



NOAA Photo by J. Lipsky

Seabirds:

1. All our remaining field studies were concluded this week prior to closing camp making for a busy last week of work.
2. On February 22 we concluded chinstrap fledge weights. We collected a total of 306 fledgling weights, of which 101 were from banded fledglings. The average fledge weight was 3174g (SD=301.7); this is slightly higher than last season and the past 10 year mean.
3. Over winter survival has been determined for adult penguins from the previous season. 69% of chinstrap reproductive study birds banded with stainless steel bands and 49% of the aluminum banded birds in the 2005-06 breeding season were seen this year. This was the highest over winter survival of the 9 years of this study. In contrast, gentoo adult over winter survival was only 34%, the lowest survival in the past 9 years.

4. We stopped collecting chinstrap radio transmitter data on February 15 and disassembled the receiver and data collection computer. The mean foraging trip duration was 10.95 hours long (n=702, S.D.=4.58). This is only slightly longer than the average trip duration from last season of 9.7 hours.

5. We conducted the annual carcass count on February 23. This was a little early as a few chinstrap chicks remain in the colony. We searched all of the beaches on the northern and eastern sides of Cape Shirreff and counted all the chick and adult penguin carcasses we found. We counted 95 penguin carcasses (40 adults, 41 chicks, and 14 unidentified); only 6 of these carcasses were gentoos (2 adults and 4 chicks). Leopard seal predation was identified as the main source of mortality.

6. We have completed all 48 day measurements on skua chicks. There are 11 chicks remaining from a total of 24 territories where skuas initiated clutches. We expect most of these chicks to fledge.

Pinnipeds:

7. This week we wrapped up our field season and closed camp. It was a successful season. We deployed time-depth recorders (TDR) and satellite-linked transmitters (PTT) on 15 females throughout the season. We deployed an additional 14 TDRs on CCAMLR and young attendance study females. All TDRs and PTTs were recovered.

8. Of the original 22 CCAMLR attendance females 13 still had pups at the time of our departure. Eight of the nine pups are thought to have died by leopard seal predation.

9. This year we also had an additional 12 attendance study females that were first and second time breeders. Nine of these females' pups were still alive at the time of our departure. Leopard seal predation is believed to be the cause of the three reproductive failures.

10. This was the final week of fur seal diet sampling. We collected 10 scat samples from areas where females were suckling pups. These samples are currently being analyzed on the ship. Only total percent occurrence by prey item will be recorded for the last ten samples (i.e. no krill carapaces will be measured for estimating krill length distribution).

11. Together with the Chileans we tagged 499 pups this season. One hundred twenty two of these pups were pups of tagged females. We collected a total of 125 DNA samples from pups of tagged females. Additionally we determined the sex of 79.7% of all tagged females pups.

12. We completed systematic tag resights on February 20th. Since 1997, 500 tags have been deployed on pups each year. In collaboration with the Chileans we resighted 120 of these seals. This year we saw the following percent return for the last 9 age classes: (1997) 1.4%, (1998) 1.2%, (1999) 7.0%, (2000) 3.6%, (2001) 6.4%, (2002) 2.8%, (2003) 1.6%, (2004) 0%, and (2005) 2.4%. This has not been corrected for tag loss.

13. On February 21st we completed our fourth and final round of 100 pup weights cooperatively with the Chilean field party for CCAMLR.

14. The fur seal lab was cleaned, inventoried and secured for the winter. Personnel from the *R/V Laurence M. Gould* (National Science Foundation) came ashore to conduct wipe tests of the lab to insure no trace amounts of tritium, used in doubly-labeled water deployments this season, remained in the lab.

Cape Shirreff Weather for the Week:

15. The weather this week was great for camp closing. On Tuesday we had the wettest day of the season with 0.42 inches of rain bringing the season total to 5.29 inches. This was followed by 3 days of calm dry weather. The mean temperature this week was 1.9 C which is the lowest since mid December.

Field Station Notes:

16. The biggest news of the week is that the field station was successfully closed for the season. Calm weather facilitated the transfer of equipment, supplies, and staff to the *R/V LM Gould*. We greatly appreciate the assistance that the ship's crew provided with the transfer and their expert small craft operations. This morning we assisted with the closing of the Copacabana field station on King George Island and are now en route to Punta Arenas, Chile. Everyone is busy getting ready for the Drake Passage, securing the ship for the possibility of heavy weather.

Report submitted by homeward-bound AMLR researchers, as the R/V LM Gould heads towards Punta Arenas, Chile. These reports are also posted at <http://swfsc.noaa.gov/aerd-field.aspx>.