

MOVEMENTS OF PRE MOLTING SATELLITE TRACKED SOUTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL (*MIROUNGA LEONINA* L.) FEMALES FROM ELEPHANT IS., SOUTH SHETLANDS, ANTÁRTICA.

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At sea activity of two SES females (*Mirounga leonina*) from Elephant Is. (61°13'S 55°23'W), Antarctica, was monitored and tracked for about 2 months in 2005/2006. The individuals were randomly selected after weaning their pups, captured, weighed, paint-marked and fitted with satellite tags (SPOT4 TAGS, Wildlife Computers, USA). This procedure was completed within 40min. The tags were still transmitting by early February when the females were expected to be already moulting on land. One of the females (K) stayed close to Elephant Is. throughout the monitoring period and was likely to have returned to the island to molt at the same site where she was captured. Female "L" on the other hand, left Elephant Is. almost immediately after being instrumented and headed towards King George Is. Thereafter, it moved westwards towards the South Pacific (59°S 88°W) and then back to the South Shetlands when she was last detected. Temporal and spatial associations of these displacements with high productivity areas are being investigated to assess how the movements of these females would be related to foraging activity. The present work reports the first description of pre-molting activity of SES from Elephant Is.

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