



Melissa Rider

“Antarctica pierced my heart.” Melissa is a twenty-seven year veteran of the Antarctic, having begun her polar career in 1994 in one of the most glamorous positions available - Waste Management Technician at the United States Antarctic Program’s (USAP) McMurdo Station. Melissa continued her work in the “Deepest South” in increasingly expanded roles of responsibility, ultimately capping her USAP career as Manager of Science Support Planning overseeing over 200 Antarctic field science projects from the South Pole to the Antarctic Peninsula.

Melissa has been affiliated with Oceanites and the Antarctic Site Inventory research project since 2004, when she managed field camp operations and monitored penguin populations for Oceanites 5-year long-term study of penguin reproductive success and seabird occurrence at Petermann Island. This National Science Foundation (NSF) supported study was conducted with USAP assistance due to the importance the NSF placed on Oceanites role in expanding the reach of its station-based studies to additional sites on the Antarctic Peninsula. Melissa has continued her association with the Antarctic Site Inventory, Oceanites, and Oceanites’ collaborator the Lynch Lab at Stony Brook University, joining multiple subsequent expeditions and serving as the medical officer as well as biologist on the Dalio Expedition in 2015, which documented “supercolonies” of Adelie penguins and numerous previously unknown new colonies of penguins in the Weddell Sea and extreme northeast reaches of the Antarctic Peninsula.



Melissa’s Antarctic work has taken her to all three USAP Stations - McMurdo, South Pole, and Palmer Stations, and she has sailed in support of science on both USAP research vessels, the RVIB Laurence M. Gould and the RV Nathaniel B. Palmer. She has also spent numerous seasons onboard research and commercial vessels in the Peninsula and Ross Sea inventorying Antarctic wildlife populations and supporting research as diverse as vertebrate paleontology and ice core drilling. Her work for USAP earned her the Polar Medal in 2008 and afforded her the opportunity to experience some of the most remote landscapes on the planet along the coast and the Antarctic Plateau.

Melissa resides in Truckee, California, where she practices as a Physician Assistant with the Tahoe Forest Hospital District. Her pastimes include hiking and climbing in wilderness areas around the world when not thawing out on warm beaches.