

IAATO Operational Update 2019.01

28 January 2019

1. Software Developers for new IAATO database and Live Ship Scheduler

A message from the Chair of the Executive Committee:

Dear IAATO Members,

First of all, Happy New Year to everyone!

I wrote to you in early November to report that after careful review of various proposals for a project to upgrade our database and to create a new Ship Scheduler, the Executive Committee [EC] – in an effort to be scrupulously thorough in our due diligence – asked the Secretariat to pursue yet another proposal to compare with the excellent proposal we had received from Box Model LLC.

The Secretariat have secured such a proposal, and the EC and Secretariat have discussed in detail its virtues and how it compares to the Box Model proposal. It is our unanimous opinion that Box Model represent the most comprehensive and cost-effective approach to the project, and on 19 December, we authorized the Secretariat to enter into contract negotiations. Damon circulated to us a draft contract on 7 January. This document has been reviewed by the EC and by our lawyers. We have authorized Damon to execute the contract today.

This means we are on the way to having both a new and more useful database and a new ship scheduler that will be available in real time during season. My congratulations to everyone – and especially to Damon, Lisa, Janeen, and Cody – for the hard work and expertise that has brought us to this point.

Those of you who serve on Tourism Growth and Live Ship Scheduler Working Groups will be hearing from the Secretariat shortly, as we seek your advice and input on a number of issues. And I will write to the full membership again in the near future with a timeline of when we can expect to see various deliverables.

Let me end where I began, by wishing one and all a splendid year ahead. We are certainly looking forward to big things for IAATO.

Best regards,

Terry Shaller

Chair, IAATO Executive Committee

2. IAATO Code of Conduct

It is the mid-season switch of staff and crew onboard the vessels. Please ensure that all relevant staff and crew, especially bridge officers and expedition staff, read the *IAATO Code of Conduct*; an essential document describing the core elements of how we all cooperate as IAATO.

Attachment:

IAATO Code of Conduct (also found in the IAATO FOM: Section 8 Vessel Operations)

3. Joint IAATO / RCCNZ / ANZ / USAP SAR Exercise

Every Season IAATO collaborates with one of the Antarctic RCCs, and simulates an emergency situation whereby all participants can practice their emergency responses.

Simulations like these assist all stakeholders in assessing their emergency response protocol to help make a safer Antarctica. Additionally, IAATO participation helps to strengthen our relationships with other Antarctic Stakeholders.

This season, IAATO collaborated with RCC New Zealand in a joint exercise which also included the United States Antarctic Program and Antarctica New Zealand. Heritage Expeditions was the representative IAATO Operator.

Very few prior details were provided to anyone directly involved to make sure that despite being a "table-top exercise", all actions/responses were as realistic as possible - so that both strengths and weaknesses could be identified. Participation in this two-hour exercise included direct communication by phone to and from MV Spirit of Enderby's bridge, as well as email communication. The IAATO Secretariat's Emergency Response protocol was also tested, as MV Spirit of Enderby initiated the emergency response by calling the IAATO Emergency Line.

In the scenario presented, a fishing vessel was in distress and needed assistance. Heritage Expedition's ship, the MV Spirit of Enderby, was a vessel of opportunity; and helped to rescue the crew of the fishing vessel.

All parties involved in the exercise found it very useful. Lessons learned included (i) which types of communication worked most effectively when there are multiple languages involved; (ii) the limitations of satellite communications as well as radio communications with aircraft; (iii) How the IAATO Secretariat internally coordinates when two of our team were unavailable due to being South. Reflecting on the lessons learned has helped to strengthen response protocols in the event of a real emergency.

We thank Heritage Expeditions for their excellent representation of IAATO Operators during this exercise.

4. Biosecurity Detector Dog Programme for South Atlantic **Media Release and Photo: Erin & Pipit (left) Megan & Samurai (right).**



The Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands is pleased to announce an extended biosecurity detector dog programme. This follows a successful pilot programme, where specially trained dogs were deployed on vessels bound for South Georgia tasked with detecting rats and mice. By ensuring there were no stowaway rodents on board, or among cargo, the dog team effectively made sure that no rodents could re-invade South Georgia.

This next phase of the project will see the return of dog handlers Megan Vick and Erin Jackson, with veteran rodent detector dog

Samurai and newcomer Pipit, a young springer spaniel who will remain in the Falklands as part of a long-term biosecurity detector dog programme. Pipit has shown great promise in her early training. She is named after the South Georgia Pipit; a small songbird found nowhere else on earth, and whose numbers are recovering in the absence of rats on South Georgia.

This next phase of the project is in collaboration with the Falkland Islands Government, where the dogs' amazing sense of smell will be put to good use to detect biosecurity risks entering the Falkland Islands, and to prevent rodents from being accidentally moved around the Falklands to rodent-free areas in cargo or as stowaways on vessels. The extended programme aims to identify a suitable long-term solution to provide a Falklands-based biosecurity detector dog programme which will have wide reaching environmental benefits for both South Georgia and the Falkland Islands.

We are delighted to be working once again with Working Dogs for Conservation ([WD4C](#)), a US based organisation experienced in delivering conservation dog programmes around the world. The project is being supported by the South Georgia Heritage Trust ([SGHT](#)), Friends of South Georgia Island ([FOSGI](#)) and the [RSPB](#).

5. Biosecurity

Introduction of non-native species is one of the highest priority concerns in Antarctica due to increased human activity and coupled with a potentially more hospitable environment caused by warming, particularly in the Peninsula region.

We remind Operators to follow biosecurity measures and to include the vacuuming of clothing prior to landing in the Antarctic and South Georgia.

Research indicates that it is field staff, not passengers, who are most likely to inadvertently introduce non-native species and pathogens.

Field staff, crew and passengers should all receive a copy of the 'Don't Pack a Pest' prior to their voyage. The leaflet is available in English, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. During recent

seasons, two well-established, non-native plant species were discovered on the 'no-go' fluvial plain area behind the buildings at Whalers Bay, Deception Island.

Remember that in addition to the first thorough biosecurity cleaning before arriving in Antarctica, comprehensive cleaning should also take place between distinct regions (e.g., between Falkland Island and South Georgia; between South Georgia and Antarctica).

The Biosecurity Declaration should be completed in each region, by everyone going ashore, including all passengers, staff and crew. Remember, recent research (See: <https://iaato.org/non-native-species-study>) indicates that tourist support staff, along with scientists and science support personnel, are more likely to transport non-native species than tourists. It is believed that this is due to field staff using the same clothing and gear in other areas of the world.

Please make sure you clean your own gear and try to have Antarctic-specific gear so you do not have to clean after each non-Antarctic landing or port call. The study found that camera bags and backpacks were the primary source of transmittal.

Remember: Take it new or take it clean.

All field staff and crew who are assigned to gangway duty should be familiar with the decontamination guidelines. Care should be taken to decontaminate boots, clothing, hiking poles, tripods, bags, etc., before and after each landing to mitigate any potential introduction of non-native species or cross-contamination. Boot-washing stations should be established at the gangway and on the Zodiac deck where appropriate. Where aircraft are used, similar procedures should be in place. A specific disinfectant, Virkon, is recommended. Virkon is highly effective and degrades naturally in the environment. It must be allowed to dry on equipment between landings.

Please note: Any gifts or transported material for stations should be sealed in plastic bags before going ashore (when applicable). The shore party will then be able to carry out the appropriate biosecurity check for the station.

6. Interactions with Elephant Seal Pups (Weaners)

IAATO has been approached by several Treaty Parties and the South Georgia Government with concerns about IAATO Operator interactions with elephant seal pups (weaners), specifically how these interactions could be/are being interpreted on social media. Whilst IAATO Operators do not encourage interactions with weaners, and work hard to ensure recommended distances and appropriate interactions with wildlife, the acceptance of a close encounter currently comes if the animal is in charge of the interaction.

However, social media makes it very easy for videos or pictures to be misconstrued, and can call into question how responsible IAATO Operators are acting.

Keeping with IAATO's long track record of being proactive, these concerns have been raised with the Field Operations Committee (FOC), and they are currently discussing proposed actions which will be presented at IAATO 2019.

7. National Program Requests

We currently we have two outstanding requests for assistance from National Antarctic Programs:

7.1 Transportation of four scientists from the Portuguese program and six Bulgarians (total 10 scientists), from Livingston Island to Maxwell Bay, King George between the 1st and 2nd of March 2019.

7.2 Seven to Eight (7-8) scientists needing transportation from Vernadsky Station to Ushuaia sometime between the end of February and the end of March.

Please contact Lisa (lkelly@iaato.org) if you may be able to assist any or all of the above scientists.

8. Emperor Penguin Working Group

As you will have seen in the last Operational Update (2018.08), the Snow Hill Emperor Penguin colony continues to be an area of concern for Argentina. Two years ago at the Treaty meeting, Argentina proposed turning the Snow Hill Emperor

Penguin colony into an ASPA. However, through further discussions, Argentina has agreed to work with IAATO to create guidelines, as well as discussing future actions. We have also recently been advised that Germany will possibly propose that the Atka Bay Rookery become an ASPA.

There is a push from the Treaty in general to look at Emperor Penguins across the continent. The UK are planning to propose they are designated as a "specially protected species" (rather than site-specific ASPAs). Antarctic Specially Protected Species status is not as restrictive as an ASPA - specifically that access is restricted, however it does afford the species additional protection and space to discuss its ongoing protection, which can include visitor access.

The Secretariat have discussed the issue informally with relevant Treaty Parties, and have concluded that instead of focusing on the Snow Hill Colony alone, we should create an Emperor Penguin Working Group for all IAATO Operators who visit colonies. If IAATO sets up such a working group and reports this to the ATCM, IAATO will be perceived as taking a proactive approach to emperor penguin colony visitor management; and we will be "on the front foot" and demonstrating commitment to the species' ongoing protection.

The ATCM are aware of the 2016 research publication in the journal *Nature Communications* (attached) which indicated that Emperor Penguins are one global population; hence the emphasis on additional holistic protection for the species, rather than individual colonies. In fact, during discussions about making the Snow Hill Island colony an ASPA, SCAR intervened to state that such an action had limited value when considering the outcomes of this research (see: www.nature.com/articles/ncomms11842).

Many Operators have already contacted the Secretariat about being involved in the proposed Working Group (all those who were interested in the original Snow Hill Colony Working Group will automatically be included).

Please contact Lisa lkelly@iaato.org if you would like to be involved.

Attachments:

- 1. Annex II: Conservation of Antarctic Flora and Fauna**
- 2. Proposal to list of species as a Specially Protected Species under Annex II**
- 3. Paper: Cristofari R. et al. (2016) Full circumpolar migration ensures evolutionary unity in the Emperor penguin. *Nature Communications* (7)**

9. Polar Field Staff Conference 2019

Registration is now open for the 2019 IAATO/AECO Polar Field Staff Conference.

IAATO and the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO) will deliver their third joint Polar Field Staff Conference on 22nd to 25th September 2019 at the 'Public House Historic Inn' in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, USA.

The conference will gather guides, expedition leaders, as well as marketing and operations managers who work for IAATO and AECO Members to support their shared mission of advocating and promoting safe and environmentally responsible polar travel.

Responsible Field Leadership is the theme of this year's gathering; focusing on embodying both company and IAATO/AECO ethos in the field, while upholding the reputation of operators as responsible tourism providers.

Delegates can expect industry updates, a look at the 'tourist of tomorrow' with particular focus on guest expectations and cultural sensitivity, as well as the role of marketing and communication. The intensive 2½ day program aims to provide field staff with an unparalleled opportunity to network, discuss and exchange experiences with counterparts and invited experts.

More information about agendas, suggested airports and transfers will be shared with AECO and IAATO members in due course.

Registration is in two parts (please be sure to complete both):

1. [Survey Monkey Questionnaire](#)
2. Hotel accommodations through [PUBLIC HOUSE REGISTRATION](#)

USE CODE : IAATO

Room Rates:

Main House-Singles/Doubles: \$129 USD

Country Lodge-Singles/Doubles (up hill from Main house): \$89 USD

***Before May 17th 2019**, we will limit registration to two (2) IAATO/AECO Member sponsored staff/crew/office personnel. We will open registration to additional members after May 17th, 2019.

If you have any questions, please contact us at Operations@iaato.org.

10. Recent and Upcoming Meetings

Meetings with Cape Town Stakeholders and Members

Cape Town, South Africa: January 15 – 25, 2019

Meetings with NZ Members and Stakeholder

Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland NZ: January 20 – 23, 2019

SAR Table Top Exercise

Wellington, NZ: January 23, 2019

Meetings with Australian Members and Stakeholders

Hobart, Tasmania, AUS: January 25 – 29, 2019

Executive Committee Meeting

Seattle, USA: February 14 – 15, 2019

IAATO/AECO Secretariat Strategy Meeting

Copenhagen, Denmark: February 20 – 21, 2019

From all of us at the IAATO Secretariat:

Damon, Amanda, Cody, Erin, Hayley, Janeen and Lisa
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