

Sit. Rep. #3
US-AMLR Field Station
Cape Shirreff, Livingston Island, Antarctica
20 November 2006

Seabirds:

1. Currently 90% of the reproductive study gentoo penguins have completed clutches of two eggs, 6% have one egg, and 4% have no eggs. Of the chinstrap penguins in the reproductive study 42% also completed their clutches this week, 18% have not initiated clutches and the other 40% have laid one egg. Of the chinstraps that have laid eggs 7% of them have lost one egg.
2. We have continued to resight known-aged penguins. There are 14 known-aged gentoos incubating eggs and 43% of these birds are 5 years old. There are 11 known-aged chinstraps that have initiated clutches so far. They range in age from 3 to 8 years old.
3. We censused gentoo penguins on 13 November. There were 781 nests, representing a 3% decline from last year. This count is 7% below the previous 9 year mean. On 16 November we measured and weighed eggs from 50 gentoo nests with full clutches. The eggs have a similar volume to, and are 2% heavier than, the previous 9 year mean.
4. On 17 November we weighed a sample of adult chinstraps at peak clutch initiation along with measuring their first egg. The mean masses of males, females, and eggs were slightly higher than the 7 year mean.
5. Brown skuas are attending their nesting territories, however only a few pairs have initiated nest building.

Pinnipeds:

6. All but two of the 10 breeding female elephant seals present on 2 November have departed to sea weaning their pups. The maximum count for southern elephant seal young of the year is 12. We have tagged all pups. None of the ten adult females were tagged.
7. The first fur seal pup was born on 16 November. As of the last census (19 Nov) there were 35 females and nine pups. Last year for the same date there were 11 females and three pups. Counts of adult territorial males are substantially greater than for the same date last year as well which may be due to an earlier arrival or an actual increase. There are 633 adult territorial or peripheral adult males on our study site. Because of less snow than in previous years access to most beaches is better than usual.
8. Two tagged females have arrived thus far. To date, we have recorded four adult males and one sub-adult tagged male on the Cape. Two of the tagged males are nine-year-old males and have been seen holding territory.

9. We have been preparing data collection field books and spreadsheets, setting up our VHF data recording stations for monitoring fur seal attendance and trip duration, and conducting range tests for transmitter reception of our stations.

Cape Shirreff Weather:

10. We had one of our biggest storms to date this season on Wednesday, 15 November. It began early morning and lasted until late in the evening. Winds were easterly and the mean maximum gust was 31mph. The two days following were sunny and much more calm. In general, it has been a very cold week. The weekly mean temperature was only -0.6C; the high was 5.6C, the low, -2.9C. Winds for most of the week were westerly with three days of easterly winds. The average wind speed was 14.3 mph. Our lowest wind chill this week was -19.9C. Total precipitation for the week was 0.04 inches. We had a net accumulation of snow nonetheless snow cover remains below average.

Camp:

11. This week we installed all the gutters for rain collection and most decks and walkways had been free of snow until yesterday when we received more snow and considerable drifting around camp. Due to the prevailing below freezing temperatures we have had to move another barrel of ice into our kitchen for water. We are on our third barrel and all our outside barrels actually have more ice than when we first arrived.

12. The *R/V LAURENCE M. GOULD* arrived on Wednesday, 15 November at 10:30am. Unfortunately the Wednesday storm out of the east prevented zodiac and offload operations. The ship waited through increasing winds until 14:00 when it departed for Palmer Station. It was to drop off Birgitte McDonald, the fifth member of our team. Unfortunately, the ship will not be able to return until no earlier than 24 November.

13. Our Chilean colleagues arrived by helicopter the following morning, 16 November. They had been waiting out the storm on the south side of Livingston Island in the Bransfield. By the following morning, 17 November, their ship had arrived off Cape Shirreff to conduct their final off load. The ship had departed by 10am leaving six Chileans.

14. Everyone is looking forward to Thanksgiving.

Submitted by AMLR researchers currently residing at Cape Shirreff.