

The importance of fisheries in shaping the ecology of Black-browed Albatrosses in the Falkland Islands

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PhD student Amanda has been keeping busy investigating the diet of Black-browed Albatross chicks. The aim of this study is to assess the extent to which chicks may be fed on fishery discards or natural prey, and how diet may affect body condition. During February and March 2019 and 2020, she spent several weeks on New Island and Steeple Jason to collect the necessary dietary data. Specifically, Amanda collected regurgitation samples from chicks as well as tissue samples which were analysed for their stable isotope signatures. This complementary approach allows her to address some of the limitations of individual methods. For example, whilst stomach contents provide information at the species level, they only provide a snap-shot view of the diet. In contrary, from stable isotopes we can assess dietary information over a much longer time-frame, but only gain taxonomic information at the trophic level. In order to analyse the stable isotope data, Amanda spent two months at the University of Exeter and at the NERC Life Science Mass Spectrometry Facility in Glasgow to make use of the specialist equipment. Data from 2020 are currently being processed, and the study is envisaged to be finalised later in the year. This project is funded by Fortuna Ltd. and through the Falkland Islands Environmental Studies Budget.



Amanda collecting scats from albatross chicks at Steeple Jason (Martin Anstee)



Amanda weighing an albatross chick (Simona Sanvito)



Fieldwork at the New Island study colony (Simona Sanvito)