

2010-2011 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 13
January 9, 2011

Science report:

1. Penguins: On Wednesday, 6 January, we censused the crèched chicks in the Copacabana Adélie penguin colony. This season, 0.98 chicks fledged per nest at Copacabana, slightly lower than the 20-year average of 1.05 chicks fledged per nest.

The majority of the 21-day weights of Adélie and gentoo penguin chicks were completed this week. The weights of 128 21-day-old Adélie penguin chicks ranged from 790 to 2,300 grams, with an average weight of 1,648 grams, a little less than the 10-year average weight of 1,716 grams. The weights of 224 21-day-old gentoo penguin chicks ranged from 590 to 2,190 grams, with an average weight of 1,542 grams, also lower than the 10-year average weight of 1,616 grams.

We conducted our third gentoo penguin chick-rearing diet sample on Monday, 3 January. All five samples were 100% krill (*Euphausia superba*), 40-55 mm in length, and approximately 67% females.

We deployed four satellite tags (PTTs) on gentoo penguins (two males and two females) on Tuesday, 4 January, to collect positional data on where birds are foraging during the chick-rearing period. Retrieval of the units began on Sunday, 9 January.

2. Skuas: A total of 29% of the 162 currently active skua territories have nests with eggs and 16% have nests with chicks. We banded our first skua chicks this week, as well as three more adults.

3. Giant Petrels: We completed our southern giant petrel nest census on Monday, 3 January. There are 168 nests in the Copacabana colonies, fewer nests than the 20-year average of 173 nests. There are 28 nests in the Point Thomas colony, slightly higher than the 20-year average of 21 nests. We have observed high rates of skua predation on southern giant petrel eggs this season at Copacabana, which suggests that the lower nest numbers may partially be due to skua activity and not entirely a result of foraging conditions.

4. Seals & Whales: On Tuesday, 4 January we counted 362 juvenile elephant seals, 26 recently weaned elephant seals, 20 female elephant seals, five male elephant seals and one recently weaned Weddell seal on our Copacabana to Patelnia seal census. On our weekly Copacabana to Pt. Thomas census on Saturday, 8 January, we counted 23 juvenile elephant seals, one recently weaned elephant seal, and one leopard seal.

Humpback whales continue to be seen regularly. We saw one adult humpback whale on Thursday, 6 January, diving in the middle of the bay, one adult humpback whale on Saturday, 8 January, exiting the bay and two adult humpback whales entering the bay on Sunday, 9 January.



Weekly Weather:

This week has been characterized by more calm weather punctuated by a couple days of higher winds (30 mph recorded at Copacabana) from the west. On Wednesday, 6 January, we had a calm, sunny day and the thermometer hit a high of 46° F. The weather continues to be warm, with temperatures consistently in the upper 30s and lower 40s, and dry.

The 2010-11 Copa Field Team:

Alexis Will, Field Team Leader

Penny Chilton

Kristen Boysen

