

Seabirds:

1. The earlier breeding gentoo penguins in our reproductive study have had a 10% failure rate over the two weeks since their mean clutch initiation in mid-November. The later breeding chinstrap penguins have two eggs in 89% of their nests; 8% have only one egg, and 1% have not laid. To date, 2% of chinstrap penguin nests in the study have lost eggs.
2. We have continued to re-sight known-age penguins. Thirty-one known-age gentoo penguins initiated clutches, 58% have complete clutches and 19% of these nests have failed so far. There are 65 known-age chinstraps currently breeding, 72% have complete clutches and 5% have failed so far.
3. On 27 November we conducted the annual nest census of chinstrap penguins and collected measurements of egg sizes and weights from 50 nests. The number of chinstrap nests has decreased 29% from the previous 13 year mean. Mean egg masses were roughly the same as the previous 13-year mean.
4. On 22 November we started gentoo egg measurements; however, due to wind and snow picking up we had to stop mid-way. We were able to finish weighing eggs from 100 total nests on 28 November. Mean egg masses were roughly the same as the previous 13-year mean.
5. Many brown skuas have begun building nest bowls and the first egg was seen on 24 November. We are still seeing skuas fighting over breeding territories and mates, as new birds arrive and some of the old mates from last season are not yet back from their winter migrations.

Pinnipeds:

6. There are no more elephant seal mother-pup pairs on the beaches. We weighed and measured the last weaner last Wednesday, 24 November, concluding our early season elephant seal captures. Most adult female elephant seals have left to sea and we are now seeing increasing numbers of juvenile males on the beaches along with all our tagged weaners, mainly on the south east part of the Cape.
7. We recorded the late arrival of a tagged elephant seal female on 14 November. She has pupped at Cape Shirreff the previous two seasons but did not appear pregnant this year.
8. At the last census of fur seal study beaches on 27 November we recorded 429 adult males on territory and a total of 203 adult females with 82 pups. Some of these females still have instruments that they carried over winter. We have now captured and recovered three of these.
10. On Saturday, 27 November, we completed our first perinatal capture of the season. The female was carrying a GLS light sensor tag. The animal had given birth and we were able to retrieve the instrument and record important morphometric measurements and tissue samples from the mother and pup.
11. We have recorded 18 tagged known-age fur seal males to date, ten of which are 11 years old and six of which are nine years old.
12. In order to get ready for the perinatal attendance female 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.



13. We had substantial increases in both elephant seals and Weddell seals this past week. In the last weekly census of phocids on the Cape we recorded 92 elephant seals, 48 Weddell seals, and one crabeater seal.

Weather:

14. This week we had a couple days of snow accumulation. The mean temperature for the week was 0.5° C. The high for the week was 4.0° C and the low was -1.9° C. Total precipitation this week was 0.43 inches. Most winds this week were from the west. Mean wind speed was 14.1 mph with maximum wind gust of 48 mph. Mean solar radiation this week was 15,577 watts per sq. meter.

Camp:

15. We celebrated Thanksgiving with a great dinner. We dug out the smoker and smoked a turkey for 9 hours (but still needed to bake it a bit after that) and served it along with many other delicious dishes that each one of us prepared (fresh baked bread, mashed potatoes, pumpkin pies, etc). We need to improve our turkey smoking technique as Christmas is coming up!

16. It was a week of great team work and camaraderie between the seal and penguin biologists as we all worked together to weigh and measure eggs and to capture our first fur seals.

17. As far as fresh water we are doing really well, as we had some wet days and almost our water barrels are full.

18. In the last two days we had some troubles with the satellite internet system that we were able to fix today.

The Cape Shirreff team wishes everyone a nice week.

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

