

The Wanderer

JANUARY 2019



marion in
BLOOM

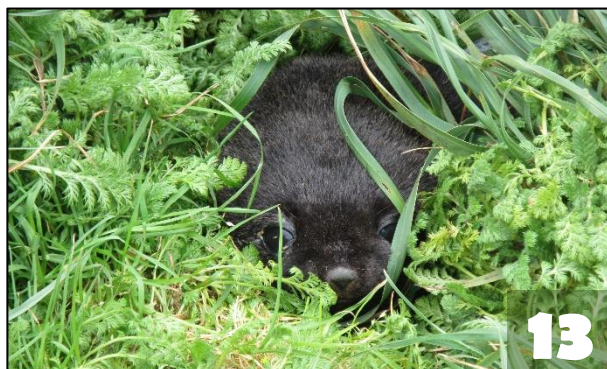
A BIRDER'S TOOLBOX

SNAPSHOTS OF ISLAND LIFE

Watertunnel

hut of the month

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COVER IMAGE:
Light-mantled Sootie
Albatross chick
Phoebastria palpebrata
- Elsa van Ginkel



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



letter from the *editors*



January was a fun-packed month... but we can feel that our fun is slowly coming to an end. The sealers and birders were hardly ever seen at base as they are racing against time to get everything done. The winders and botanists are wrapping up all their final tasks and all the team members are still in high spirits! Many of the field researchers have also been working very hard at finishing their degrees inbetween all the long field hours – they are making us proud. Then a big *shout-out* to all our family members and friends who are supporting us from the mainland. Thank you. We hope that you will enjoy this edition of the Wanderer as much as we have been enjoying this island.



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

Elsa van Ginkel
Editor

This first month of the new year has been a quick one. Everyone has been doing their best to ensure that their work gets done before the time runs out. There are mixed feelings in the team as the end of our expedition approaches; many are looking forward to getting back to the mainstream civilisation but there are also many who have fallen in love with this paradise and will be sad to say goodbye. There is still so much of this island I want to see and (I must say) the simpleness of life here is rather enchanting. Thank you to everyone back home for your continued support, enjoy this edition of the Wanderer!

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

James Burns
Co-Editor

Watertunnel.

Hut Stop # 7

- Elsa van Ginkel

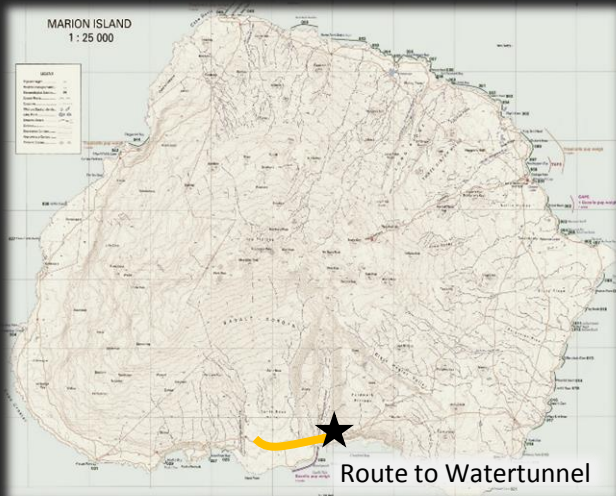
Hut of the Month: Watertunnel

Route to Watertunnel

Grey-headed to Watertunnel... this is probably the second most enjoyable walk after the stretch from Mixed Pickle to Swartkops! You'll start off through the treacherous Santa Rosa Valley – it only gets you down if you stray from the path, so keep your eyes open because every now and then the path uses its trickery to fool you, especially on misty days. This *black-veg-lava* section, as it is known among fellow Marionites, goes on for about 35-50 minutes – depending on your fitness level.



Santa Rosa Valley



After the Santa Rosa Valley, the path meanders through a beautiful plain with no unnecessary ups and downs. If you do decide to do some exploring, you'll find that there are multiple gazella harems (*Antarctic fur seals – Arctocephalus gazella*) on Gazella Plain (I guess it's all in the name!) and their interactions are entertaining to watch, especially if you do have the time but usually we just *motor* past in the hopes of getting to the Watertunnel hut and beyond.



Gazella Plain

After the stroll through the plain, you reach the feared-by-all, *Devil's Staircase*. If you've had a long day and your thighs and knees have been acting up, this is the last staircase you want to climb - but in total honesty there are worse climbs than Devil's Staircase - like the stretch of uphill after Watertunnel and the *Black Haglet staircase* - which will be explained in next month's walk to Kildalkey.



View from Devil's Staircase

After the Devil's Staircase, just before you reach the hut, you cross a dry riverbed and if you are lucky enough, you might actually see this river in flood which is quite the sight as it creates a small yet beautiful waterfall.



Waterfall close to Watertunnel...



If you feel lost in Santa Rosa Valley, you could always head to Harrismith...

The Hut

The hut is situated right next to the Watertunnel river, which supplies us with drinking water and bears the same name as the hut, originating from the Watertunnel feature found approximately 20 minutes upstream of the hut. If there is a pool to brave for a swim, I'd recommend one of the pools found at this feature.



Watertunnel hut

Watertunnel feature



Hut recipe

Roosterkoek/Flat bread:

Ingredients:

250g self-raising flour

2tbl spoons oil

2tbl spoons powdered milk

2tbl spoons condensed milk

Luke warm water

Mehods:

- 1.Mix all ingredients together.
- 2.Add water until the dough doesn't stick to sides of bowl.
- 3.Divide dough in similar-sized pieces and flatten them.
- 4.Place in pan and bake them on low heat until they are crisp brown on the sides, make sure to turn them regularly.



Work in the area

The main work at Watertunnel is the seal work at Gazella Plain and the birders count numerous bird species during their Round Islands.

MARION IN BLOOM

-Marika Louw



Crassula moschata

Here on Marion, we may not have the bonny purple of Jacaranda trees or vibrant reds of Flamboyant trees punctuating the atmosphere with tantalizing scents or invading our vision with an overwhelming presence...



Cerastium fontanum



Colobanthus kerguelensis

... but we do have a surprisingly beautiful world of miniscule wonders that grace our mossy, rocky, and mirey landscape with a timid charm. Crouch down, and it turns out that the hardiest of beings (surviving bouts of heavy snow, powerful wind, relentless rain) reveal a delicate gentleness that comes with the continuation of life. Featured here are a few examples of the little beauts!



Right: This little plant is luckily not as intimidating as its name sounds: *Juncus scheuchzerioides*. The inflorescences consist of 2 to 8 flowers.

Below: *Azorella selago* wearing its yellow colours!

Far below right: *Callitriche antarctica* sporting miniscule flowers investigated by a moth-fly.



Below: the little moth-fly, *Psychoda parthenogenetica* visits a flower of *Ranunculus biternatus*.



These hardy denizens of Marion island never cease to surprise and amaze us!

PICK OF PICS

Waves of Colour



Monica Leitner

3rd Sister Lake



Elsa van Ginkel

Proud in the Crowd



Marike Louw

Gentoo Penguin Chicks

Pygoscelis papua

Hold on...



Marike Louw

Macaroni Penguin Chick

Eudyptes chrysolophus

Marion's Beauty



Elsa van Ginkel

Agrostis magellanica

Tiny Wonders



Marike Louw

Shore Stonecrop

Crassula moschata

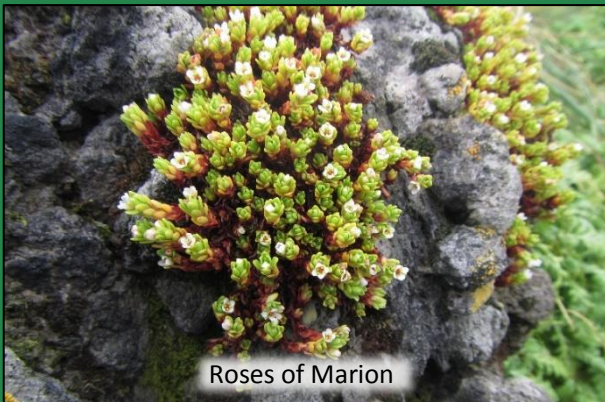
Experience the Natives

species of the month...

- Bongi Kuhlase

Crassula moschata

Crassula moschata - I often refer to them as the green roses of Marion, due to their concentric-growing leaves.



Roses of Marion

This hairless, small, succulent herb is found in very wet areas - essentially growing in permanent fresh water pools and run-off streams.



Crassula mats along the coast

It grows as abundant mats, covering large areas in the littoral zone on beach rock stacks along the coast, on humic sandy soils on rocky shores and thin peaty soil on beach pebbles.



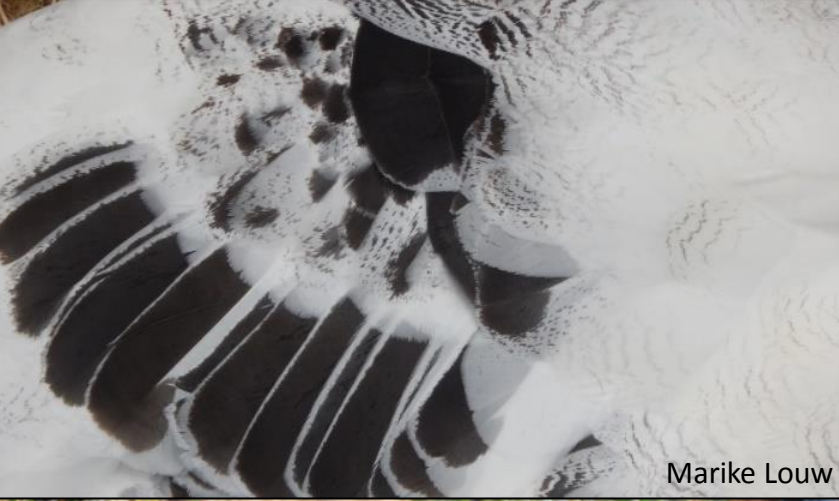
Growing among beach rock stacks

Its deceptive appearance of stability has been a source of many water submerged boots at the Goney plain stone cliffs as well as the coastal walk to Archway. In the warm summer months, these mats grow beautiful white flowers to attract pollinators and the daring Marion explorer.



White flowers

Its distribution is limited to the cool climate areas in South America, Falkland, Marion, Prince Edward, Crozet and Kerguelen Islands, New Zealand and Australia.



Marike Louw



Elsa van Ginkel



Elsa van Ginkel



Elsa van Ginkel



Elsa van Ginkel

Taste of island life



Elsa van Ginkel



Marike Louw



Zinhle's Birthday



Favourite Piece of Equipment

My toolbox!

When I sample birds, I have to collect so many different samples which all require little bits of equipment. If I didn't have my trusty organized toolkit, with all the things I need to get the job done, my life would be a whole lot harder! It makes the sampling efficient and the to-do list taped to the top ensures I don't forget anything – BONUS!

- Michelle Thompson (#Birder)



As an O & C Birder, we have a few tools at our disposal. These include tally counters, burrow scopes, a sturdy crook for catching birds and all sizes of ringing pliers ... but none of this would be possible without a pair of legs. As such, my favourite tools are my legs - that get me to the birds and back to base. I have to count and walk and I would say the same applies for all field personnel on Marion as 90% of all work on the island is walking.

- Sean Morar (#Birder)

Working with the animals on Marion is such a privilege because so many of these species occur in inaccessible parts of the world that so few people ever get to see. As part of the monitoring that happens on the island, many bird species get a uniquely numbered metal ring placed around one foot. In a way, this is like naming the bird and always linking it to Marion Island and the M75 expedition because these birds can be seen in different parts of the world and for many years to come. We use these odd looking ringing pliers to secure the metal rings comfortably around all kinds of birds' feet, ranging from Wandering Albatross (largest) to Storm Petrels (smallest).

- Monica Leitner (#ECO)



Ringing pliers for rings to fit all kinds of birds: Wandering Albatross (left), Sooty Albatross (middle), Storm-petrel (right)



A weird looking tool for a pretty cool task.



Our favourite Paddy around base, "Chicken", has a ring on his right leg with a unique identification number.

What's up with this Weather?

... bringing it all together...

- James Burns

January was undoubtedly a summer month, although the average South African would probably not be easily convinced. Being a sub-Antarctic island in the roaring forties, Marion still experienced a good number of cold, wet and windy days (not necessarily all at once). On average though, and comparatively to be sure, the days were warmer and there were many more clearish days and hours of unobstructed sunlight. The days have been long with first light before 4AM and stars coming out properly after 9PM.



Junction box connecting wind, rain and temperature sensors

The wind sensor and automatic rain gauge, which were introduced in previous articles, are just two of the sensors which form part of the AWS. In addition to these, there are two more sensors to complete the system. The first of these is an advanced temperature sensor which is also capable of measure humidity, the moisture content of the air. This sensor is located in a Stevenson screen. This is a raised, white, well slatted wooden box (resembling a commercial beehive). The purpose of this container, in addition to providing protection from the elements, is to minimise the effects of solar heating (the white being more reflective) and yet to allow for free flowing air (hence the slats).



We have already discussed the majority of our meteorological apparatus over the past several months and this month we will be concluding this series. The AWS, or automatic weather station, is essentially the central hub of the various sensors we use in our observations. The 'brain' of the AWS is the logger where all the data is stored and it is through this that we can access, process and distribute the data collected.

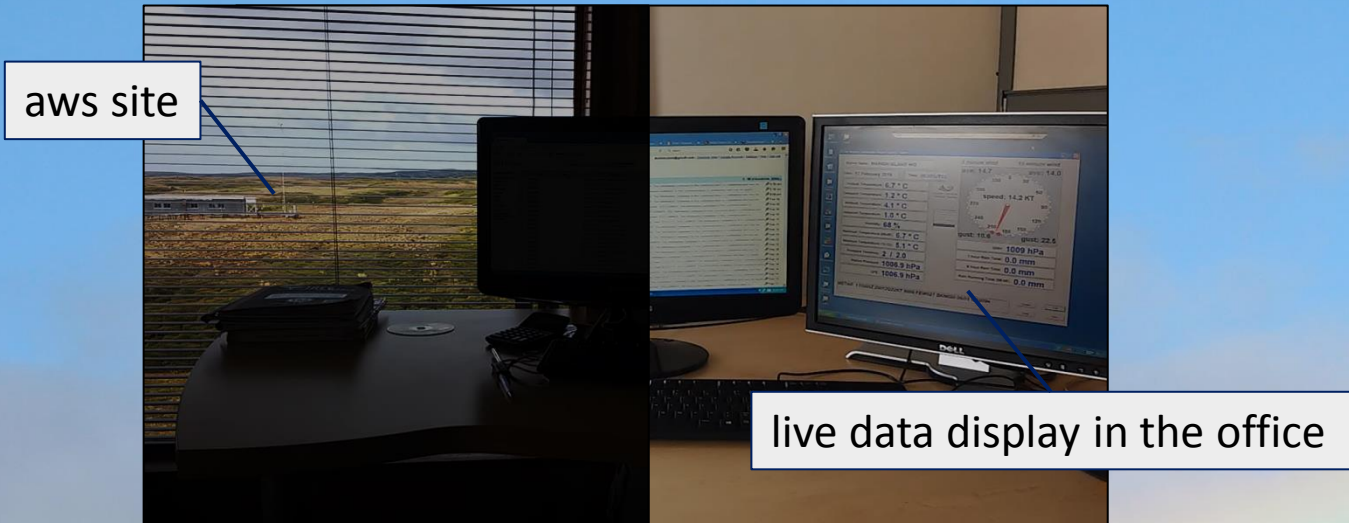


one of the data loggers and a spare aws control box

What's up with this Weather?

The final sensor, measuring pressure, is located in the AWS box itself. Also housed in this box is the logger mentioned before, a 12V battery and a surge protector. Through remote access to the AWS, it is possible to view a 'live stream', if you will, of all the parameters being recorded.

While we have been enjoying the better weather for the past couple of months, we are fast approaching winter again and we are bracing ourselves for the inevitable chill.



SAWS MONTHLY WEATHER STATS – January 2019					
TEMP	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	AVERAGE LOW	AVERAGE HIGH
	0.6°C	13.8°C	8.4°C	5.6°C	11.2°C
PRESSURE	MIN	MAX	AVERAGE	HUMIDITY	AVERAGE
	986.5hPa	1026.9hPa	1005.0hPa		81%
RAIN	TOTAL	DAYS WITH RAIN (>1mm)		MAX IN 24 HOURS	
	93.6mm	19 (15)		26.4mm (30 th)	
WIND	MAX	DIRECTION	SUNSHINE	TOTAL	
	159km/h	NW		145.1 HOURS	



M75



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