

2008-2009 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 9
December 28, 2008

We enjoyed the Christmas week with the longest stretch of consecutive nice days all season. Christmas Eve was spent with our friends at Arctowski, then we returned to Copa for a Christmas Day feast (we are still eating leftovers). Snow and light rain has filled our water catchments to capacity. Our generator, charging system, and all Hut operations are functioning properly.

Penguins

Most of the Adélie penguin chicks were crèched by the end of the week. Nearly all of the 21-day chick measurements have been completed for the Adélie chicks. We completed our first Adélie diet on 12/22/08. The krill consisted of 80% females, with only 1 juvenile krill found in the samples. The majority of the krill ranged in size from 39–50 mm. The first round of PTT satellite transmitters was deployed on Adélies on 12/27/08 to determine the foraging location of penguins at sea. We selected an even ratio of males to females with 2 chicks for deployment. The transmitters will remain on the penguins for 7-10 days and then will be retrieved and prepared for a second round of deployments.

Gentoos: We have completed nearly all of the 21-day measurements on gentoo chicks, with the exception of a few late laying birds. Most of the chicks of known-age penguins have grown large enough for adult bands. The chick census was completed on 12/26/08, as this was approximately one week after the peak crèche date. However, not all of the data has been compiled yet, so this will be included in next week's sitrep, along with the completed Adélie chick census info. The first round of gentoo penguin PTT satellite transmitters was deployed on 12/28/08 to determine foraging locations for gentoo penguins. Similar to the Adélies, we selected an even ratio of male to female penguins with 2 chicks for deployment. These transmitters will also remain deployed for 7-10 days before retrieval.

Chinstraps: Most of the chinstrap chicks have hatched at Demay and Patelnia colonies. The only 2 chinstraps nests at Copa have hatched, and are still with chicks.

Skuas

Many of the skuas that arrived on territory later in the season have laid eggs in this last week. Over 60% of the occupied territories have bred this season and several of the pairs that failed early have re-laid; however, many of the nests have continued to fail regularly. Only about 5% of the active nests had hatched chicks by the end of this week.



Seals and Whales

Nothing unusual has been sighted during our weekly seal census. Another week has passed without any leopard seal sightings. Whales have been sighted in the bay or the mouth of the bay nearly every day this week. Minke whales were sighted once, and humpbacks have been seen several days.

Other

A juvenile macaroni penguin was sighted twice this week in separate colonies. The melanistic Adélie continues to visit the penguin colonies regularly. Calm weather has allowed us to continue with giant petrel census and re-sighting work.

Weekly Weather

We have enjoyed many nice and calm days this week. Christmas Eve and Christmas day were calm and warm. The weather on 12/26/08 was nice in the morning, but the evening brought a snow storm with winds from the east. The snow continued for most of the following day with winds gusting to 20 knots in the morning, then clearing in the afternoon.



The 2008-09 Copa Field Team
David Loomis – Field Team Leader
Jefferson Hinke
Amy Lindsley
Kristen Green

