

2008-2009 Weekly Field Reports

Cape Shirreff, Livingston Island

Seabirds:

1. In the three weeks since gentoo penguin clutch initiation 6% of the nests in our reproduction study have failed. In the week since chinstrap penguin peak clutch initiation 95% of our reproduction study are incubating partial or full clutches, 5% have yet to initiate a clutch.
2. We continue to monitor known age penguins that were banded here as chicks. To date, 34 known aged gentoo penguins have nested. Of these, seven have failed and 27 are incubating. Thirty five known aged chinstrap penguins have nested. Of these, five nests have failed and 30 remain on eggs.



3. On 29 November we conducted the annual chinstrap nest census. We counted 4026 nests, which represents a 33% increase from the previous year census. This year, the number of chinstrap nests has decreased 32% from the previous 11 year mean and is 48% lower than the highest count of 7744 nests in the summer of 1999-2000.

4. To date, 21 brown skua pairs have been observed on territories. Two pairs have initiated clutches, one pair has a complete

complete two egg clutch and another pair currently has one egg.





Pinnipeds:

5. All but one of the 40 southern elephant seal pups born on Cape Shirreff has weaned. Once the last pup has weaned we will

conclude early season elephant seal captures.

6. At the last census of fur seal study beaches on 23 Nov we recorded a total of 565 adult females and 331 pups (329 live and 2 dead).
7. We have concluded range tests of our two VHF receiving stations for monitoring trip duration of fur seals. Both stations are now ready to begin logging instrumented fur seals. We will begin the first captures on 3 December.
8. We have now recorded 52 adult tagged females that have arrived to the cape 43 of these have parturition sites within the U.S. AMLR study area. Natality rate to date is 75.4%. We expect this rate to increase since many non-pregnant females arrive earlier than pregnant females.
9. We have recorded 36 known-aged Antarctic fur seals tagged as pups.



Weather:

10. The mean temperature for the week was 1.4C. The high temperature for the week was 4.7C and the low was -1.1C. Total precipitation this week was 0.23 inches. Most winds this week were from the west. Mean wind speed was 14.0 mph with maximum wind gust of 32 mph. Sunrise and sunset are now 03:13 and 22:23 and we are gaining about six minutes of sun per day. Mean solar radiation this week was 16,750 Watts per sq. meter.

Camp:

11. We saw our first humpback whale foraging very near shore on Thanksgiving day.
12. We enjoyed a festive Thanksgiving and enjoyed the holiday emails from friends and family. We have already consumed most of our leftovers and had our traditional smoked turkey enchiladas last night.

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

