

Seabirds:

1. Among our gentoo reproductive study nests none failed this week, so the failure rate remains at 10%. Four percent of the chinstrap penguin reproductive study nests have failed so far.
2. We continue to monitor known-age penguins. Thirty-three known-age gentoo penguins have initiated clutches. Of the 33 nests, 24% have failed. Currently 68 known-age chinstrap penguins have initiated clutches. Of the 68 known-age chinstraps that have initiated clutches, 91% continue to incubate partial or full clutches and 9% have failed.
3. Out of 27 territories with brown skua pairs attending, currently one pair has one egg and four pairs have completed their clutches.

Pinnipeds:

4. At the last census of fur seal study beaches on 5 December we recorded a total of 688 adult females and 552 pups (541 live and 11 cumulative dead).
5. We began fur seal captures for attendance and foraging behavior on 1 December. As of today, 5 December, we have completed nine of the 30 captures we have planned for CCAMLR trip duration protocol. All females have been captured within one day postpartum. We captured, anesthetize and sample these animals. Milk, tissue for DNA, and morphometric measurements are collected, and a radio transmitter attached to the animal. Thanks to those instruments we are able to monitor their presence or absence from the beaches remotely by a receiver, and in this way can monitor their foraging trip duration.
6. We have been retrieving overwinter instruments. Instruments that were placed on animals at the end of last season, March 2010, and were carried over their winter migrations.
7. Our two VHF receiving stations are recording and we downloaded our first data from them. Thus far none of the females we have instrumented have departed on their first trip to sea.
8. Thus far only 57% (74/150) of our tagged female population has returned to Cape Shirreff. The natality rate for returned females thus far is 86.0%.
9. Even though we have seen few adult crabeater seals, this week we had what appeared to be a recently weaned crabeater pup arrive at Half Moon beach. He was observed for only one day though. We also had a recently weaned Weddell pup arrive that must have been born somewhere off the Cape.
10. To date we have seen 33 fur seals that were tagged as pups in previous years (33% of these have been 9-year-olds from the 1999/00 cohort).
11. At the last weekly Cape-wide phocid census on 4 December we counted 115 elephant seals and 20 Weddell seals. We observed a juvenile male leopard seal in poor body condition, underweight. He remained on the beach for only two days and hasn't been seen since.



Weather:

12. This week the weather was generally mild with exception of a mild storm last Tuesday. Mean wind speed was 11.7 mph with maximum wind gust of 41.0 mph. Winds were mostly from the west all week. The mean temperature for the week was 0.4° C. The high temperature for the week was 3.6° C and the low was -2.4° C. Total precipitation this week was 0.06 inches. Mean solar radiation was 15,622 watts per sq. meter.

Camp:

13. The seabird and pinniped research is in full swing and has kept us all very busy with collecting and entering data. Camp is running smoothly, we still are doing really well with water and food.

14. Fur seal perinatal captures are keeping us pretty busy. We are all working together, as all five people are needed to keep the males distracted from their harem while we are capturing the females. We are using new anesthesia equipment, including a portable capnometer and pulse-oximeter. This instrument allowed us to better monitor the anesthesia status of the animal by monitoring of the animal's breathing pattern and heart rate, as well as other important physiological parameters (blood oxygen saturation and end-tidal carbon dioxide), giving us a better understanding and control of the anesthesia procedure. This week has been a good week for everyone: we finally started the perinatal captures and we are getting a lot of good work done. The weather has been nice overall; this morning was a perfect day, so much so that we placed our chairs outside and had coffee on the deck with a wonderful view of the Cape.

Have a nice week.

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

