U.S. Antarctic Marine Living Resources Program

2008-2009 Weekly Field Reports
Cape Shirreff, Livingston Island

Volume 2
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Seabirds:

1. Plots to study the reproduction of gentoo penguins are established. These plots will be checked daily for the rest of the season until the chicks crèche. This allows us to record the timing of breeding across the colony as well as reproductive success. We will begin banding one adult at each nest for the reproductive study this week.

2. The first gentoo egg was seen on 28 October. To date, five nests in the reproductive study plots have initiated clutches.

3. Chinstrap penguins are establishing territories. To date, no chinstrap penguins have initiated clutches.

4. We have begun a demographic study to determine the reproductive success of penguins that were banded here as chicks and have now returned to breed. We are currently reading bands to locate these known-aged birds and will follow their breeding activities daily to determine their reproductive success. To date, 3 known age gentoos have initiated clutches.

5. Brown skuas are reestablishing pair bonds and have been observed stealing eggs from gentoo penguins.

Pinnipeds:

6. Since our first breeding elephant seal census on 27 October we have recorded an additional five births bringing the total elephant seal pup production to 30. Seven females have weaned their pups and departed to sea. There are now 25 adult females

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remaining and 23 of these have suckling pups.

7. We have weighed, measured and tagged the seven weaned elephant seal pups. All but one, were weighed within 24 hours of weaning. Mass ranged from 78.8-111.6 kilograms. All seven pups are male.

8. We recorded the first female Antarctic fur seal to arrive on one of the AMLR study beaches on 1 November.

9. Males are continuing to arrive every day. Fur seal breeding colonies and beaches have less snow and ice than usual for this time of year. No beaches have ice berms that would prevent females from gaining access to areas above hide tide mark. There are currently 127 adult males on territory within the US-AMLR study. Two of these are tagged males that were tagged as pups in 1998/99 and 1999/00 (9 & 10 years old).

Weather:

10. We set up our weather station on 28 October to record wind speed, direction, temperature, humidity, and precipitation at 15-minute intervals. We have an independent solar radiation sensor that records at the same interval. The weekly mean temperature was +0.9C. The low was -2.2 and the high was 10.6. We had a total cumulative precipitation for the week of 0.42 inches. Maximum wind speed was 48 miles per hour and the mean wind speed was 12.0 mph with prevailing winds from the west and north.

11. We were unable to download our over-winter temperature data logger so no record of temperatures for 2008 exist. We will return the logger to the manufacturer at the end of the season in hopes of recovering data or at least get an assessment as to why it failed.

12. The unseasonably warm weather this past week has resulted in greatly diminished snow cover.

Camp:

13. Our camp is running smoothly and all power and communication system are in operation. We have a daily radio schedule with Palmer station and we download email twice a day.

14. The warmer weather has allowed us to install our rain collection barrel that provides water to our kitchen sink. For a couple days we had running water. It is still cold enough to require a barrel inside the main hut for thawing our frozen water supply.

Submitted by AMLR staff currently residing at the Cape Shirreff field station, Livingston Island.