

The Antarctic Site Inventory



2005 Annual Report from Oceanites, Inc.

CONTENTS

Antarctic Site Inventory Update

Petermann Island Monitoring and Assessment

The 28th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting

***The Oceanites
SITE GUIDE TO THE ANTARCTIC PENINSULA,
Second Edition***

Website Launch

Contact Numbers

A FABULOUS YEAR !

2005 was an important benchmark for Oceanites and the Antarctic Site Inventory project, and I trust that our good news brings you great cheer. As you're aware, the Inventory is the only research project collecting crucial, scientific baseline data throughout the Antarctic Peninsula and, most importantly, is the only Antarctic project completely sustained by public donations and contributions. For sure, without your help, none of our successes would have happened. These are achievements for all of us to share.

During the 2004-05 field season, our shipboard work aboard the *MV National Geographic Endeavour* produced 69 site visits and added four new locations to the Antarctic Site Inventory database. Through eleven seasons from November 1994 through February 2005, the Inventory now has made 639 visits to 93 locations, including repetitive visits to all of the most heavily visited sites in the Antarctic Peninsula.

At Petermann Island, we had another successful year monitoring the resident penguin and seabird populations, despite some truly awful weather — persistent cold rain and an ice-clogged Penola Strait, the latter of which made staff changes a bit more challenging than expected. We are generating the first, century-long comparisons of penguin populations in the Antarctic. The great French explorer Jean Baptiste Charcot overwintered at Petermann in 1909, at which time the island more than 1,000 pairs of nesting Adélie penguins, but fewer than 60 pairs of nesting gentoo penguins. In a hundred years, these populations have changed markedly — Adélies down to slightly over 500 nests, gentoos now booming with more than 2,000 nests.

Petermann Island is located six miles north of the Ukrainian Vernadsky Station (formerly, the UK Faraday Station), which has produced the longest set — 60 years — of continuous weather observations in the Antarctic. In this span, temperatures have risen on an annual basis by 5°F, and in winter by 9°F, spurring questions, of course, how and whether these changes relate to the marked changes in Petermann's penguin populations. Obviously, we have much more work to do!

At the June 2005 Antarctic Treaty Meeting in Stockholm, the three-year effort by the UK government, buoyed this year by the co-sponsorship of the US and Australia, brought to a successful conclusion the effort to adopt site specific management guidelines for the most environmentally sensitive and heavily visited locations in the Antarctic Peninsula. In fashioning these proposals, the UK relied on the Inventory's database and site-specific descriptive information — and for Oceanites, the dream of making a permanent contribution to the Treaty System was realized. As said, this is a proud moment for all of us to share.

The Treaty Parties also convened an intersessional working group to assess these guidelines, and there will be an inspection trip in January-February 2006 (in which I'll participate), to review the guidelines and ascertain whether any improvements or changes are needed.

Within the last month, pursuant to support from The Tinker Foundation, a new, 2d edition of the acclaimed *Oceanites Site Guide To The Antarctic Peninsula* was published. This is a popular version of site descriptive information contained in the *Oceanites Compendium Of Antarctic Peninsula Sites*, published by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

We will continue our track record of securing Antarctica's future — and I hope that you'll help us to keep our good work flowing.

Once again, thank you for your support and all best wishes,

Ron Naveen

President, Oceanites, Inc
Principal Investigator, Antarctic Site Inventory

December 1, 2005

Antarctic Site Inventory Update

During the 2004-05 field season, Antarctic Site Inventory researchers made 69 visits and added four new sites to the Inventory database. In eleven seasons from November 1994 through March 2005, the Inventory now has made 639 visits to 93 Antarctic Peninsula locations.

The Inventory's 12th field season — the Petermann field camp and our shipboard surveys — began in November 2005.

Experienced Inventory researchers working in the 2005-06 season include: Ron Naveen, Steven Forrest, Rosemary Dagit, Ian Bullock, Stacey Buckelew, John Carlson, Iris Saxer, and Doug Gould. Researchers joining the project include: Aileen Miller, Mike Polito, and Matt Drennan.

Petermann Island Monitoring & Assessment

The Inventory's long-term monitoring and assessment project at Petermann Island had a successful, second season of work. The project involves two, 3+ week sessions — the first in November-December, coinciding with the peak of penguin egg-laying (for nest censuses), the second in January-February, coinciding with the peak of penguin chick-crèching (for chick censuses).

Our November 2004 arrival at Petermann was once again assisted by the US research vessel LAWRENCE GOULD, whose personnel helped us erect our office tent and sleeping tents a hundred meters above the Circumcision Bay shoreline, and south of the shoreline refuge hut constructed more than 50 years ago by Argentina and now maintained by personnel from the nearby Vernadsky Station.

This second season of work was marked by ice-clogged conditions in offshore Penola Strait, which made for difficult exchanges of staff, and by more rain than expected — perhaps, symbolic of climate changes occurring in the Peninsula.

When our work concludes, we expect to produce the first, century-long comparison of penguin and seabird populations in the Antarctic. Charcot recorded more than 1,000 pairs of Adélie penguins and fewer than 60 pairs of nesting gentoo penguins. Now, these populations have flipped — Adélies down to slightly over 500 nests, while gentoos are booming with more than 2,000 nests.

Throughout the Antarctic Peninsula, the Inventory — consistent with other research projects — has recorded declines of Adélie and chinstrap penguins, with gentoo penguins seemingly increasing both their

numbers and their range. A major line of inquiry, therefore, is how all of this may relate to changing weather conditions.

Indeed, changes are occurring. For example, six miles south of Petermann Island lies the Ukrainian Vernadsky Station (formerly, the UK Faraday Station), which has produced the longest set — 60 years — of continuous weather observations in Antarctica. During this span, data show annual temperatures rising by 5°F and winter temperatures by 9°F.

The 28th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting

Our oft-stated goal is contributing to the long-term conservation of Antarctica. At the 28th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in June 2005 in Stockholm, some of these dreams came true. After three years of discussion, the Parties adopted the concept of site-specific management guidance, recognizing the concentration of visitors at certain locations, as well as their responsibility under the Environmental Protocol To The Antarctic Treaty for precautionary management regarding potential environmental impacts.

The United Kingdom initiated this management effort at the 26th Consultative Meeting in Madrid in 2003. Importantly, for Oceanites, the Parties relied upon the extensive database and site-descriptive information compiled by the Antarctic Site Inventory project. Initially, Site Guidelines were adopted for four locations (Penguin Island, 62°06'S, 57°54'W; Aitcho Islands, 62°24'S, 59°47'W; Cuverville Island, 64°41'S, 62°38'W; and Jougla Point, 64°49'S, 63°30'W), with guidelines for seven additional locations expected to follow (Turret Point, 62°05'S, 57°55'W; Yankee Harbor, 62°32'S, 59°47'W; Hannah Point 62°39'S, 60°37'W; Paulet Island, 63°35'S, 55°47'W; Neko Harbor, 64°50'S, 62°33'W; Pléneau Island, 65°06'S, 64°04'W; and Petermann Island, 65°10'S, 64°10'W).

Each Site Guideline contains these elements: preferred landing area, restricted zones (because of particular sensitivities), seasonal limits on total visit time ashore per 24 hours, a limit on numbers of visitors ashore at one time (100), preferred walking routes, limits on the size of ship that may visit (in terms of passenger capacity), and precautionary distances for approaching certain wildlife (5 meters from nesting penguins, 50 meters from nesting southern giant petrels), and other limitations for approaching flora and avoiding potential hazards.

The Parties also recognized that circumstances might change — for example, increased tourist pressure or demonstrable environmental impact. As a result, there was agreement that the Treaty's Committee On

Environmental Protection should advise when changes were appropriate. An intersessional working group was convened, and there will be an inspection trip in January-February 2006 to review the guidelines and assess the need for changes.

The Parties also designated Deception Island as an Antarctic Specially Managed Area, and adopted a Code of Conduct for visitors to that location's four, regular visitor sites (Whaler's Bay, 62°59'S, 60°34'W; Pendulum Cove, 62°56'S, 60°36'W; Telefon Bay, 62°56'S, 60°40'W; and Baily Head, 62°58'S, 60°30'W).

General provisions of this Code apply to all four sites: a limit on numbers of visitors ashore at one time (100), a guide-to-passenger ratio of 1-to-20, and precautionary distances from birds or seals (generally, 5 meters and, where practicable, at least 15 meters from fur seals). Specific provisions apply to each site, which, for Baily Head, involve a limit of 350 passengers in any one day, a limit of 6 hours total visit time in any one day, and maintaining a safe distance from the site's rock cliffs and glacier front.

Much has changed since the mid-1980s, when there was only a handful of tourist ships plying Antarctic waters and fewer than 2,000 visitors per season. At that time, there was no uniform tourist guidance on which to rely, and expedition leaders used common sense, as well as their experience in other sensitive locations, to ensure that visitors witnessed Antarctica's beauty and grandeur in a safe and environmentally sound fashion.

In the 2004-05 season, 27,950 shipborne passengers visited Antarctica, 22,926 of whom made landings at visitor sites. Now, all who visit and work in Antarctica can rely on Treaty-established guidelines to ensure that potential environmental impacts are kept to a minimum, if not avoided altogether.

Another issue broached in Stockholm was a potential de-listing of Antarctic fur seals as a Specially Protected Species, and the addition of southern giant petrels to that list. The issue will be re-engaged at the 29th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, which takes place in Edinburgh, Scotland UK, 12-23 June 2006.

The Oceanites Site Guide To The Antarctic Peninsula, Second Edition

The fully revised, second edition of the *Oceanites Site Guide To The Antarctic Peninsula* has just been published. It contains 128 pages, full descriptions of 40 key sites, four regional maps, 16 orientation maps, "Fact Packs" about the Antarctic Treaty, ice, krill, penguins, and vegetation, and more than 115 photographs.

This acclaimed book is the popular version of the *Oceanites Compendium Of Antarctic Peninsula Visitor Sites*, distributed by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Copies of the new *Site Guide* are available from Longitude Books in NY (www.longitude.com) and, ultimately, will be available through the Oceanites website.

The Oceanites Website Launch

Oceanites believes that "information is power" and that, by making a plethora of conservation-oriented information easily available, we nurture the conservation of Antarctica for posterity.

To this end — to put relevant biological data, site-specific information, maps, and photographs in the hands of "Antarcticists" everywhere, we are planning the most comprehensive, possible Antarctic website ever produced. In our rapidly digitized world, we see this is the fastest, most reliable means of disseminating everything anyone ever wanted to know about this glorious continent to the large community of Antarctic diplomats, scientists, conservation organizations, tour ship and yacht operators and visitors, and the general public.

Mindful that the Treaty operates concomitantly in four languages, the website aims in a similar direction — an English-language version initially, with other language-versions to follow. Ultimately, the website will contain a virtual classroom allowing interested adults and children to "plug into" a wealth of slide show or PowerPoint presentations, videos, and downloadable materials about key Antarctic subjects.

The website is expected to launch in early 2006.

Contact Numbers

If you or your family's foundation would like to make a definitive, long-term contribution to assist the long-term conservation of Antarctica, please contact Ron Naveen and Oceanites directly at:

Oceanites, Inc.
P.O. Box 15259
Chevy Chase, MD 20825 USA
1-202-237-6262
oceanites.mail@verizon.net

Oceanites is a tax-exempt §501(c)(3) organization under US tax law, and contributions and donations by US citizens are fully tax-deductible.

Cover photo:
Adélie penguin at Petermann Island, by Ron Naveen
© 2005 Oceanites