



Sit. Rep. #2
19 November 2007
US AMLR Field Station
Cape Shirreff, Livingston Island, Antarctica

Seabirds:

1. Plots to study the reproduction of chinstrap penguins are established. These plots will be checked daily for the rest of the season until the chicks crèche. This allows us to record the timing of breeding across the colony as well as reproductive success. We will also record the daily attendance patterns of adult chinstraps in these plots after both members of the pair are banded.



2. The first chinstrap egg was seen on 15 November. To date, five nests in the reproductive study plots have initiated clutches.

3. Gentoo penguins are establishing territories. To date, no gentoo penguins have initiated clutches.

4. We have begun a demographic study to determine the reproductive success of penguins that were banded here as chicks and have now returned to breed. We are currently reading bands to locate these known-aged birds and will follow their breeding activities daily to determine their reproductive success.

5. Brown skuas are reestablishing pair bonds and have been observed stealing eggs from chinstrap penguins.

Pinnipeds:



6. Only two of the six breeding female elephant seals present when we censused on 9 November remain, the others have departed to sea after weaning their pups. The maximum count for southern elephant seal young of the year is 15. We have tagged 12 of the weaned pups. One of the remaining females was tagged here two years ago.

7. The first fur seal pup on our study beach was born on 15 November. We conducted the first census of the season on 17 November. There were seven females and one pup. The counts are lower than last year at the same time (22 females and five pups), but similar to other years. The only study beach we have seen females is Copihue, which is currently the most accessible beach. Counts of adult territorial males are substantially less than for the same date for the last three years, which is likely due to the inaccessibility of the beaches due to the large ice berm at the high tide line. There are 276 adult territorial or peripheral adult males on our study site compared to 584, 539, and 386 for the previous three years.

8. Two tagged females have arrived. We have also recorded three tagged adult males and one tagged sub-adult male on the Cape. The adult male is an eight year old and was seen holding a territory.

9. This week we have set up the fur seal lab, started preparing data collection field books and spreadsheets, and set up our VHF data recording stations for monitoring fur seal attendance and trip duration.

Cape Shirreff Weather for the Week:

10. The weather this week has been moderate with temperatures ranging from -5.6 degrees Celsius to a high of 6.6 degrees. The mean temperature for the week was slightly below freezing at -0.6 degrees.

11. The wind has been blowing fairly regularly throughout the week. Mostly from the West, averaging 11.5 mph for the week with a high of 35 mph recorded on Tuesday.

12. No precipitation was recorded on our rain gauge, but throughout the week there has been some snowfall. In the calm spots, where it has not been blown clear or drifted in, approximately four inches has accumulated.

Field Station Notes:

13. The conditions at the camp continue to improve as we get settled in and keep shoveling snow to clear the decks and paths between the huts. We have cleared all of the windows on the main hut, and have deck level paths to the storeroom, shop, and the fur seal lab. There



is quite a lot of snow removal remaining to get the drifted snow away from the sides of the huts, which helps reduce the meltwater entering the huts.

14. On Thursday, Nov 15, the Chilean research team arrived to open their nearby camp. It was good to see the returning personnel and to meet the new crew. There are only three for this early part of the season, but more are scheduled to arrive in December.

Report submitted by AMLR researchers now residing at the Cape Shirreff field station on Livingston Island. These reports are posted at <http://swfsc.noaa.gov/aerd-field.aspx>. Photos by M. Goebel (NMFS/AERD).