

2011-2012 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 6
November 21, 2011

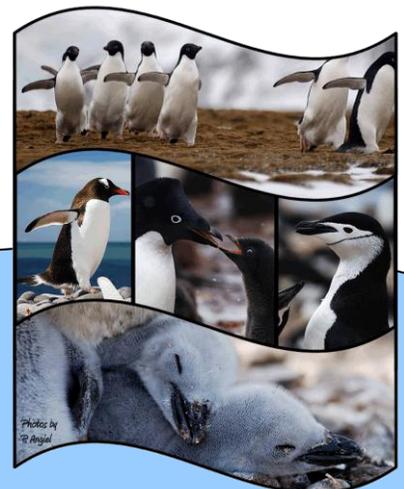
Science Report:

- 1. Penguins:** The first Adélie penguin chick at Copa hatched this week on Friday (11/25) and was shortly followed by chicks appearing in our study sites. The Adélie penguins are much more synchronous in their breeding chronology than gentoos. While it may take three weeks for the majority of the gentoo chicks to hatch, we are expecting to see the bulk of the Adélie chicks emerge from their shells within the next two weeks.
- 2. Skuas:** Skua activity continues to increase everywhere. At Copa, the first eggs were laid on Wednesday (11/23), when both the Hut Skuas (the pair that nests near the hut) and another Copa pair with a penguin territory laid their first eggs. Several other brown skua pairs, all with penguin territories, initiated clutches later this week, including several pairs at Point Thomas found during the mid-week check on Wednesday (11/23). Skua pairs with penguin feeding territories are usually the earliest to return and the first pairs to lay, which follows from their having access to plentiful food in the penguin colony.

In the Backcountry, where mostly south polar skuas breed, we found a few south polar & brown skua nests with eggs during our weekly check on Saturday (11/26). Furthermore, every active territory from last year, as well as some previously inactive ones, had at least one bird return to occupy their old territories.

Currently it looks like it's going to be another fairly bustling skua year. At Copa, Point Thomas, and in the Backcountry there are pairs of skuas again looking to carve out previously un-established territories. Anecdotally, there still seems to be a greater number of unbanded birds, many moving into territories and replacing the previous year's holder, suggesting that there is an influx of birds originating from areas other than the one covered in our study.

- 3. Seals & Whales:** Our weekly seal census of the beaches from Copa to Point Thomas yielded 4 elephant seals, 1 Weddell, & 1 crabeater. Often there is a bit of a lull between the end of November and mid-December in seal sightings. The elephant seals have completed breeding and weaned their pups and the fur seals have not yet started to arrive.
- 4. Other:** A king penguin showed up at the Point Thomas Adélie penguin colony about a week ago, according to the Poles, & was still there as of today (Sunday, 11/27). It appears to be an adult, from its plumage, but may be a young, pre-breeder, as most adults are breeding in colonies further north right now. The closest breeding colonies of king penguins are on the Falkland Islands or South Georgia, almost 1000 miles away, so this individual is definitely far outside its normal range.



2011-2012 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 6
November 21, 2011

We hosted an international Thanksgiving here at Copa, with 4 Poles from Arctowski & 5 Brazilians from Ferraz Station in attendance. All had a very nice time eating turkey with all the fixings & several pies, & enjoying each other's company.

Weekly Weather:

Weather improved considerably this week, with calm, warm conditions for the last 4 days of the week (Thurs-Sun), melting most of the remaining snow. The first 3 days of the week were the usual cloudy with wind (20-30 knots), so the warm, calm weather for the last few days has been very welcome.

The 2011-12 Copa Field Team
Sue Trivelpiece, Co-PI
Penny Chilton, Field Team Leader
Brette Soucie
Matt Henschen

