

The authors clearly did a lot of work including an additional year of dive data into analyses and they have clarified most of the questions I had about methodology. My remaining comments center on interpretation of some of the findings that have now been included in the Discussion section, and some important caveats that should be made clear. The Discussion section's paragraph topics also seemed to 'jump around', and I think edits for flow and concision in the Discussion would improve the manuscript.

The use of the word 'foraging' in many places in the discussion when comparing multiple studies that used very different metrics as proxy, was at many times quite confusing. For example, the authors stated 'their [Goetz 2023] foraging results showed contrary to our foraging results'. Goetz 2023 and other Weddell seal studies have used area restricted search and first passage time to infer areas/times associated with greater foraging effort. Conversely, this study used prey capture attempts and it seemed that these did not increase in the winter months as ARS had in previous work. There are a ton of possibilities that could account for these differences, and so the method used should be made clear throughout these paragraphs rather than clumping them all together as 'foraging'.

Abstract

Would remove 'diurnal' from 'diurnal light hours'

Methods

Line 120: What was the dose of Zoletil actually administered to the animals?

Line 135: I believe this should be reworded to say that --- dive descents were defined as the start of the dive until the first inflection point that exceeded 75% of maximum dive depth (?) As written, it sounds as though the descent only includes the first inflection point and this would only very infrequently be >75% max depth.

Line 275: Should refer to Figure 3 for dive depth

Lines 282-285: This feels like an incomplete/hanging sentence. It looks like the authors mean that PrCA's occurred most frequently in benthic dives, even though a small proportion of dives were classified as benthic (?). It also seems like this point would be better made at the very end of the paragraph.

Line 286: The authors said in the previous sentence that the most PrCA's occurred in MSW but here it sounds like it is actually HSSW?

Lines 293-294: I think terminology should be kept consistent with this referring to PrCA's (instead of going back and forth with calling it foraging activities --- this could be taken to mean prey capture attempts or also could presume that all benthic dives are made with the intent that the animals are trying to forage, etc. It's more open ended).

Lines 302-303: I think the authors mean that the seals made more prey capture attempts in these water masses? It is a bit ambiguous when it is referred to as 'preference in foraging habitat' since that usually means whether the seals were simply present in a given location.

Lines 312-315: These two sentences essentially say the same thing and could be combined.

Lines 360-361: But there was no evidence that the two species were doing this. In fact, both the seals and emperor penguins made very similar proportions of deep dives exceeding ~350 m. The inter-specific competition was believed to be primarily between penguins and juvenile Weddell seals (not the adults to a great extent)

Lines 363-364: Again it becomes ambiguous when referred to simply as foraging activity, and this makes the paragraph more confusing. The authors should say how this study defined foraging. By defining it right away, the length of this paragraph could be significantly reduced by starting with the explanation that different metrics were used to measure foraging effort between the two studies.

Paragraph @ lines ~365-380. This paragraph should be edited for concision. This paragraph is also missing two important points. One is that prey may simply not be as predictable or more difficult to visualize in the dark winter months, so animals may in fact still be performing dives with the intent of foraging but have fewer prey capture opportunities. It also seems from the figures (4c & 6) that the decrease in PrCA's in ~July was primarily driven by a decrease in the number of pelagic dives (there was not a decrease in PrCA's in benthic dives). This point should be made in this paragraph, and that the frequency of PrCA's made during benthic dives appeared consistent throughout the year. The data here suggest that the animals relied more on benthic foraging late winter and this shift was reflected in season changes in PrCA's.

The organization of the Discussion section also jumps around quite a bit and could be edited for better flow. For example, this paragraph is followed by another about water masses, but then back to comparisons of foraging effort with previous work in lines 414-432. This paragraph and the paragraph @ lines 414-432 would seem to go together.

The authors note that 'jerk' may not accurately portray what is happening during capture of larger prey that require more handling. But a very important overall caveat that should also be included somewhere in this paper (perhaps in this paragraph) that what the authors have are prey capture ATTEMPTS. There is no way of knowing from these data whether the prey capture attempts were actually successful with the animal obtaining prey --- or not. There has also been some previous work (Fuiman, Davis, Williams) suggesting that prey capture attempts are more successful during daylight.