

Dispatch from Wednesday, 16 January 2008

Greetings:

The last two days we have been busy counting fur seal pups to get an idea of how there population is doing. We count the pups, because the moms intermittently go to sea feed. So if we counted females on the beach we'd only count 20-30% of the number of females here. Further, trip durations vary from season to season, so you can't correct for the number present. Therefore, we just count the number of pups. Early in the season the pups stay mostly on shore, so if you are early enough (like no) you can get a reliable count of the number of pups produced each year. This gives us an idea of how the population is doing. This work is part of Mike Goebel's research as part of the AMLR program to monitor how fur seals are doing in the South Shetland Islands and how that relates to krill. Tomorrow is our last day of pup surveys and they we move to the Cape Shirreff where we begin tagging elephant seals and leopard seals. Today's picture is of one of the Islands we surveyed. It's called Window Island.

Best,
Dan Costa

