



Sit. Rep. #16
25 February 2008
US AMLR Field Station
Cape Shirreff, Livingston Island, Antarctica

Seabirds

1. Gentoo penguins in our reproductive study have completed crèche formation this week; 42% of nests in the reproductive study crèched at least one chick and 58% have failed. The median date of crèche was February 7, 2008. Average chick age at crèche was 27 days and 0.53 chicks crèched per nest.

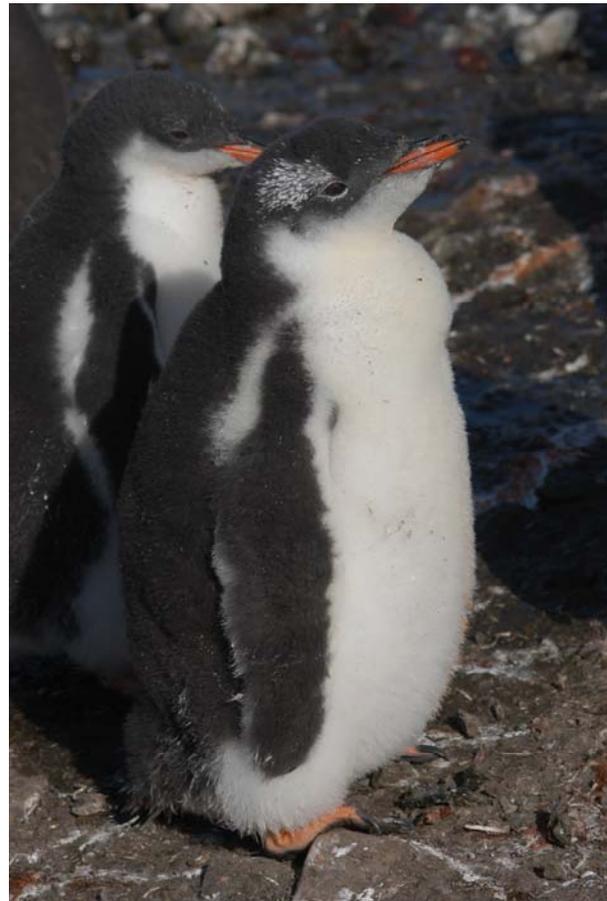
2. We conducted the annual census of gentoo chicks on February 19. We counted 544 chicks, which is 45% lower than the previous 11 year average of 993. Overall reproductive success from census data is 0.89 chicks per nest.

3. On February 24th we weighed and banded gentoo penguin chicks. Due to the unusually low number of chicks in the colonies, we banded only 100 this year, half the number that is normally banded at Cape Shirreff. In the future, resights of these birds will be used to determine cohort survival.

4. Chinstrap chicks have begun to fledge this week. We are weighing fledglings immediately before they depart to obtain a measure of condition. We will continue to collect these data throughout the fledging period.

5. This week we recovered satellite transmitters and time depth recorders that were deployed on gentoo and chinstrap penguins. These instruments give us foraging locations and diving profiles of adult penguins with crèched chicks.

6. This week we began to weigh and measure brown skua chicks at 48 days of age to determine their sex and to measure their condition. On February 22 we measured and banded one chick at Punta Oeste, a point of land adjacent to Cape Shirreff.



Pinnipeds

7. We lost three more attendance pups this week, likely due to leopard seal predation. Only 11 attendance mother/pup pairs remain in the study out of the original 28.



8. Fur seal diet sampling continued this week with the collection of 10 scat samples from areas of suckling females. We have processed four of these scats. All four contained evidence of krill and three of the four contained otoliths.

9. Young fur seals tagged as pup continue to arrive. This week four new yearlings were seen for the first time this season. We have seen a total of 130 different known-aged individuals with the following percent return: (1997) 1.2%; (1998) 1.2%; (1999) 6.2%; (2000) 2.6%; (2001) 4.4; (2002) 2.2%; (2003) 0.8%; (2004) 0.0%; (2005) 4.2%; and (2006) 3.2 %.

10. We continue to tag pups as part of the cooperative Chilean – US deployment of 500 tags on pups. We have flipper and PIT tagged 134 pups; 78 of these are pups of tagged females.

11. On 19 February we completed our fourth round of 100 pup weights cooperatively with the Chilean field group for CCAMLR.

12. We continue to see new leopard seals arriving that have been tagged in previous years at the cape. We have seen 18 tagged leopard seals this season.

Cape Shirreff Weather for the Week

13. The week has been quite windy and rainy. Rain accumulation for the week was 0.54 inches. Wind speeds averaged 17.0 mph with a high gust of 53.0 mph.

14. Average temperature for the week was 2.8 degrees Celsius. The warmest temperature was 6.0 degrees and the lowest 0.6 degrees.

Field Station Notes

15. Wind and rain have limited the work we were able to do around camp; however, we fixed door covers and prepped them for painting. We have also begun to complete inventories and other camp closing preparations.

16. Weather had also hampered our Chilean colleagues plans for closing their camp. Their ship waited several days for favorable weather to remove gear and personnel; calmer weather permitted them to depart this morning. We will miss their help and the camaraderie.



Report submitted by AMLR researchers currently consuming freshies 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).