

# 2009-2010 Weekly Field Reports

## Copacabana, King George Island

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### Science report:

1. Penguins: Earlier this week, two dead emperor penguin fledglings were found washed up on the beach at Copa and Block Point (near Demay) after the big storm. Emperor penguins are rarely seen at Copa (alive or dead), so to find two in one week is very unusual.

Many research projects were completed this week:

It was the last week for the beach sweep, our nightly walk to check for banded known-age penguins.

We completed the Adélie penguin fledging weights, as most of these chicks have already left to forage at sea, not to return for at least 2 years, if they survive. The mean fledging weight this year was lower than we've ever seen in almost 30 years, meaning that most of these birds are in less than optimal condition and will probably not survive the winter. This will further impact the already declining Adélie penguin population at Copa, since very few, if any, of these fledglings will return to breed in the future.

We completed our chinstrap penguin diet samples this week. This final sample yielded twice as many female krill (*Euphausia superba*) than male, all about 44-50 mm in length. Three of the samples contained juvenile krill, which are less than 36 mm in length. Four of the five samples also had *Thysanoessa macrura*, and two samples contained evidence of fish, from which the otoliths were recovered to aid in the identification of the fish species eaten.

The chinstrap penguin colonies at Demay, Uchatka, and Patelnia were censused, and this concludes our chinstrap work for the season. The Demay colonies had no chicks from the 37 nests counted in early December. The Uchatka colonies averaged about one chick fledged per nest, while Patelnia ended up with less, with about 0.8 chicks/nest.

2. Skuas: This was an exciting week for skuas in western Admiralty Bay; we banded 40 chicks – 21 in the Demay/Patelnia area, 15 in the Back-country, and 6 at Point Thomas. We have also begun to do 48-day measurements on the skua chicks – culmen length, culmen width, tarsal length, and weight – which help us to determine their sex before fledging, as females are larger than males.

3. Whales: No whales were observed in the bay this week.

4. Seals: We counted 616 fur seals, 313 of those at Patelnia. The number of elephant seals is dropping, with only about 380 counted this week. Five Weddell seals were also seen.



### **Camp Activities:**

The beginning of the week was once again stormy, so we spent much of our time indoors, entering data. Friday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, was a beautiful day as well as Copacabana's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – we celebrated by spending the morning sitting on the deck enjoying the warm sunshine – a truly perfect day.

### **Weekly Weather:**

The week started with another three-day storm, with high winds, cold temperatures, and more snow from the east-southeast. Thursday started with snow, but calmed by the afternoon, and Friday was a stellar day, sunny, warm, and no wind. The temperatures have been around freezing for the remainder of the week, with little to no wind.

### The 2009-10 Copa Field Team:

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