



## Copa Sitrep # 6

11/23/07 – 11/29/07

The snow is finally melting noticeably, thank goodness, but made movement in the field difficult and extremely tiring, as even snow shoes plunged through the surface and wet clingy snow added 5 lbs of weight to each foot. Don't let the idea of melting snow make you think the winter is at an end, though. In the middle of the week, we had a 28-hour blizzard that reburied Copa and a large number of penguin nests. Entire gentoo sub-colonies have been buried and deserted, and many of our study birds are now scattered all over the colony and looking for new nest sites to, hopefully, relay.

1. Penguins: Out of 100 monitored Adélie penguin Repro Study nests, 43 remain active. The first Adélie chicks were seen & heard.

Out of 97 monitored gentoo penguin Repro Study nests, 39 have been lost, mostly resulting from the midweek blizzard, including 4 entire Repro Study sites (with 5 nests each) and 3 entire non-disturbance sites (also with 5 nests each). 2 Pairs that had not yet laid were in the obliterated sub-colonies, so there will only be a total of 98 repro nests monitored this year. The gentoo nest census on 11/27 resulted in a total of 2907 nests in the Copa Rookery and 139 at Pt. Thomas, although entire sub-colonies were wiped out in the blizzard the very next day. We also collected the gentoo egg samples, where 50 nests with 2 eggs (i.e., completed clutches) are randomly selected & both eggs are measured & weighed. After the latest storm, many of the gentoos have now moved up into the hills above Copa (where the only snow-free areas with available pebbles are located) and are making new nests, where previously only Adélies & skuas have nested! The chinstrap nest census resulted in a total count of 1130 nests for the 3 main colonies at Demay, Uchatka, & Patelnia, including 4 nests at Copa. It does not appear that the weather this year is having as strong an influence on chinstraps as it is on the other two species.

2. Skuas: The first skua eggs were found at Pt. Thomas on 11/24 and at Copa on 11/26. We were able to finish the Pt. Thomas and Back Country skua routes this week. But, since canoeing is still not possible due to snow and ice, we are dependent on simultaneous low tides and good weather in order to access Demay & Patelnia, which we were finally able to do for the first time this week.

End of Sitrep #6

The 2007-08 Copa Field Team

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