

# around the continent

## SOUTH POLE

### Polies face cold and flu

By Brenda Everitt  
*Pole correspondent*

They're working around the clock at South Pole Station now that people have become acclimated and settled into their routines, despite a rash of the flu and polar "crud."

Temperatures have remained low. The average temperature for the week ending on South Pole Meteorology reports is about seven degrees lower than the usual temperature for this time of year, based on records going back to 1958. Sundogs and halos have been observed on several occasions since the beginning of November, and the low temperatures have continued to yield impressive contrails on the incoming and outbound airplanes.

Heavy equipment has been running around the clock in order to move snow away from the new station and dome areas, and also to create several snow roads. One of the new snow roads will lead out to the Dark Sector, where the Ice Cube project will be busy setting up and drilling holes in the ice.

Soon after summer season kicked off, an outbreak of influenza-A and cold-like symptoms knocked dozens of workers at South Pole Station off their feet for several days. While the station's population hovered around 220 for the week ending Nov. 7, medical staff reported seeing more than 100 people for various flu-like symptoms. Those who were thought to have the flu were asked to stay away from work, and some had their meals brought to their rooms. With so many sick, the station declared a half-day safety stand-down in order to give people there a chance to rest and get well. The station did not order a quarantine as was rumored.

The outbreak, though, did prompt repeated messages from management and kitchen staff for personnel to wash their hands as often as possible. This led to a new South Pole greeting: an elbow-to-elbow touch that replaced the hesitant handshake. Diners were greeted by two bottles of anti-bacteri-



Photo by Brien Barnett / *The Antarctic Sun*

*Water vapor condenses into ice crystals, fogging the air behind an LC-130 as it lands at the South Pole.*

al hand lotion.

The situation seemed to be improving slightly as of Wednesday.

In other news, the station plans to offer support to the South Pole GPS reference station for a Chilean-Brazilian expedition in November and December. The planned round-trip tractor traverse from Patriot Hills to Pole will be making a contribution to ITASE, the International Trans-Antarctic Scientific Expedition. They will be collecting core samples and performing GPS and gravity measurements along the route.

Also, opportunities for working out, personal training sessions and swing dance classes are increasing. Basketball, climbing and other activities that take place in the gym are on hold until the stacks of outgoing package mail can be loaded onto planes. That will happen when the temperatures ease and the contrails break.

*Sun staffer Brien Barnett contributed to this report.*

## PALMER

### Sea ice weakens

By Kerry Kells  
*Palmer correspondent*

A substantial calving of the glacier on Anvers Island, behind Palmer Station, broke apart the sea ice and sent cracks in all directions like a spider's web. However, the sea ice has continued to cling around station, halting the efforts of the researchers to take samples from their station sites. Members of Langdon Quetin's Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) project tested their dive gear and were able to punch holes in the thin ice for scuba diving. Enough krill — about

100 — have been collected so that experiments can begin. Krill are plentiful right now as they congregate in groups beneath the sea ice.

On Tuesday, Palmer Station waited for the election results. Some people voted before deployment and some voted by absentee ballots sent from Punta Arenas, Chile. They followed election updates and final results via the Web.

On Wednesday, Brett Pickering, who works with Bill Fraser's LTER Seabird Research group, gave a slide show on "Trekking in Suriname." The photos followed his river journey through Suriname in December 1996 to January 1997 to collect parasites and miscellaneous invertebrates. On the Corantijn and Maratakka Rivers, their guides took him and five other travelers from the capital city of Paramaribo through the roadless wilderness of Suriname. Brett showed slides of their



Photo by Cara Sucher / Special to *The Antarctic Sun*  
*Members of the Long Term Ecological Research team use the new aluminum boat to cross through brash ice near Palmer Station.*

camp, the wilderness and the wildlife of the area.

Also this past week, Palmer held another community event, the annual Tag and Bag. Because Palmer Station receives a large number of cruise ship and yacht visitors, we have a well-stocked station store. Tag and Bag is a get-together to fold, tag and store all the merchandise for the summer season. The event becomes a party in which everyone helps out. A barbeque behind the carpenter shop followed on Saturday to celebrate Palmer Station's successful ISO (International Organization for Standardization) certification.

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## the week in weather

### McMurdo Station

High: 21F / -6C

Low: -3F / -19C

Max. sustained wind: 46mph / 74kph

Windchill: -40F / -40C

### Palmer Station

High: 45F / 7C

Low: 22F / -6C

Max. sustained wind: 39mph / 63kph

Precipitation: 14mm

### South Pole Station

High: -39F / -40C

Low: -58F / -50C

Peak wind: 25mph / 40kph

Max. Physio-altitude: 3,366m

# Palmer From page 5

Over the weekend strong winds brought enough force to break up and soften the sea ice around the station. While the ice remains, it has weakened. On Monday, several researchers borrowed a new aluminum landing craft from marine operations. Hugh Ducklow's group managed to get to Bonaparte Point across from Palmer for plankton and water samples. His group will take samples throughout the summer season from there and a second sampling site which is nearly two miles away. Several of the scientists helped the two seabird researchers and assisted them on the islands of Torgeson, Litchfield, Cormorant and Christine — all sites for penguin and seabird counts. The "birders" measured the snowfall and counted the penguins, skuas and cormorants at the

islands. The return proved to be an adventure as they spotted four orca whales near the island of Christine, including one that swam under the boat.

## SHIPS

### Nathaniel B. Palmer

Compiled from reports by Karl Newyear

After three weeks at sea, the *Nathaniel B. Palmer* arrived in Timaru, New Zealand on Nov. 6, and everyone enjoyed a chance to stretch their legs on dry land. Fueling began the next morning just after 8 a.m. and was completed by mid-afternoon. Meanwhile, the ships crew received a number of cargo items, including spare parts for the inoperable TeraScan satellite receiving system. The electronic technicians were able to make the necessary repairs and the *NBP* is again

receiving satellite images aboard ship. Those aboard thanked people in Denver and McMurdo who helped provide satellite images in the interim.

The *NBP* is now at sea again and headed generally south toward the Ross Sea. Whale sightings were a bit more common in the relatively smooth seas, though fog limited visibility at times.

A swell, running from the southwest on Nov. 8, suggested weather was coming, which it did the next day, with winds of 35 to 45 knots and 15- to 20-foot seas. The sea and spray made it nearly impossible to spot marine mammals, though there were a few seabirds around.

"The ship speed is correspondingly slower in these conditions and it sometimes seems like it's taking forever to get back to the ice," wrote marine projects coordinator Karl Newyear.

## Crossword: Antarctic Life

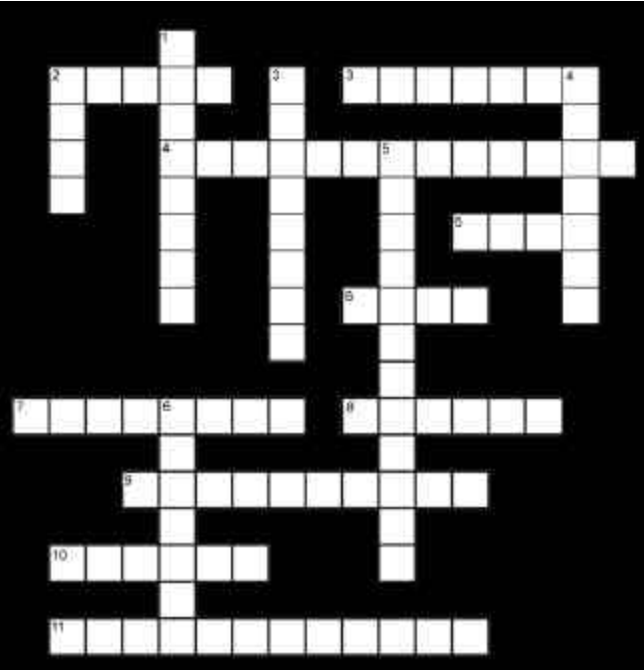
**Across:**

- 2. A red crustacean found in large quantities south of the Antarctic Convergence.
- 3. This seal is the southernmost ranging marine mammal in the world.
- 4. Minute free-floating flora that form the base of the food chain in the Southern Ocean.
- 5. A large, sharp-witted and observant gull-like bird common in McMurdo.
- 6. A whale of the suborder odontoceti found in Antarctic waters.
- 7. This whale composes complex vocalizations or "songs" that are repeated year after year.
- 8. The mysticeti suborder are often referred to as \_\_\_\_\_ whales
- 9. This bird sometimes visits McMurdo and has a bat-like flight.

- 10. This life form demonstrates the symbiosis of algae and fungi.
- 11. The substance Antarctic fish produce, allowing them to live in cold water.

**Down:**

- 1. The largest of the Antarctic seals
- 2. A subantarctic penguin that has similar markings to the emperor penguin
- 3. This taxonomic order consists of marine mammals that spend their lives entirely in the water.
- 4. This seal ranges far out to sea and is a notorious predator.
- 5. Fossils of this 230 million year old mammal-like herbivore are found in Antarctica.
- 6. Organisms living on or in the sea floor belong to the \_\_\_\_\_ environment/community.



## Continental Drift What do you miss from home?



"The smell of rain in the Alaskan rainforest."

Nicole Huck, McMurdo janitor from Girdwood, Alaska, first season



"Going out for a drive."

Tony Black, Pole meteorologist from San Diego, Calif., third season



"I miss my wife because she works at McMurdo and I live at Palmer."

Ken Navarro, Palmer asst. supervisor of logistics from Connifer, Colo., 16 seasons