



Sit. Rep. #3
26 November 2007
US AMLR Field Station
Cape Shirreff, Livingston Island, Antarctica

Seabirds:

1. Currently, 66 of the 100 reproductive study chinstrap penguin nests have initiated clutches; 22 of these have complete clutches of two eggs.

2. We have established reproductive study plots for gentoo penguins, and two of the 50 study nests have initiated clutches. The extensive snow cover in the rookery appears to have affected gentoo nesting behavior: they are building nests in areas that are not traditional colony locations.



3. We continue to resight known-aged penguins. Sixteen known-aged chinstraps have established nests and initiated clutches. We are in the process of locating known-aged gentoo nests.

4. On 25 November we weighed male and female adult chinstraps and their first egg at peak clutch initiation. We will continue these measurements on November 26 to obtain a sample of 50 pairs and their first egg.

5. Brown skuas are attending their nesting territories. One kelp gull nest has been located with a complete three-egg clutch.

Pinnipeds:

6. The most current census took place on 25 November. At that time we had 477 males and 198 females. Thirty six pups had been born on the U.S. AMLR study site (which comprises about one third of total pup production on Cape Shirreff). The total number



of males is much lower than last years count at this time (627); however the female count is similar (189). The pup count is much lower than last years count of 94 at the same time.

7. Pup mortality, thus far, is greater than last year for the same time period. As of 25 November, we have recorded three dead pups (7.7%) compared to 0.0% on the same date last year. Additionally, this year it is likely higher than recorded due to weather. With the recent stormy activity, many females that had given birth below the ice berm lost their pups; we often do not see the dead pups if they are washed out to sea.

8. Adult tagged females returning from previous years are arriving daily. So far we have had 14 tagged females (6.4%) arrive compared to 21 last year at the same date. The natality rate for tagged arrivals is 85.7%.

9. Since arriving we have recorded ten known-aged seals (i.e., an animal tagged as a pup at Cape Shirreff). Nine have been males and one is a female. Two of the males are ten-year-olds from the 1997/98 cohort (the first tagged cohort at Cape Shirreff) and have been observed being territorial, however none have been observed with females yet. One nine-year-old was also observed holding a territory, but he also has not been observed with females.

10. Only one elephant seal female with a pup remains on shore. We expect her to depart to sea any time now.

11. We have completed range tests for both of the VHF monitoring stations for the annual fur seal female attendance study measuring visit and trip durations. We have also started to gather the gear we need for captures, which involved quite a bit of snow shoveling. We continue to work on preparation of field notebooks and computer spreadsheets.

Cape Shirreff Weather for the Week:

12. This has been a windy week with an average wind speed of 16.8 mph recorded. The peak gusts were recorded on Tuesday with a maximum of 56 mph. Most of the winds

have been from the west, but there has been some variability as weather fronts move through the area.

13. Thursday we measured the first liquid precipitation with .03 inches of rain. There has continued to be snow in flurries and some drifting around the huts, necessitating plenty of shoveling to keep the doors and walks clear.

14. Temperatures have ranged from a low of -5 degrees Celsius, to a high of 7.9 degrees. The average for the week has held to slightly below freezing at -0.9 degrees.

Field Station

Notes:

15. Things are progressing nicely here at the Cape. There is still plenty of snow to shovel in the mornings to keep the paths and doors clear. Conditions for skiing to the study sites are still pretty good, although with the thawing and freezing cycles, it is becoming icier.



16. Thursday was a special day as we celebrated Thanksgiving with a smoked turkey feast with all the fixings. Stuffing, mashed potatoes, roasted vegetables, and home made pumpkin pie for dessert. It was a real treat. We were happy to have our Chilean compatriots over to share the event, and thoughts of home and family were on our minds and in our hearts.

Report submitted by AMLR researchers currently 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).