Get to Know Ekaterina
By Jeremy Wright

Who is Ekaterina Puffin? After hearing a few of my fellow math students talk about Professor Gilkey's teaching assistant, I wanted to find out more about her. The following Q&A session with Ekaterina answers many of the questions I had and will hopefully educate others in the math department who have not met her, or, like me, are curious about her role in the math department.
Interview

Jeromy:  What are your duties as a T.A.?

Ekaterina:  I prepare all of Professor Gilkey's lecture notes and syllabi. I write and grade the homework, quizzes, exams, and the final for Professor Gilkey's courses. I even assign final grades using Duckweb.

J:  Have you worked at any other universities?

E:  I am director of the Krill Institute of Technology, Islas Malvinas.

*Interviewer's note: Islas Malvinas is the Spanish name for the Falkland Islands, an archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean, 300 miles off the coast of Argentina.

J:  Impressive. Where did you do your undergraduate and graduate work?

E:  My undergraduate and graduate degrees are both from the Krill Institute. My degree is in marine biology.

J:  How long have you worked with Professor Gilkey and how did you meet?

E:  I met Professor Gilkey in a Safeway in Ashland. It was about 8 or 9 years ago. We had a conversation while he was shopping and ended up leaving the store together. We have been friends ever since.

J:  How did you become interested in Math?

E:  My aunt runs a "nest and breakfast" in the Antarctic. I was in charge of keeping the financial records for the business. In connection with my marine biology studies, I do research applying pseudo-Riemannian geometry to the study of avian population dynamics and krill distribution in the Antarctic.

J:  What brought you to the University of Oregon?

E:  After becoming friends with Professor Gilkey I came up here to work with him.
J: Do you enjoy working here?

E: I enjoy working here at the University; however, the students can frustrate me at times. I am a puffin and can’t always restrain my natural tendencies. I bit a student in my 282 class last year. He claimed that zero is equal to 2π. Fortunately, he was an in-state student and no formal complaint was filed.

J: Your first name sounds Russian and your surname Italian. What is your ancestral background?

E: While I am a puffin, you will notice that my beak resembles that of a toucan. My ancestry is mixed, but I am originally from Argentina, more specifically Cordoba.

J: Do you speak Spanish?

E: Yes, I am fluent in Spanish. I am actually teaching Professor Gilkey Spanish. I also speak a little German, French, and Russian.

J: How did you acquire skills in these languages?

E: I have a sister, much smaller than me, with whom I share a brain disk. My sister travels with Professor Gilkey all over the world.

J: You seem very young for someone with so much experience. May I ask your age?

E: I, like many human women, would not like everyone to know my age. I am mature. I would say, mid career.

J: Besides math, what are your other hobbies?

E: I enjoy participating in university service; doing research in the fields I mentioned previously, krill, and writing legal memos to the university attorney.

J: Is there anything else you would like the students here at the U of O to know about you?
E: I publish papers on Faculty Governance here at the U of O. You can see on my blog (http://uomarmotters.blogspot.com/) that I am the managing editor of the La Anotana de Ciencia y Matemática and have taken part in digitalization of the University of Oregon Assembly Records.

Considering the contributions I have made and continue to make to this university, I am frustrated by the lack of respect shown to me by the refusal of this institution to grant me an adjunct appointment. I believe it is the practice of the University of Oregon Administration to discriminate based on species. I do not consider it a coincidence that no other puffins have been appointed to positions at this institution.

J: Thank you for your time.

For those of you who wish to obtain more information about Ekaterina. Her blog “UOMarmotters” (http://uomarmotters.blogspot.com/) contains information and links to her publications. I hope that with this information, you will appreciate the contributions that puffins can make to our university community. Perhaps some of the conduct of the U of O Administration would change if they would look a little deeper into Ekaterina’s contributions.