

The Antarctic Site Inventory – 2015 Annual Report



This isn't an albino Adélie penguin! Rather, it's a 'leucistic' Adélie, which means that it's had a loss of pigmentation.



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To all Oceanites supporters and friends . . .

The 22nd consecutive field season of Oceanites' Antarctic Site Inventory is underway. Also, wonderfully, I can report to you the achievement of Oceanites being honored with an invitation for officially sanctioned, independent observer status at the meetings of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and its Scientific Committee, which oversee and regulate fishing activities in Antarctica.

Attending these meetings in October gave me a considerably chastened view of our Antarctic Site Inventory study area, the vastly warming western Antarctic Peninsula, which continues to change and which, no question, has become the epicenter of future penguin conservation efforts.

The realities are stark:

The region is becoming more ice-free in winter. There's been an increase in krill fishing as well as fishing in the vicinity of penguin breeding colonies we monitor. There's continued uncertainty about penguin population changes 'colliding' with, and potentially being linked to, this fishing effort.

Countries are far from agreed on conservation measures to confidently address these concerns.

But Oceanites and the Antarctic Site Inventory are uniquely poised and grateful for this new opportunity to make a difference — to step up our monitoring efforts to continue addressing the 'krill-penguin' puzzle and, through our work, optimistically, to directly influence conservation management in Antarctica.

We're proud to be your 'eyes and ears' on the Seventh Continent. And I trust you'll continue supporting our seminal, ground-breaking work.

As always . . . Keep Dreaming Penguins!

With all best wishes,

Ron Naveen
President, Oceanites, Inc.
November 30, 2015

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The 2015-16 Antarctic Site Inventory Field Season — Counting Penguins, Season 22

The 22nd field season of Oceanites' Antarctic Site Inventory has started, once again working closely with One Ocean Expeditions and its two vessels, *Akademik Ioffe* and *Akademik Sergey Vavilov*, to achieve up to 150-160 visits at 'core sites' that we census regularly from season to season. There will be 14 departures. This season's roster of researchers includes: Ron Naveen, Stacey Buckelew, Philip McDowall, Michael Schrimpf, Catie Foley, Maureen Lynch, Nicole Bender, Emily Runnells, Grant Humphries, and Alex Borowicz.

Over 21 seasons, Oceanites' Antarctic Site Inventory has made 1,561 site visits and collected data at 208 locations. The Antarctic Site Inventory continues to be the only scientific project monitoring penguin population changes across the significantly warming Antarctic Peninsula — where gentoo penguins are increasing their numbers and extending their range southward, while Adélie and chinstrap numbers are in decline across the region.

Oceanites at CCAMLR

The Epicenter Of Antarctic Penguin Conservation

In addition to assisting Antarctic Treaty countries in their adoption of site-specific management guidelines, the 21-year-old Inventory database takes on new significance with Oceanites' recent invitation to become an independent, nongovernmental observer at the meetings of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and its Scientific Committee, which oversee and regulate fishing activities in Antarctica. These meetings take place every October in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia.

CCAMLR assesses whether krill fishing, climate change, and/or other factors may be impacting Antarctic penguin populations. Granting observer status to Oceanites recognizes the inherent value of the 21-year-old Antarctic Site Inventory database, how it may contribute to forthcoming analyses of fishing activities in Antarctica, and how ongoing Inventory data collection assists a better understanding changes occurring in the Antarctic Peninsula. Ron Naveen attended this year's CCAMLR sessions.

The big political news was China's relinquishing objection to the Ross Sea Region Marine Protected Area (in east Antarctica), leaving Russia, now, isolated in opposition. A new revision to this plan adds a Krill Research Zone that increases the total area covered to more than 1.5 million square km, of which over 1 million square km comprise a no-take area.

In coming years, Oceanites will focus on issues raised at this year's CCAMLR sessions, which will continue to be discussed and which uniquely affect penguin populations in the western Antarctic Peninsula, the study area of the Antarctic Site Inventory, including:

- A proposal for research zones wherever ice sheets have collapsed or severely retreated
- An initiative to establish a ‘buffer zone’ prohibiting krill fishing around penguin colonies during the breeding season
- Adjusting krill catch levels where there is potential overlap between penguin foraging and krill fishing; particularly in the southern Bransfield Strait and Gerlache Strait, which are becoming more ice-free in the austral winter

In September, via a statement that appeared on the Oceanites Feed blog, Twitter, and Facebook, Ron Naveen noted Oceanites’ observer status in CCAMLR and expressed Oceanites’ dedication to CCAMLR and to sorting the ‘krill-penguin puzzle’.

The 2015 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting

Ron Naveen again participated as a nongovernmental adviser to the US delegation at the most recent Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Sofia, Bulgaria, June 1-10, 2015.

Two papers regarding Oceanites’ Antarctic Site Inventory were introduced and discussed.



The first was the ‘regular’ Information Paper that informed all delegates of latest results and progress to date. The second was a Working Paper that described the ongoing effort of Oceanites and the Inventory, in collaboration with The Lynch Lab at Stony Brook University, to develop a new methodology for assessing site sensitivities at visitor sites. We anticipate submitting a final report on the latter at the next Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Santiago, Chile, May 23—June 1, 2016.

THE PENGUIN COUNTERS Documentary

THE PENGUIN COUNTERS documentary has been on the festival circuit nationally and internationally, continues to gain plaudits, and the intention remains for television broadcast worldwide over the next two years. The film recounts Ron’s lifetime connection to penguins and Antarctica, as he and his Inventory team were counting all of the chinstrap penguins at Deception Island — work that confirmed the decline of this species throughout the Antarctic Peninsula.

The festival cut of THE PENGUIN COUNTERS was greatly assisted by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which hosted the film’s debut at the National Geographic Society’s Grosvenor Auditorium in Washington; DC.

The film then screened at the Santa Barbara Film Festival and there have been subsequent showings at:

- Great Lakes Environmental Film Festival
- Mexico International Film Festival (Grand Jury Award)
- Esperanza Film Festival in Moscow (Audience Award)
- Pittsburgh Independent Film Festival
- Washington DC Environmental Film Festival
- UK Documentary Film Festival
- Hot Springs (Arkansas) Film Festival
- Savannah Film Festival
- Blue Ocean Film Festival (Monaco)
- Fort Lauderdale Film Festival

As we go to press, there's news that THE PENGUIN COUNTERS also will be screened at the Oceans & Climate Pavilion during COP21, the December 2015 Paris Climate Conference, which, for the first time in over 20 years of UN negotiations, aims to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate.



All photographs by Ron Naveen, ©2015 Oceanites, Inc.

- p.1 'Leucistic' Adélie penguin, Devil Island,
- p.2 Juvenile emperor penguins on disintegrating 1st year ice, Prince Gustav Channel.
- p.3 Chinstrap penguin and chick, Baily Head, Deception Island.
- p.4 Chinstrap penguin, Baily Head, Deception Island.