

# 2010-2011 Weekly Field Reports

## Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 10  
December 19, 2010

### Science report:

1. Penguins: The first gentoo penguin chicks crèched this week, which is the first time they are left unattended by their parents. In our productivity study, a nest is considered to be successful once the chicks have crèched, so we end our daily checks. The adults continue to return to the colony to feed their chicks, but the chicks are no longer tied to their nests, making it difficult to follow their fates. In our known-age study, however, we individually mark the chicks of known-age parents so we can track their survival through the crèche phase to fledging. When they are big enough, we band them so we will be able to follow them if/when they return. By banding chicks, we can record important information on the success (survival, reproduction, etc.) of specific age-groups in both species of penguins.

Currently, 50% of the known-age Adélie penguins and 84% of the known-age gentoo penguins that initiated nests this year have chicks. Experience does help when it comes to breeding success, as older birds, although not as numerous, are usually more successful than younger birds at breeding.

“Beach Sweeps” started on 16 December, where we walk the beaches and colony areas every evening to re-sight known-age penguins that didn’t breed this season or are just returning to the colony for the first time since fledging.

A juvenile macaroni penguin was seen on 16 December and our first 1-year-old Adélie penguin was seen on 19 December.

2. Skuas: This week we found that 49% of our now 162 active skua territories currently have nests with eggs. We began banding unbanded breeders this week, as well. By banding these birds, we increase the number of individuals we can identify and track throughout their lifetime in our study area. On 18 December, the first south polar skua chick of the season hatched at Point Thomas.

4. Seals: Both of the seal censuses were conducted again this week, covering the whole western shore of Admiralty Bay from Patelnia to Pt. Thomas. Large numbers of elephant seal juveniles (288) and weaners (102), but no adults, were observed again on the Demay/Patelnia census. And on our Copa to Pt. Thomas count, we observed one elephant seal weaner and three Weddell seals.

5. Other: Mike Polito departed on Friday, 17 December, after a successful week of collecting the remainder of his samples from ten chinstrap and 20 juvenile gentoo penguins.

### Weekly Weather:

This week brought warmer weather and above freezing temperatures all week, with multiple sunny days. We had a storm on 13 December with snow and east wind gusting up to 56 mph. It was short-lived, however, and we have not seen winds over 25 mph for the rest of the week. It almost feels like summer.

### The 2010-11 Copa Field Team:

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