

The WANDERER

Marion Island | October 2014

BREEDING SEASON

Mayhem!

GIANT PETRELS
& SKUAS

night-birding
101

ROOKS
HUT REVIEW

INTERVIEWS

The men behind Marion's
SPACE & WEATHER



environmental affairs

Department
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MARION71
Expedition 46°36'S 37°57'E

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The W

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Letter from the editor

Get out there!

If you have overwintered on an island, you will understand when I say that the island becomes like your child: you don't want to see it "grow up" too quickly. At the current rate that life is entering and exiting Marion, you struggle to blink without missing out on some species or event! Suddenly it feels like the entire southern ocean's birds have arrived, while the Subantarctic fur seal pups have left us with an awkward silence (see p.4). The only way to counter this FOMO (fear of missing out) is to get out as much as possible! This is exactly what Senior Meteorologist Joe did one afternoon and he was rewarded with a golden sighting (see p.16). So get out wherever you are and don't miss the blossoming of spring into summer, but first catch up on some island news. Enjoy this month's edition of *The Wanderer*.


DANIËL KOTZÉ
EDITOR

FANTASTIC FLORA

Lycopodium?

TEXT AND PHOTO BY LIEZL PRETORIUS

Whenever I come across this little plant (*Lycopodium saururus*), I get this uncontrollable urge to greet it as a friend. Maybe it is because many a time it is the tallest erect plant (a full 10-25cm!) one sees for long periods in the field. So every now and again (mainly when I am alone in the field), I will pause briefly next to it and a "Hello, my little friend" will escape from my mouth before I happily walk on. The leaves are thick and scale-like, but soft to the touch. It usually occurs scattered in between other plants and seems to prefer a rocky terrain. It consists of one to a few characteristic "fingers" per plant. *Lycopodium* is native to Marion Island, but can be found in various other places as well, including Prince Edward Island, Kerguelen, Crozet, Réunion, Mauritius, Madagascar, Rodrigues, St. Helena and Southern Africa.



PRETTY BUT TOUGH. *Lycopodium* plants are not only beautiful, but they can survive the winter under metres of snow and temperatures below -10°C.

NEWSFLASH

THE BIRDS ARE BACK!

TEXT BY VONICA PEROLD AND ALEXIS OSBORNE

After many months at sea various birds are returning to Marion Island to breed and if successful see their offspring fledge. Already Sooty-, Grey-headed- and Light-mantled Albatrosses are incubating and this month the first Northern Giant Petrel chick was observed. This means that the birders are busier than ever before, doing regular monitoring checks on these species. The first Macaroni- and Rockhopper Penguins also started arriving this month and are increasing in numbers daily. This is an exciting time for the birders on Marion Island and we are looking forward to the months ahead.



RED-WHITE TAGS ARE OUT

Since the elephant seal pups have started to wean, the sealers have initiated the application of the long awaited red-white tag cohort. Every elephant seal born on Marion is tagged with a unique number, while every year has a different colour combination. By doing this, the future movement, weight and history of the animal can be monitored, providing vital data to assess the status of the elephant seal population on Marion. The sealers even dressed up for this event. Gotta tag'em all sealers!



HALFWAY THERE!

October also meant that M71 passed the halfway mark for our time on Marion. It's an exciting, but sad thought that take-over 2015 is closer than take-over 2014. How time flies when you are having fun!



BON VOYAGE FUR BALLS!

Sadly we have to say good-bye to the Subantarctic fur seal pups of 2014. At 10 months old they are finally ready to take on the southern ocean (and its killer whales!). We have become fond of these cute pups that taught us Tropicalis, Marion's official language. May the ocean provide!



The Photo Gallery

COMPILED BY DANIĚL KOTZÉ



October in focus

This is a selection of M71's photographers' favourite photos from the past month and the stories behind them.

David Green

The Itch



After heading out on a walk to Macaroni Bay, I stopped along the top of the cliffs to catch a few glimpses of the Sooty Albatrosses which have just begun to lay. This individual had staked out a nest site, but was not yet incubating, and was whiling away the time with some careful preening.

How? Canon 600D; ss 1/4000 sec; f5.6; ISO 800.



How?

Canon 600D; ss 1/1000 sec; f8; ISO 1600.



Obey Your Thirst

Many of the Macaroni penguins stopped to drink at the river along their way up to the colony. It was quite strange to see, as they had just come out of the sea where water is naturally in ample supply. Penguins are able to drink sea water without ill effect, however it seems these individuals relished the opportunity to drink fresh water.

Daniël Kotzé

Love Birds

After a long day in the field, I was spoiled with the sight of hundreds of flying White-chinned Petrels at dusk. I walked past these two love-birds displaying their affection for each other outside their burrow.



Seal Surfing

One Lesser Sheathbill at Kildalkey Bay took a fancy in hopping onto elephant seals' backs to scavenge. This cow was however not impressed with being used as a snack platter and tried everything to get rid of the cheeky bird, who had a hard time keeping balance.

How? ▲

Canon EOS 700D; shutter speed 1/4000 sec; aperture f5.6; ISO 800.

How? ▼

Canon EOS 700D; shutter speed 1/4000 sec; aperture f5.6; ISO 800.





Speedy Sooty

How? Canon EOS 700D; shutter speed 1/25 sec; aperture f29; ISO 100.

I tried my hand at a few long exposure shots this month. The first picture I used a technique called panning to capture a Sooty Albatross in flight at Ship's Cove, but with a long exposure so that I could follow the bird as it flew past and in this way blur the background. The next photo is of a Subantarctic fur seal pup playing in the water. With a longer exposure it makes the water look smooth. I used flash on this photo to capture all the water splashing.



Shower Hour

How?

Canon EOS 700D; shutter speed 1/8 sec; aperture f8; ISO 800, flash.

Maybe next year..

This young bachelor southern elephant seal bull was caught "smiling" close to one of the harems at King Penguin Bay. It was almost as if he was day-dreaming about having his own little harem. Maybe next year buddy!



Liezl Pretorius

How?

Nikon Coolpix AV110
shutter speed 1/50 sec;
aperture f3.9; ISO 125.

Love's First Kiss

During a stay at Grey-headed hut, co-sealer Daniël and I got the opportunity to assist birder, Vonica, in retrieving devices from Grey-headed Albatrosses. It was the perfect opportunity to get some photos of these magnificent birds and I caught these two fondly greeting each other. What a beautiful pair!

▼ **How?** Canon EOS 700D; shutter speed 1/320 sec; aperture f5; ISO 800. ▼

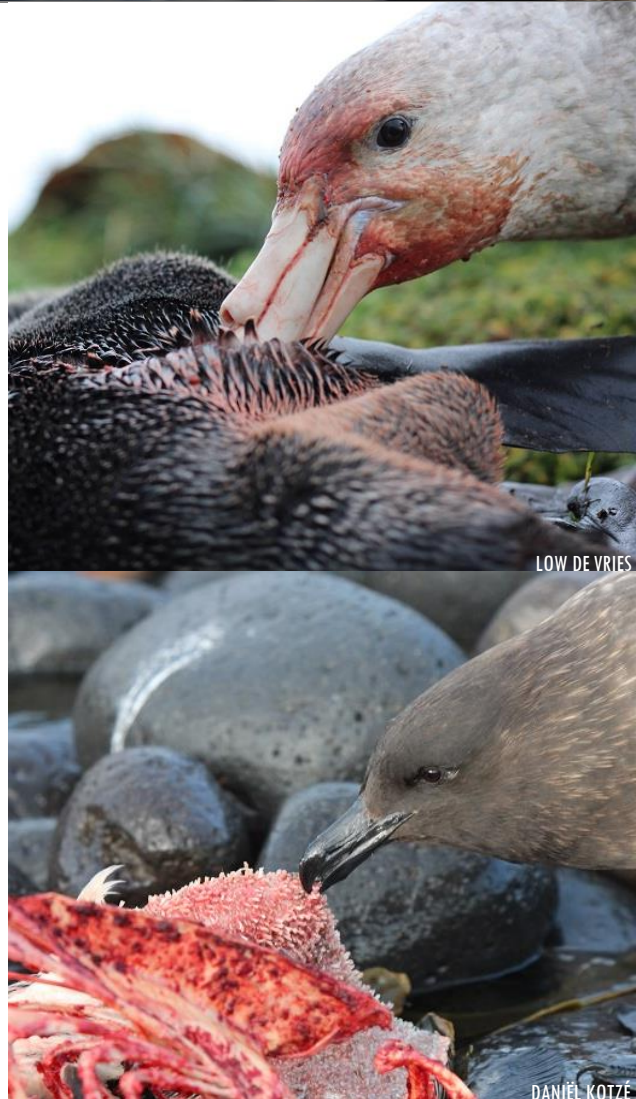


A DEADLY DUO

TEXT BY DAVID GREEN

This month's article goes slightly against what I was originally setting out to achieve with bird family of the month. However, after looking at what is still to come, I decided to split two species from the petrel family, which would otherwise have developed into a very long article and have added them to this article. So for this issue, I will be discussing the iconic predatory birds of Marion.

Of the 28 bird species known to breed on Marion Island, most inspire awe in some way, either because of their beauty or their capacity to find food across hundreds or even thousands of kilometres of featureless ocean. However, there are three species on the island that, although invoking awe in a similar manner, seem also to instil fear upon the other fauna of the island. These species are the Northern (*Macronectes halli*) and Southern Giant Petrels (*M. giganteus*) and the Subantarctic Skua (*Stercorarius lonnbergi*). While none of these species is particularly striking or beautiful, being plumaged in greys and browns (apart from the rare white morph Southern Giant Petrel), their fearsome natures have won them quite the reputation. Northern and Southern Giant Petrels have a distinct air of prehistory about them, and they dominate their surroundings by brute force. One need only observe them at a King Penguin colony to see the truth in this as they terrorise the chicks, doggedly chasing them until one inevitably stumbles. Their powerful bills make short work of the feathers and skin protecting the viscera beneath. While feeding they make for a terrifying sight with their wings extended, and plumage and tail puffed up. They are no strangers to blood and guts, and will happily bury their heads neck deep into carrion, a gruesome sight. When carrion is abundant, these birds may gather in large groups and civility rapidly breaks down as they savagely fight for choice morsels. To top this all off they have a blood curdling call, which sounds like it has come straight out of Jurassic Park. One of the most memorable sights on the island will be of a giant petrel soaring overhead with its head and neck outstretched as it issues its gurgling call, ▶



LOW DE VRIES

DANIEL KOTZÉ

MEAT IS MEAT. A Southern Giant Petrel eating a Subantarctic fur seal pup (TOP) and a Subantarctic Skua scavenging the remains of a King Penguin (ABOVE).

A DEADLY DUO

reminiscent of a demonic horse. Surprisingly for such a fearsome bird, giant petrels are quite skittish and will often beat a hasty retreat when approached by people – a trait which is in no way shared by their smaller partner in crime, the Subantarctic Skua.

The occurrence of Skuas on Marion is seasonal, with most birds migrating north during winter. They make up for their absence during these few cold months by seemingly over-running the island in summer. Skuas are highly predatory, but unlike the much larger giant petrels, they are agile killers, often catching their prey on the wing. To use an anthropomorphic analogy, they are like fighter pilots – cool killers, with a large pinch of arrogance. More than a few prions have met their demise being snatched up in flight by a swooping skua. To add to this, skuas have a great deal of bravado, and show little fear when approached by passing observers. In fact, if you comes across one sitting right in the middle of a path (which is often the case), it's unlikely to move out of your way unless you're practically on top of it. Walking past them as they lazily and begrudgingly move out of your way it is quite easy to forget that they are such voracious predators. However, one only has to visit the outskirts of a Gentoo colony and see the grisly remains of a multitude of chicks to be reminded that on Marion, skuas are a force to be reckoned



DOWNED PETREL. A Northern Giant Petrel chick

LOW DE VRIES

with. They seem to advertise this with a very characteristic display call, often performed with a partner. It is a striking image to see two together, wings extended above them, as they belt out their raucous duet.

For me, giant petrels and skuas are in some ways set apart from the other avifauna of Marion Island. Their fearsome presence and seemingly remorseless killing give them a dark gritty image, which is in distinct contrast with other species that forage predominantly at sea. They are the villains that everyone seems to enjoy seeing, and in my mind are quintessential parts of the essence of Marion.



WINGMAN. The characteristic display call of a Subantarctic Skua is an impressive show of sound and size.



DAVID GREEN

NIGHT BIRDERS. Geneveive handles a Great-winged Petrel while Zuko is in charge of scanning the night sky.

NIGHT BIRDING 101

TEXT BY GENEVEIVE MOROKE

Night birding at Marion Island provides the best chance to hear and see seabirds that are most active after dusk and before dawn. These night birds range from breeding species to non-breeding visitors and even rare or vagrant species. The excitement of seeing these birds never ceases to amaze us.

Sessions are conducted close to the base at Nellie's Humps and Skua Ridge, both are vantage points that provide sightings of different yet interesting species. Here is what we pack: spotlight with 12V batteries (heavy!), pencil and notebook, ringing box, head torch, bird guide booklet and warm clothes. During calm and misty conditions the birds are most active. Our sessions comprise of two hours of scouting while taking note of all activity every 10 minutes. To identify the species, close attention must be paid to the characteristics such as colour, size, shape, wings and head-markings. A photographic memory is definitely an advantage. Additionally, bird calls that are heard during the sessions are also identified and recorded to represent the presence of the bird in the vicinity, even if they were not seen. ▶

IN THE SPOTLIGHT. Some of the species you might find during night birding.



Grey-backed Storm Petrel

LOW DE VRIES



Kerguelen Petrel

DANIËL KOTZÉ



South Georgian Diving Petrel

LOW DE VRIES



Great-winged Petrel

DANIËL KOTZÉ



Soft-plumaged Petrel

LOW DE VRIES



Salvin's Prion

DANIËL KOTZÉ

Sighting birds at night is an amazing experience, but identifying these fast flying object at night is a great challenge! With practice however one eventually gains confidence. The spotlight is not only used to sight the birds, but also to 'down' them. This is when the bird is blinded by the light and lands. Downed birds are measured, weighed and banded on the leg with a unique combination of a numbered SAFRING metal ring. Factors such as extreme weather and the presence of predator birds may cause us to stop the session to avoid any further disturbance.



HOW DE VRIES

DANIEL KOTZÉ

HANDLE WITH CARE. Liezl handles a Soft-plumaged Petrel (LEFT) while David and Vonica measures the beak of a Great-winged Petrel during night birding sessions (RIGHT).

SEPTEMBER according to the METKASSIES



DANIEL KOTZÉ

MAXIMUM WIND GUST	179.6 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL	104 mm
HIGHEST IN 24 HOURS	28.6 mm
TOTAL DAYS WITH RAIN	22 days
TOTAL DAYS > 1 MM	19 days
TOTAL SUNSHINE	271 hours

NEEDLE ICE. Beautiful needle ice was seen in the field during September. This unique phenomenon occurs when the soil temperature is above- and the air temperature below freezing point.

	AVERAGE	MAXIMUM	MINIMUM	AVERAGE MAX	AVERAGE MIN
TEMPERATURE	3.9°C	13.1°C	-2.9°C	6.6°C	1.1°C
PRESSURE	1008.2 hPa	1028.4 hPa	970.7 hPa	1014.5 hPa	1000.9 hPa
HUMIDITY	86%	100%	49%	-	-

DATA COURTESY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN WEATHER SERVICE

A Reader's Round Island:

ROOK'S HUT

TEXT BY LOW DE VRIES

Less is more

Rook's you little biscuit! A quaint little hut next to the cliffs with a view of the southern Indian Ocean. Sublimely awesome.

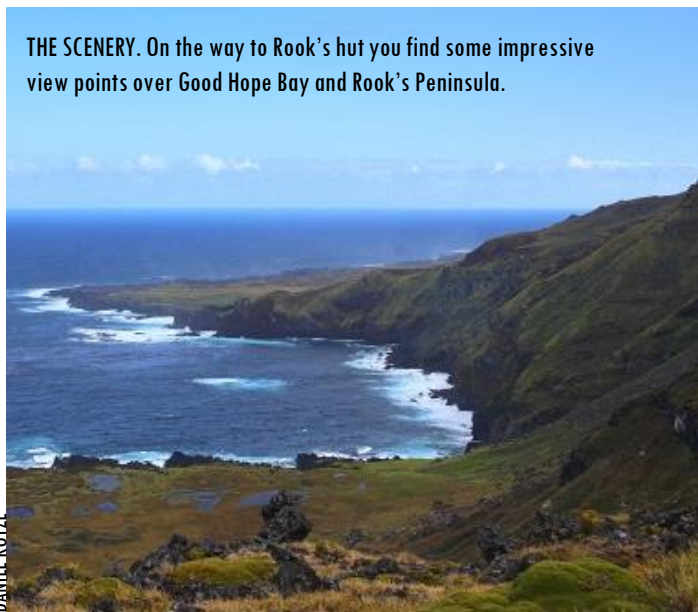


LOW DE VRIES

The route to Rook's starts like so many epic journeys, with a ladder. The first section of Grey-headed Ridge is basically a cliff, so they have been kind enough to place a ladder there to assist with the climb. From there it is still pretty steep, but not far, and once you are done you are at the top of the ridge. And what a top it is to reach. You stay high up until the end of the hike with the southern Indian Ocean stretching endlessly out on your left in the direction of Antarctica. It's a short walk, 2 hours even for a newbie or a less experienced hiker. On the way you pass numerous streams which plummet over the edge forming little waterfalls. However on days when the wind sends its icy tentacles from Antarctica, the waterfalls are blown back up and over the cliff's edge (can you still call it a waterFALL?), cooling you down during the hike. You also walk past Rook's Peninsula, which is a bit of a climb down and back up again, but well worth it. The Peninsula, the bay to the west, and also the hut, is named after J.A. Rook, a three time expedition member and officer-in-charge between 1949 and 1952. In 1974, the very first hut was erected on this site for the cat hunters.

However this hut was quickly destroyed by the weather. The current hut itself is one of the older huts, meaning the old design. It is slightly smaller, you have no dry room and no table, but who cares about these small things. Just step outside and see why so many people have said ►

THE SCENERY. On the way to Rook's hut you find some impressive view points over Good Hope Bay and Rook's Peninsula.



DANIEL KOTZÉ

ROOK'S HUT REVIEW

they love the place. The surrounding area is a playground with an open plain, a beautiful stream and two caves. One cave right outside the hut. During summer you have Rockhopper Penguins inside the cave and at the cave's mouth. You can spend hours walking around exploring the area and taking photos. Unfortunately a night in this hut is not on the schedule very often and thus not used nearly as

much as it deserves. Reading through the hut books you often come across a few words of praise for this hut, and people stating that it's one of their favourite huts. The same is true for me, although it has some less desirable aspects. It's small, the door rattles in the wind, it's a bit shaky and the windows are tiny and placed high in the walls. The hut is not flawless, perhaps. But it is perfect.

CAVE VIEW. Rook's hut is situated close to one of the largest and most spectacular caves on Marion.

RECIPE: ROOK'S QUICK AND EASY SOUP

This recipe was invented by Liezl Pretorius (sealer). Serves immediately after you enter the hut from the field.

1. Bring a kettle of water to a boil on the gas stove.
2. Add boiled water to your favourite flavour of instant soup (choices are limited to oxtail and vegetable).
3. Chop up three of the six viennas found in a tin and add to the soup.
4. Step outside, sit on the catwalk and enjoy the view.

LOW DE VRIES

BREEDING SEASON

TEXT BY DANIEL KOTZÉ

STATS

65 Total Adult Bulls

On the 15th of October, the peak of elephant seal breeding season, the sealers circled the island to count the total island population of these endangered seals. Here are some of the facts:

527 Total Adult Cows

418 Total Pups

1005 Total elephant seals counted



DANIÉL KOTZÉ



DANIÉL KOTZÉ

173kg



Heaviest weaner weighed

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Marion's first inhabitants: The seal hunters

TEXT BY FRANK VENTER

ROBERT W RAND

The human history of Marion Island, prior to annexation in 1948, is rarely mentioned and unfortunately not well documented. It is likely that the first to call this magical place home were not scientists, or even unfortunate castaways, but in fact infamous seal hunters. Theirs is a story of determination, adventure and sadly, the exploitation of Marion's animal resources.

It is important to mention to our readers that while a modern group of island biologists are referred to as "sealers", the subjects of this article came to Marion for more nefarious reasons. They were in fact seal hunters. During the 19th and early 20th century, the sea elephant oil industry was well established, and employed thousands in America, Norway, the UK and South Africa. In the days before the petrochemical revolution, elephant seals were a convenient source of blubber, which when boiled down in large try pots, delivered oil. This oil was used as lamp fuel, as well as for the production of soap, paint and other products. Marion and other sub-Antarctic islands were thus prime targets. In addition to elephant seals, fur seals and penguins were also targeted for the production of leather. While it is known that hunting took place on Marion between 1802 and 1930, the true extent of such activities will never be grasped. There are however some records, such as that from the *SS Kildalkey*, which lists an astonishing 1500 elephant seals taken in a single voyage. Lured by the promise of steady employment, men stayed on Marion for extended periods, even years as in the case of those dropped off by the *Pickering* in 1918. Originally meant to spend 10 months on Marion, those

sealers were only retrieved after two years. Understandably, morale was low among the group, thinking that their ship had either sunk, or that they were left for dead. Living in rudimentary wooden huts, shelters carved into rock, or even under an overturned boat, life was hard for such men. In addition, having clothes fashioned from seal skin and boots made from penguin leather, enduring Marion's climate must have been a monumental challenge. This was not the only hardship encountered, as they were paid a pittance. In fact, accounts state that in years when the oil price was low, some were not paid at all!

1500: Elephant seals killed on a single voyage
1005: Marion's current elephant seal population

Although we may not approve of the unsavoury industry in which these men were involved, we have to admire their grit. The last recorded hunt on Marion took place in 1930, with the only remains of this part of island history being the graves, a few scattered artefacts and Marion's three famous try pots. At present, the Prince Edward Islands are protected, and thankfully efforts by government and scientists have seen animal populations recover.

WHY ARE WE HERE?

TEXT BY ALEXIS OSBORNE



Ever wondered why you washed ashore a Sub-Antarctic island called Marion Island? Away from civilisation, away from friends and family with only 18 other people? These are some of the questions I have been asking myself for some time. Although I do not have all the answers yet, I do feel that this is not just another job, other than the fact that we are here to conduct research and contribute to science. I do believe that there is a deeper meaning or purpose to the fact that we were placed here on this beautiful island which we call "heaven with bad weather". I believe God placed us here to shape and mould each other's characters so that we can leave this island as better people. I also believe God took

us away from a sunny and noisy South Africa, so that we can be away from the crowd and be still in order to hear His voice. God has a plan for each and every one of us on this island, whether you are Muslim, Christian or Atheist. One of the good things about being a field assistant here on Marion is that you get to spend weeks in the field huts on your own. Away from these 19 people with minimal communication. Maybe it's God's way of taking us even further from the crowd so that we can hear His voice? Our time on Marion will soon come to an end, I just hope that we make a difference in each other's lives, even if it is just putting a smile on someone's face.

The WITNESS BIRTH OF AN ELEPHANT SEAL PUP

TEXT BY JOE KLAASEN



Being a weatherman, binds me to the base and I don't get to see most of the island. Maybe I'll do at least one round island sometime, but now I'm concentrating on what I am here for. For now let me share a wonderful experience with you.

It was one of those few beautiful days on Marion Island. After the fuss about the birth of elephant seal pups at Van den Boogaart beach, I was excited to see these baby "gorillas". I tried to convince other team members to join me, but with no interested parties it became a solo mission. I finally reached the cows and saw four little black pups. I tried to get closer but the size of these mammals scare the living daylight out of me! So I sat back and breathed in the beautiful day and was even lucky enough to see a couple of killer whale pods swim past. It started with two cows wrestling, skuas approaching and then suddenly there was one big splash of water and blood coming from the cow's rear. I jumped up in confusion! One last roar and then a little wet pup made its appearance into this world. The pup started making high pitched barks or cries while his mother had to fight off the skuas. They are after the placenta, but if the opportunity presents

itself would not hesitate to go for the pup. The cow pushed the pup into the water to get rid of some placenta. Again the killer whales swam past. The cow defeated the skuas and finally got the time to smell and lick her newborn and guide him out of the waves. Still surprised at what has just unfolded in front of me, I stood dead still. I was so excited to go and tell the sealers and rest of the team. Being the first team member to witness this event made me feel blessed and think of the following Bible verse:

Psalm 24:1-2

The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the rivers.



Nothing is MPHOssible

TEXT BY YINHLA SHIHLOMULE

Meet Mpho Mphogo, M71's SANSA (South African National Space Agency) engineer. If you have a computer problem, he will sort it out. If you have a pizza craving, he will provide you with slices from heaven. If you need a helping hand in the field, he will be glad to assist. He is also the brain behind M71's (unofficial) slogan: 'It's proper Mchana!' and an all-round nice guy. Here's what he had to say to a couple of questions.

1 *Tell us a bit more about yourself?*
I was born in a small town in Limpopo called Thohoyandou. I have had a passion for electronics and computers from a very young age and therefore studied Electronic Engineering at Tshwane University of Technology.

2 *What did you do before coming to Marion?*
I was a junior embedded developer for a power (electrical) measurement company in Pretoria when the opportunity arose to go to Marion Island.

3 *What does your job as SANSA engineer entail?*
I maintain a suite of SANSA scientific instruments that we use to study the sun. These are predominately ground based instruments that monitor Earth's magnetic field, upper atmosphere and the near-Earth space environments. Matter and radiation is constantly being ejected from the sun. The matter (particles) are high energy protons and electrons that travel through space and hit the Earth; this is called the solar wind. Sometimes the sun is more active and ejects large amounts of matter known as solar flares. This is collectively called space weather and it's what I monitor.

4 *How do you spend your free time on the island?*
I believe in the idea of always learning. I have received a number of certificates from EDX and Coursera. Apart from that I love watching movies, TV series and documentaries, taking walks or assisting field workers.

5 *You're regarded as one of Marion's top chefs, so what's your favourite menu?*
I love experimenting on my fellow islanders (evil laugh). If it's not pizza night then I'll probably prepare stuffed tortillas or else beef stew and pap.

6 *Any highlights on the island so far?*
It would definitely be completing a round island thanks to the ECO's. I could experience the island first hand and push myself to my utmost physical and mental limits.

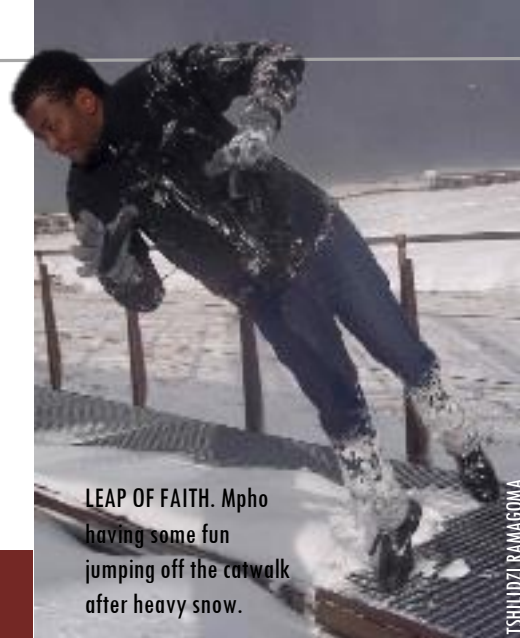
MPHO

SPACE AGENT. Mpho enjoys spending time outside, especially on beautiful days like this at Ship's Cove.

7 Favourite place on the island?
Katedraalkrans, They say the mountains is where you sweat the fat from your soul.

8 What do you miss most about South Africa?
Nandos! But on a serious note, my lovely fiancé, Tshilidzi, and our little boy, Mpho.

9 What will you miss most about Marion Island?
The amazing experience of just walking along the coast, listening to the calls of birds, the breaking of the waves and the groaning of the seals, and then all of a sudden from nowhere it starts snowing or raining.



LEAP OF FAITH. Mpho having some fun jumping off the catwalk after heavy snow.

TSHILIDZI RAMAGOMA

OCTOBER EVENTS

Mseventyfun TEXT BY DANIËL KOTZÉ

Tshilidzi's Game Party

Tshilidzi hosted a braai and games evening on the 17th of October to celebrate his 34th birthday. There were an overload of pizza, hamburgers, cake and fruit punch. Congratulations to Yinhla (pool), Daniël (table tennis, fingerboard, darts tied) and Low (darts tied) for their victorious performances in the games room as well as everyone who took part in the events.



TIEZI PRETORIJS

Vonica's Birthday Braai

Birder Vonica turned 28 on a very windy 3rd of October. The wind didn't keep the team from enjoying sundowners at Crane Point before heading to the braai room for boereworsrolls, good music and even better company. We wish Vonica all the best for the final half of her expedition and especially the hard work during the breeding season.



DANIËL KOTZÉ

SA vs NZ Rugby Game

One of the things we really miss here on Marion is live rugby. Mpho was kind enough to organise a viewing of the SA vs NZ thriller and the whole team got together to scream our lungs out for the Springboks. We even had biltong, thanks Louise!



LOW DE VRIJES

Thank you to everyone who organised these events!

THE WEATHERMEN



TEXT BY ALEXIS OSBORNE AND ZUKO ZAIZO

TSHI IDZI RAMAGOMA



JOHANNES



JOE

ALEXIS OSBORNE

Together with Frank Venter (team leader), Joe Klaasen and Johannes Masinge form M71's weather trio. Senior meteorologist Joe has shaken hands with a number of presidents while working for the SA Airforce and always has a joke or story to share. Johannes (or "Mr.T" as we know him with his new haircut) is M71's pap master and has more round islands under his belt than some of the field assistants. Here is what these two men shared with *The Wanderer*.

1. Give us a short history of yourself?

I was born and bred in Mookgophong (Naboomspruit), the oldest of four children. After school I studied hydrology and water resources at UniVenda. I eventually joined the South African Weather Service (SAWS), who trained me to become a meteorological technician.

I was born in Reiger Park, Boksburg, and after matriculating decided to join the SA Air Force. I started off as an air traffic controller and, after falling in love with the skies, joined SAWS. I have a beautiful wife, Ulanda, and seven kids.

2. Why did you decide to apply for this expedition?

I've always heard people saying a lot of good things about Marion at SAWS, praising the environment, the base and the huts. I decided to try my luck.

I just arrived from Abu Dhabi working as a meteorological technician and was interested in working in snowy conditions. So I gave Marion a shot.

3. So what is it you guys do exactly as metkassies?

We primarily do weather observations. This is not only reading the instruments, but also observing the cloud cover, cloud types and visibility on an hourly basis. We do either a day or night shift.

Besides the weather observations, I am also responsible for the administration and management of the weather office, upper air and monthly climate reports.

4. What do you do when you're not working, sleeping or eating?

I like to go out and help the field assistants. Otherwise I keep busy by going to the gym or playing FIFA with the guys.

I'll take a walk, assist field workers, play FIFA, watch series or read my favourite book, *Under the Dome* by Steven King.

5. Favourite island location, animal and dish?

I enjoy the whole island and especially going to the huts. The Antarctic fur seal males are my favourite, they are aggressive and demand attention when hiking. Pap and beef stew!

As a base paddy, I enjoy the movie "aka FIFA" room to play video games and talk about island life. Killer whales close-up are unbeatable and there's nothing like roast beef and pork chops!

6. What do you miss from SA and what will you miss from Marion?

Fresh and traditional food like *malamogodu* and *guxe*. I also miss my family and friends and especially driving around. I'll miss Marion's extreme weather, the huts, long distance hiking and, of course, the 'pick 'n tick' food store.

My lovely family (wife Ulanda and kids: Quenique, Jorelle, Zaydene, Zenadene, Hiltonique, Montenique and Raynique). I'll surely miss the killer whales once I'm back in South Africa.

7. Any island highlights you would like to share?

When I did my first round Island with the ECO's, and, the day after our arrival at base, undertook a hike to the top of Junior's Kop with the team.

Definitely witnessing the birth of an elephant seal (see p.16). This was a special moment and a rare sighting for anyone on Marion Island.

8. What would your advice be to future meteorologists coming to the island?

Marion is isolated; prepare yourself to work with limited resources, and be ready to get the job going with limited assistance from other SAWS structures. Since you will spend most of your time at base, I would also advise you to go out with field assistance and explore more of the island.

Be prepared for the weather out here. It can be very tricky at times. On Marion you experience all four seasons in one day- snow, rain and very windy conditions is just another day on Marion.

HERE COMES THE SUN. When the weather is good, Joe loves to head out to the field. Here he is with the birders at Piew Crag.



MASTERCHEF MARION. Johannes enjoys island cooking, especially pap and beef stew.



TEAM COLLAGE

COMPILED BY DANIEL KOTZÉ

What has M71 been up to this month?



DANIEL KOTZÉ



DANIEL KOTZÉ



DANIEL KOTZÉ



DANIEL KOTZÉ



DANIEL KOTZÉ



LIEZL PRETORIUS



LOUISE GADNEY

Around the island

Clockwise from left: Mpho & Zuko helping out the sealers at Archway; David with a Black-bellied Storm Petrel during night birding; Louise, Frank & Liezl getting to know the elephant seal weeners; The pup weighing team at Van den Boogaart; Alexis going solo at Grey-headed; Frank and Low visiting Daniel during a killer whale observation at Kill Point; Liezl & Vonica at Good Hope Bay; John fixing the radio antennae at Watertunnel.



LOW DE VRIES



LOUISE GADNEY



LOUISE GADNEY



LOW DE VRIES



LOUISE GADNEY



LIEZL PRETORIUS

Around base

Clockwise from left: Vonica vs the wind!; DJ time in the radio room; Christmas in October; Mpho, Gerard & Yinhla cooking; Vonica's birthday braai; Everyone at Tshilidzi's party; Playing FIFA; Tshilidzi surrounded by all the women on Marion.



LOUISE GADNEY



LOUISE GADNEY



LIEZL PRETORIUS