

2009-2010 Weekly Field Reports

Copacabana, King George Island

Volume 18
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Science report:

1. Penguins: We are nearing the end of our penguin work, with only the chicks to band of two known-age gentoo penguin pairs that re-laid. This will be the termination of the penguin work.

2. Skuas: This is the last week for our skua rounds in the Back-country and at Point Thomas. Overall, it was a very productive and successful year for skuas, especially the south polars. However, Copa and Point Thomas had the lowest reproductive success of all the areas.

Of the 20 south polar skua territories at Point Thomas, 19 laid eggs and only three of these successfully fledged chicks. Of the 26 brown skua territories, 16 had eggs and only five of these successfully fledged chicks. There were 6 mixed skua pairs, five of these female browns with male south polars; one a female brown with a male hybrid (which is a skua with both brown and south polar ancestors). Of these mixed pairs, five of them had chicks, none of which successfully fledged. Two of the Point Thomas territories were held by triads, which are three skuas on one territory, one female and two males. One triad was a combination of a brown female and two south polar males and the other was a brown female, a brown male, and a hybrid male.

The final tally for the Back-country south polar skuas was 15 successfully fledged chicks from the 25 pairs that bred. One brown skua pair and one hybrid/hybrid pair bred, but were unsuccessful.

3. Giant Petrels: Several of the giant petrel colonies near Copa were re-mapped, the nests re-marked, and the chicks banded. We will continue this as weather conditions allow, as it needs to be calm and dry.

3. Whales: No whales were observed this week.

4. Seals: One hundred and fifty fur seals were counted at Point Thomas, almost double the amount of the last two weeks. A crabeater seal was also seen at Pt. Thomas, which is very unusual for this time of year, since these seals are generally associated with the pack ice. This is the final seal census of the season.

Camp Activities:

We have begun our closing inventory for the year and are completing our data entry. Also, when the weather allows, the old paint is being scraped off the outside of the hut, to ready it for painting next season. All the scraped paint is caught in tarps on the ground, to be disposed of off-site, hence the need for calm, dry weather.



Weekly Weather:

The temperature has been hovering around freezing all week. We had periodic snow and rain showers, with variable winds all week. The weekend provided us with a small snow storm Saturday night (2/27) through Sunday (2/28) with winds over 40 mph, snow, and high surf.

The 2009-10 Copa Field Team:

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