

Dispatch from Thursday, 26 April 2007

Greetings:

We awoke this morning to another fabulous day. It is hard to imagine a place more beautiful than Lallemand Fjord, where we spent the last few days. However, the location we are now in, is absolutely amazing. We are surrounded by high peaks and glaciers wherever you look. More importantly the water is flat calm like glass and the sun is out and the sky is clear blue. The only clouds are those forming around the tops of some of the mountain. It's absolutely breathtaking!!

On the way here, we saw the lights of the British Antarctic Base at Rothera at the southern end of Adelaide Island. We had hoped to make a call there, but the schedule won't allow it. Our plans were to deploy a minimum of 12 satellite tags and as of yesterday we had deployed 7.

We set to work this morning again looking for crabeater seals. As usually we found lots of fur seals. It appears that the crabeater seals keep a reasonable schedule. We don't see any before 9:00 am and most have gone into the water by 5:00PM. Nice working hours for us! Around mid morning we spotted a crabeater on a good floe and deployed a tag. Later in the day we found a floe with 4 crabeater seals on it and we managed to tag one of them. We started to tag a third seal, but she went into the water before we could catch her.

So that brings us up to 9 tags deployed with one more day of work for this leg of the cruise. With luck we can deploy one more tag tomorrow before we head back to Palmer Station. This would be great as it would leave the next for the next leg of the cruise 2 of the CTD tags and 4 GPS tags to deploy.

Today's selection of images are a picture of a Weddell seal we considered deploying a tag on, but thought the better of it, given the size of the floe she was on and the size of the seal. Weddell seals around here are quite a bit bigger than crabeater seals. Although they don't fight as hard, a bigger seal on a small floe is still something to avoid.

I've included a picture showing the teeth of one of our crabeater seals. This shows how well adapted they are to feeding on small shrimp like krill. The special teeth work like a sieve to catch the krill.

The moonrise image is what we saw as we headed back to the ship, after trying to get our third seal of the day! The final image is of a group of three crabeater seals in the foreground, with the Gould and the mountains in the background.

After a good day of work spirits are high and we look forward to our final day of field work!

Best from the seal team.



