

2010-2011 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 11
December 26, 2010

Science report:

1. Penguins: So far, 17% of our Adélie and 21% of our gentoo penguin study nests that are currently active have creched chicks. A total of 66% of the Adélie and 85% of the gentoo penguin nests we started following at the beginning of the season are still active.

We conducted our first chick-rearing gentoo penguin diet sample on Monday, 20 December. Of the five birds we sampled we had one load of nearly 100% fish (2.5 krill were found) and another that had an unusually large proportion of juvenile krill (28%). The other three samples contained mainly adult krill (*Euphausia superba*) with an equal ratio of male to female mostly 40 to 55 mm in length.

The first chinstrap penguin chicks were observed this week. About 70% of the nests in our study colonies had hatched as of 23 December.

An adult king penguin was seen at Arctowski (Point Thomas) on Saturday 25 December and Sunday 26 December. This is only the third season that a king penguin has been observed in our study area.

2. Skuas: This week we lost 3% of our skua nests. Now 43% of our 162 active skua territories have nests with eggs and 3% have chicks. We banded one more adult skua this week.

3. Giant Petrels: We began to census the giant petrel colonies on 26 December. During this census we count the number of nests with eggs and re-sight all banded adults. Later in the season, when the giant petrels have chicks, we will census the colonies again. These two visits will provide us with a rough estimate of their reproductive success when we compare the number of eggs to the number of chicks.

4. Seals & Whales: We saw fewer recently weaned elephant seals on our census this week than last (35), but nearly twice as many juvenile elephant seals (400). We also counted three Weddell seals. On our Copacabana to Point Thomas seal survey on Sunday, 26 December we had the highest count of seals this season: seven elephant seals (two males, three females and two juveniles), and one Weddell seal.

We saw increased humpback whale activity in the bay this week. Starting on 24 December we saw at least two separate individuals. We observed whales throughout the day in various locations but were unable to determine whether they were the same individuals or not. We continued to see humpback whales on Saturday 25 December and Sunday 26 December.

Weekly Weather:

We had a brief blow on Monday evening (12/20) with gusts near 45 mph, but for the most part the weather has been very pleasant this week. It was sunny and a little breezy (no more than 25 mph) at the beginning. We had some rain on Thursday (12/23) but it was calm and, other than a small snow storm on Saturday (12/25) morning, the winds have remained light and we have stayed dry.

The 2010-11 Copa Field Team:

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