

# 2012-2013 Weekly Field Reports

## Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 16  
January 28, 2013

### Science Report:

Penguins: Adélie penguin chicks in the lower Copa Beach colonies were banded on Monday (1/28), but due to high winds, the rest of the banding in the upper colonies was postponed until Tuesday (1/29), when the weather improved. Adélie penguin fledge weights began on Thursday (1/31), with the first of the Adélie penguin fledgers sighted at the water's edge. Weights of the chicks at fledging are an indication of their condition as they head off for their first winter on their own. Condition at fledging can have an effect on survival (and therefore return rates) of these birds, particularly during their first winter of independence.

Diet sampling of chinstrap penguins began on Thursday (1/31), on five adults with chicks selected from the Uchatka colony. Analysis of the chinstrap penguin diet samples showed that 29% of the krill (*Euphausia superba*) were in the juvenile size range (35 mm or less in length), 40% were adult males, and 31% were adult females. No fish or otoliths were found in any of the chinstrap penguin samples this week.

Satellite tags (PTTs) were deployed on five chinstrap penguins in the Uchatka colonies on Thursday (1/31). Adults tending two chicks were selected, weighed, measured, and fitted with a PTT. The tags will remain on the birds until Friday (2/8), when we hope to begin recovery efforts.

Breeding chinstrap penguins on Copa Beach stand at seven chicks from five nests, all of which have crèched and are now very exposed, due to all of the Adélie penguin chicks having fledged and vacated the adjacent colony.

The gentoo penguin chicks have completed crèching this week. Reproductive success remained steady with 81 out of 100 nests crèching chicks. Forty-five known-age gentoo penguin nests crèched chicks this year. All gentoo penguin known-age chicks have been banded.

The last of the gentoo penguin chick censuses was completed on Saturday (2/2) in the Copa Beach colonies. The total count for all of the Copa colonies was 5,885 chicks, which equals 1.09 chicks crèched per nest. This is lower than the gentoo penguin reproductive success of 1.39 chicks crèched per nest from last year.

Gentoo penguin diet sampling was delayed for one week in order to incorporate samples from later in the chick rearing phase.



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Three gentoo penguin PITs were deployed on Friday (2/1) in the Copa Beach colonies. Adult birds tending two chicks were selected, weighed, measured, and fitted with a PIT. Recovery efforts will begin on Saturday (2/9).

2. Skuas: There remain five active brown skua nests at Copa, with a total of seven chicks.

Point Thomas skua routes were completed on Saturday (2/2). There are still two active brown skua nests, totaling three chicks.

The Demay, Patelnia, and Back Country skua routes were not completed this week.

3. Sheathbills: One unbanded sheathbill is still being observed on Copa Rock and appeared to be attending the old nest site used last year.
4. Whales & Seals: One adult humpback whale with a calf was seen on Thursday (1/31) and one adult on Saturday (2/2). One fin whale was observed on Monday (1/28), diving in the middle of Admiralty Bay.

The Copa and Point Thomas seal censuses, carried out on Sunday (2/3), yielded 100 juvenile/unknown sex elephant seals, one elephant seal weaner, four fur seals, and one crabeater seal weaner.

One leopard seal attack off Copa Beach was observed on Friday (2/1), but the prey species was not determined. A single patrolling leopard seal was seen the following day, Saturday (2/2).

### Weekly Weather:

The week's weather was quite variable. There were very high winds Monday night (1/28), with reports in the bay estimating them to be above 90 knots. Both Thursday morning (1/31) and Friday evening (2/1) were sunny, warm, and windless, but, surprisingly, between the two, we experienced a blizzard from Thursday afternoon (1/31) through Friday morning (2/1). Temperatures fluctuated between freezing and the lower forties (°F) for most of the week.



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## Camp Activities:

Copacabana was paid a visit by Arctowski personnel accompanied by Chilean scientists on Monday (1/28). They had been invited to participate in the Adélie chick banding but, unfortunately, the weather cut short the banding effort. The Brazilian naval vessel, Ary Rongel, visited Copa on Sunday (2/3), to collect some soil samples from gentoo penguin colonies.

## The 2012-13 Copa Field Team:

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