

Assessing the demand for science on South Georgia: consultation with Asian polar research institutes – Part 1

By Victoria Peck

First published 23rd February 2015

The South Georgia Future Science Project is assessing the international demand for science on and around South Georgia with an aim to make recommendations on future logistics and infrastructure which could make the island and surrounding region more accessible to scientists. On February 9th Dr. Paul Brickle, Prof. John Turner and Dr. Vicky Peck flew to the Far East to begin the first phase of consultations with world renowned polar research institutes to see how South Georgia may fit into their future science strategies. First port of call was the Korean Polar Research Institute (KOPRI), in Incheon, Seoul. Although KOPRI is currently in the process of “moving house”, with much of their science becoming focussed on their newly opened base, Jang Bogu, at Terra Nova, the South Georgia Future Science team were thoroughly impressed by the consideration that KOPRI scientists put into assessing the opportunities that South Georgia may offer their science. KOPRI scientist and Head of International Cooperation Dr. Hyoung Chul Shin, recognised the considerable synergy with the science that KOPRI undertakes at King Sejong Station at the northern Antarctic Peninsula and what could be done at South Georgia, and were enthusiastic about the opportunity for comparative studies between the two locations. Extension of upper atmospheric studies and bio-logging determination of penguin foraging behaviours were just two of the possibilities that emerged in a very productive discussion session.

The next stop for the South Georgia Future Science team was Tokyo, to meet with the Japanese National Institute of Polar Research, NIPR. Although NIPR’s Antarctic research stations are located on the East Antarctic ice sheet, their scientific outlook is wide ranging and already includes NIPR scientists actively involved in research on South Georgia. The South Georgia Future Science team were particularly interested in the thoughts of Dr. Akinori Takahashi, who has worked on South Georgia over several seasons. Dr. Takahashi was enthusiastic about the opportunities that South Georgia presents for the study of marine mammals, seabirds and penguins, recognising the “unparalleled diversity and abundance of marine predators”



SAERI NEWS

and the invaluable baseline knowledge that past research on South Georgia provides to this field of research. Dr. Takahashi and terrestrial biologist Dr. Satoshi Imura were also kind enough to share their thoughts and aspirations for future research on and around South Georgia and we will be sure to use this information in our assessment of how science could be better facilitated in the future.

The South Georgia Future Science team would like to thank KOPRI and NIPR again for sharing their time, thoughts, enthusiasm and generous hospitality with us.

In our next update we will report on meetings with scientists from the Malaysian National Antarctic Research Centre and the Indian National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research.