

2010-2011 Weekly Field Reports Copacabana, King George Island

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Science report:

1. Penguins: So far, 97% of our Adélie and 57% of our gentoo penguin study nests that are currently active have crèched chicks. A total of 41% of our Adélie and 51% of our gentoo penguin known-age study nests that we have followed since the start of the season have crèched chicks. As of our last count, 44% of the gentoo penguin known-age nests that are still active have yet to crèche.

On 2 January we conducted our Adélie penguin chick census at Point Thomas. To get a general idea of productivity at all of the colonies we count the number of chicks in each colony one week after peak crèche. By comparing the number of chicks crèched to the number of nests initiated, we can determine how many chicks fledged per nest (little to no losses occur between crèching & fledging), which is the measure of breeding success. This season 0.94 chicks fledged per nest at our Point Thomas colonies, the highest success since 2006-07 and not much lower than the 20-year average of 1.0 chicks fledged per nest.

We conducted another gentoo penguin diet sample on 28 December. Two of our five samples had small amounts of fish (<0.05%). The majority of the samples consisted of adult krill (*Euphausia superba*) with slightly (63%) more females than males, ranging from 40 to 60 mm in length.

2. Skuas: This week the skuas recouped some of the losses observed last week. Between pairs re-laying and new nests found, currently 37% of our 162 active territories have nests with eggs and 10% have hatched chicks. We banded four more adult skuas this week.

3. Giant Petrels: We continued to census the local southern giant petrel colonies as weather permitted.

4. Seals & Whales: 188 juvenile, 141 weaner, five male, & 14 female elephant seals were counted during our Copacabana to Patelnia seal census on Thursday, 30 December. This was the highest number of weaners recorded this season. We also saw four Weddell seals, one recently weaned. On our Copacabana to Point Thomas seal survey on Saturday 1 January we counted ten elephant seals (two females and eight juveniles).

We continued to see humpback whales in the bay this week, one adult in the middle of the bay on Tuesday 28 December and two breaching at Arctowski on Sunday 2 January.

Weekly Weather:

After a brief storm from the east on Monday 27 December, with 30 mph winds and lots of snow, we had a surprising stretch of calm and warm weather for the remainder of the week, with highs from 36-40o F. The period of calm ended 2 January, when the wind switched to the west and increased, with 30 mph gusts at Copacabana.

The 2010-11 Copa Field Team:

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