seabirds. Gough Island is home to 24 species of seabirds, most of which are classed as either vulnerable or under severe threat due to a number of reasons, including the invasive house mouse which is causing rapid declines in many of these species. The **Sub-Antarctic fur seal** is an indication of the importance of Gough for these magnificent animals. Home to around 300,000 fur seals, Gough holds 80% of the world's population with some 60,000 pups born on the island each year.

We are going to use this logo to represent the team in all our correspondence and on badges for clothes including T-shirts, hats and buffs.

**Derren Fox (Senior Research Assistant)**

# G61 Team Profiles: Lehlohonolo Rakoteli

## Communications Engineer

**Nickname: Hloni**

Home town:

Excelsior (Free State)

**Background :**

Married to Lesego Rakoteli and we are blessed with two lovely kids, our son Karabo(10) and daughter Reneilwe(3). I worked in



SANDF for 12 years before joining the DEA. I admire nature a lot and recall all those wonderful moments I had as a soldier out in the field (Walmansthal, Lohatla and de Brug). It was the time when I was most at peace, the peace and quiet of mother nature when all you hear around is the sweet sounds and calls of the creatures around, and all the noises and fast life of the city are absent.

Being on Gough Island brings one as close to nature as possible. I hold a BTech Electrical Engineering Degree and I am here as a Communications Engineer and Team Leader for G61. I hope to make the best of the remaining months on the Island.

**What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?**

I am the team leader on this expedition and I believe the biggest challenge any leader faces is distinguishing between being a leader and a dictator, I hope not to fall into the same trap.

**What is your best experience so far?**

There's so many, but I think being part of G61 is the best experience in itself. Observing the Albatross species so up close and watching nature unfold, the downpours and weather patterns is quite an experience.

**Food hates :**

Is broccoli regarded as food? If so then I hate it!

**Last music album you bought/downloaded:**

Well I just downloaded Minnie Riperton's 'Loving You'

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# G61 Team Profiles: S'celo Winston Ndwalane

## Diesel Mechanic And Deputy Team Leader

**Nickname: S'celo**

Home town:

Highflats (KZN)

**Background :**

I started working in Scottburgh garage as a mechanic, specialising in tractor engines. Then I moved to work as a mechanical fitter in

Limpopo and Mpumalanga when Eskom power station was shut to do maintenance. I finished a trade test in Free State which took me 2 years. After that I got the job from the DEA to work on SANAE BASE In Antarctica as a Diesel Mechanic for a period of 16 months. After this I got a job as a caravan technician in Empangeni while I was waiting for a response on application in Dept of Agriculture for the post as a tractor mechanic. I got the job with the Dept and worked there for two years but resigned after I got this post as a diesel mechanic here in Gough Island.



**What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?**

The way in which the base plan is set up due to weather condition that change every second in a day.

**What is your best experience so far?**

Staying in a raining area like this since we arrive, seeing many different birds closely and spending my spare time fishing in the ocean for the first time in my life. The fishing is so close to the base where we stay.

**Food hates :**

Food hates for me is to eat chicken without bones and skin (fillet) - health wise it doesn't matter but just for taste only.

**Last music album you bought/downloaded:**

DJ Vinny Da Vinci vol 8 House Music Always.

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# G61 Team Profiles: Patrick Mangali

## Medical Orderly



**Nickname: (The real)  
Stix Linguini**

Home town:

Kroonstad

### **Background :**

I was recruited in the Military Health Services for the first seven years after high school most of my medical training was accumulated during that time and intense working experience including parachuting, swift water rescue, Rapid medical evacuation warzone medical extrication to name the least after my military career I have been in the medical college, training students and also in the department of health. My recent studies includes Industrial Psychology and will be starting a Diploma in Labour Relations as soon as I get to Mzansi .

### **What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?**

Being away from my family and friends for such a long time.

### **What is your best experience so far?**

Travelling in the SA Agulhas II is the most emotional moment of this expedition because of what the vessel stand for I think it was named after a very strong individual umama Miriam Makeba.

### **Last music album you bought/downloaded:**

Cassper Nyovest-Mama I made it

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# G61 Team Profiles: Berend Maepa

## *Senior Meteorologist*

**Nickname: Sticks**

Home town: Slagboom,  
Bela-Bela, Limpopo,



**Background :**

Was born in Warmbath and has been working for the weather service as a meteorological technician in Bloemfontein for the past 3 years

**What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?**

To keep to my daily dose of information flow, my goal was to use free resources from the internet to further my various intellectual pursuits for global transformation in humanities progress. The internet speed is a nightmare.

**What is your best experience so far?**

The air quality is superb, the erratic change of weather and the constant battles between the weather patterns. They tend to ignite the breath taking beauty of Gough Island and excites the seabirds as well.

**Food hates :**

Pies, always a resort for lazy cook and leaves such a mess.

**Last music album you bought/downloaded:**

Lupe Fiasco- Tetsuo & Youth.

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# G61 Team Profiles: Josef Klaasen

## Assistant Meteorologist

### **Nickname: Joe**

Home town:

Brakpan North, East Rand, Gauteng, South Africa.



### **Background :**

Born in Boksburg. Married to Ulanda and we are proud parents of seven kids. Work as a Meteorologist in South Africa, United Arab Emirates. It goes with two Islands Expedition's, namely Marion Island and Gough Island. Emergency replacement for this team after returning four months ago from Marion Island.

### **What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?**

To keep focus of why we are here. The Rain and rain and more rain every day, it's too much.

### **What is your best experience so far?**

The beauty of Gough Island. The weather out here is very challenging. The experience everyone share and bring to this team. Playing FIFA 15 on the Big Screen (projector) not the whole day (wink). Screaming or shall I said crying of the nights birds.

### **Food hates :**

I need a serious diet. I will go for the fish we received for the year 'Eish'. Rather get me a fresh Snoek or Blue fish from Gough waters lol.

### **Last music album you bought/downloaded:**

FIFA 15 soundtrack and The Empire Series album all Downloaded few months ago.

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# G61 Team Profiles: Prince Manqoba

## Assistant Meteorologist



**Nickname: Prince**

Home town:

Pretoria

### **Background :**

This being my second voyage down here at Gough, it really is an experience of a life time only a few do actually receive. I will again make the best of it.

### **What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?**

Coping without fresh fruits again but kinda got use to it already by now.

### **What is your best experience so far?**

The rain! Being a pluviophile and coming from Pretoria the last time it rained it was in May). So right now it's pay up for all those dry days.

### **Food hates :**

My taste buds are so welcoming

### **Last music album you bought/downloaded:**

Andreas Vollenweider – Cosmopoly (jazz fusion)

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# G61 Team Profiles: Derren Fox

## Senior Research Assistant



### Nickname:

**Derren, occasionally Foxy or even Dezza!**

Home town:

No fixed abode!

### Background :

I've worked in conservation in various roles since the mid-nineties, mostly on the Scottish Islands, including Islay, the Western Isles and Orkney managing nature reserves and carrying out research. I've spent time on Bird Island off South Georgia, Signy and Ascension working on seabird research and really found my niche there. I'm a very keen wildlife photographer and am looking forward to spending time out in the field here with my camera.

### What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?

Living without fresh fruit and veg will be a challenge, they aren't allowed here due to the risk of releasing invasive species onto the island.

### What is your best experience so far?

Sitting underground with my torch off in Prion Cave, surrounded by the cacophony of calls from hundreds of prions calling. The whole cave reverberates with the noise, it's an extraordinary experience. We're very privileged to live and work in such an extraordinary place for a year.

### Food hates :

Not many, anchovies is the main one I guess, they are the devil's work!

### Last music album you bought/downloaded:

It's been a while, but I think it was Bimbling by Martha Tilston.

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# G61 Team Profiles: Jan Bradley

## Field Assistant (Birder and Sagina Eradicator)



**Nickname:** Jan

Home town:

Waterval Boven,  
Mpumalanga Province,  
South Africa.

### **Background :**

I live in a small town in the country and work as a rock climbing guide. The mountains have always been special to me and spending as much time outdoors as possible has always been a passion. I got involved with the Sagina eradication programme on Gough a couple of years ago and it has only been a matter of time before I took the plunge for a year stint. Using my skills in a conservation setting is a very rewarding experience, combining two passions, conservation and spending time in nature.

### **What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?**

Doing everything on my to do list.

### **What is your best experience so far?**

Gough is always a wonderful experience but for me so far it was seeing the west of the island which I haven't visited before.

### **Food hates :**

Raisins in anything, they're great on their own but shouldn't mix with other foods.

### **Last music album you bought/downloaded:**

Beth Hart & Joe Bonamassa - Seesaw

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# G61 Team Profiles: Chris Taylor

## Field Assistant (Birder)



**Nickname: Chris**

Home town:

Dursley, Gloucestershire,  
England

### **Background :**

I have been working on nature reserves around the UK including several seabird islands (Skomer and Orkney). I have worked as both a nature reserve warden and various field assistant positions studying seabirds. I have recently completed a research masters looking into the effects of power lines on Swans and Geese. This is my first job in the Southern Hemisphere.

### **What do you think will be the toughest challenge of this year?**

Keeping dry – The field assistant position require walking in all sorts of weather, which I am used to, but the rain here is exceptional.

### **What is your best experience so far?**

Being able to see so many new seabird species up so close.

### **Food hates :**

Rusks (sorry!) – They just need some butter/sugar to make them into a proper treat!

### **Last music album you bought/downloaded:**

Salt-fish Forty – An Scottish folk band from Orkney Islands.

**Blog:** <http://chrisongough.blogspot.co.za/>

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# Wildlife Highlights

Various Elephant Seals have been visiting Seal Beach provide interest for people on Base. The individual was tagged with a GPS device by some visiting Sealers during takeover. The tag has sadly been dislodged (a risk of deploying the device during the mating season). Subantarctic Furseals (bottom right) have been increasing in numbers in anticipation of the coming breeding season



Photo credits: Chris Taylor and Patrick Mangali (top right)

# Wildlife Highlights



Many of the above ground species are now on eggs including the Sooty Albatross (left), Yellow-nosed Albatross (top right) and the Northern Rockhopper Penguin (bottom right)

# First impressions by Berend (Senior Met)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2015 was our day of departure in the mother city (Cape Town, SA), to journey into the world of unknowns in pursuit of scientific explorations, reading about it in our pre-departure information aroused mixed emotions. Browsing through our most favorable source of information, Wikipedia, anxiety kicked in. Gough Island seemed to be coined “the loneliest island on the planet” or according to an article written by J.T McNish with the subtext in bold “Gough, lovely island of death”. Comfort was asserted by the presence of the minister of environmental affairs, friends and families who managed to come and bid us farewell.

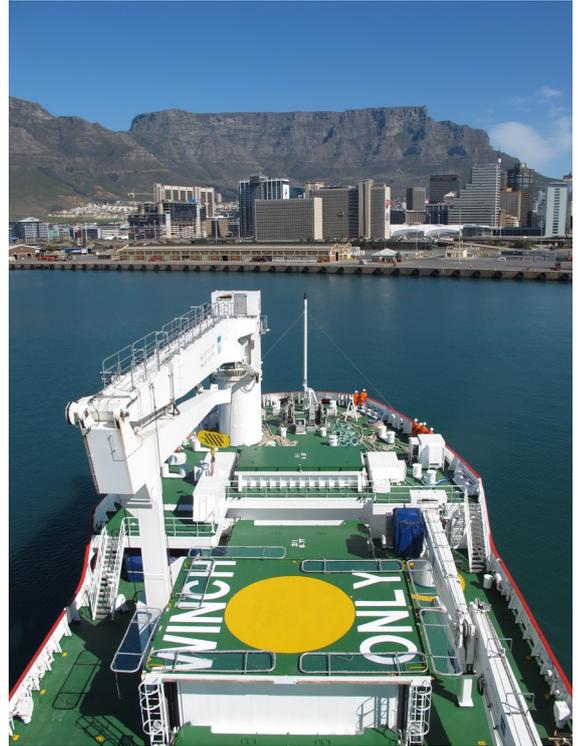
As we journeyed through the rough sea swells and waves, life on the voyage was awesome, cool and mostly collected with new friendship blossoming between our companions heading to Tristan da Cunda, lovely people indeed. After they have reached their destination we continued our journey to Gough and arrived peacefully ahead of schedule. Takeover was a smooth sail, fun-filled, adventurous time. A most courageous time to welcome our new realities and bond with our new home, the mountain in the sea, our new paradise.

A month has passed since our arrival on the island and every team member has undertaken their duties with an amazing ease, welcoming each other into our field of work, be it, simply conducting upper air, tagging birds or doing maintenance on our water supply. Team work has been effective and family ties are becoming stronger as we share supper daily, engaging on our chores and sharing more about our individuality and becoming one big family. Once in while we chill and watch movies or take a family trip down to Seal Beach or fishing.

The idea of Gough being the loneliest place on the island of death has been dismissed and replaced by joyous braais, pool challenges, chess games, hard work and dedications.

The weather has completely forgotten that we are only 9 guys on the base, it has thus by far remained romantic with more rainy days than sunshine. A cup of coffee and a book or DVD box-set marathon does miracles, a perfect cure.

Gough has become the finest funfest memorabilia.



The SA Agulhas II and G61 departs Cape Town

## Weather Summary: September 2015

Ave Max. Pressure	1014.2 hpa
Ave. Min Pressure	1003.1 hpa
Ave. Pressure	1008.7 hpa
Max Pressure	1034.5 hpa
Min Pressure	969.2 hpa
Ave. Max Temp	13.4
Ave. Min Temp	8.2
Ave. Temp	10.8
Max Temp	17.0
Min Temp	4.6
Ave Humidity	88 %
Max Humidity	97 %
Min Humidity	46 %
Max Wind Gust	33.2 m/s
Total Rainfall	338.0 ml
Highest in 24 Hours	89.0 ml
Total days with rain	24 days
Total days >1mm	20 days
Total Sunshine	126.0



Gough—not always sunny but always beautiful

# Rope rescue training

Lead by Jan Bradley (Field Assistant/Sagina) the team were shown how to haul an injured casualty up a cliff using a pulley system.

