

# 2008-2009 Weekly Field Reports

## Copacabana, King George Island

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This has been another windy week, making it difficult to travel very far from the hut to work, but it hasn't been bad enough to keep us from getting our penguin work done. In our spare time, we've started taping penguin bands with red tape, the color of the year, for this year's cohort of chicks, since we have several gentoo chicks of known-age parents that will be large enough to receive a band in the next 1-2 weeks.

### Penguins

All of the gentoo penguin chicks in both our reproductive study sites and known-age nests have hatched. The first of our 21-day chick weights started this week and there are several chicks a day now to be weighed. We have begun marking chicks of known-age gentoos with colored Velcro flipper bands, to easily locate them when they are large enough for a stainless steel band. Breeding known-age gentoo numbers are up this year and, so far, we have recorded 104 active nests. Adélie penguin chicks are hatching in abundance. The peak of hatching occurred this week in all of the Copa colonies, and inspection of the Point Thomas rookery indicated most nests were hatched there, as well. Nearly 90% of our repro and known-age penguin nests had at least one chick hatched by the end of the week.

Chinstrap penguin egg measurements were conducted this week at the Patelnia colonies. 50 nests with complete clutches (2 eggs) are randomly selected and both eggs are measured & weighed, to give us an indication of female condition at egg-laying. The average volumes of both the 1st and 2nd eggs this year were down about 2.5 grams from last year.

### Skuas

All of the skua territories we monitor were visited this week. Several of the backcountry/Demay/Patelnia skuas are laying eggs early this season, most likely as a result of very little snow on the territories. Some of the nests exposed to the frequent high winds experienced here recently have had eggs blown out of the nest bowl. Approximately 80% of the skua territories are now occupied, and over 25% of those territories have nests.

### Seals

No leopard seal predations have been observed all week. We completed our weekly seal census and did, however, sight one small male leopard seal on a gravel beach near Demay Point.



We also counted our 1st fur seal during the census, although this wasn't the first one seen this season.

### Other

Snowy Sheathbills are definitely not nesting at Copa rock as in years past. The resident breeders were sighted for a couple of days and then moved on. The Giant Petrels are holding tighter to their nests indicating most are with eggs, or even early chicks. Giant Petrel re-sights will begin this week depending on weather as they are prone to flushing from the nest on windy days.

### Weekly Weather

We were hit with several days of strong winds again this week. Very little precipitation fell with the exception of a very short lived snow storm on 12/6, which only produced a couple of inches of snow. Several days of south winds have kept the temperature low.



### Hut maintenance

All of the equipment at Copa is operating properly. We have spent our spare time this week organizing the hut and working on our water catchment system. We have also started collecting water from a nearby stream, as we have no snow to use for melt-water this season.

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