Cape Royds
77°33’10.7S, 166°10’6.5E
West Coast of Ross Island, McMurdo Sound

Key features
- Historic hut and associated artefacts from British Antarctic (Nimrod) Expedition 1907-1909 led by Sir Ernest Shackleton (ASPA 157)
- Views of the southernmost Adelie penguin colony (ASPA 121)
- Views of Mt Erebus and the Transantarctic Mountains

Description

TOPOGRAPHY
Cape Royds is a strip of phonolitic, ice free land on the western most point of Ross Island. Mt Erebus is the dominant feature on the landscape, and is responsible for the volcanic geology of the Cape.

FAUNA
Confirmed breeders: Adelie penguins (Pygoscelis adeliae) and south polar skuas (Catharacta maccormicki).

Regularly haul out: Weddell seals (Leptonychotes weddellii).

Other: Emperor penguins (Aptenodytes forsteri), snow petrels (Pagodroma nivea), Antarctic petrels (Thalassoica antarctica), and leopard seals (Hydrurga leptonyx) have been seen in the area. A polynya off Cape Royds supports a rich and diverse marine fauna.

FLORA
The southernmost recorded green snow algae in the Ross Sea region occur near the penguin colony at Cape Royds. Crustose lichens, common only in a few sites in the region have been recorded in the area.

OTHER
Cape Royds is one of the principal areas of early human activity in Antarctica. The hut built by the British Antarctic Nimrod Expedition remains at Cape Royds as an important symbol of the heroic era of Antarctic Exploration. Numerous artefacts are distributed around the Cape.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS
Disturbance to the penguin colony, disturbance to historic artefacts, cumulative effects of human presence in and around the hut, tracking and ground compaction.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS
Disturbance to sensitive flora and fauna communities, damage to hut and associated artefacts, fire, importation of non-native species, litter, disturbance to research, tracking and ground compaction, noise.

Landing Requirements

SHIPS*
Ships carrying 200 or fewer passengers. One ship at a time. Maximum two ships per day (midnight to midnight).

VISITORS
No more than 100 visitors ashore at any time, exclusive of expedition guides and leaders. Entry into ASPA 157 and 121 is prohibited except in accordance with a permit which must be carried on site. Permits to enter ASPA 121 will not be given for recreational visits; visitors to ASPA 157 must avoid ASPA 121. The annual max. number of visitors into ASPA 157 is 2000, the max. number of people in ASPA 157 at any one time is 40, and the max. number of people inside the hut at any one time is 8 people (inclusive of guides and expedition leaders). All visits to ASPA 157 must be accompanied by an experienced guide. Consult the ASPA Management Plans and permits for further information.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA
Access by foot or small boat should be made from Backdoor Bay (taking care to avoid the marine extent of ASPA 121) following the walking route depicted in map 2. Helicopters should land at the primary landing pad (166°10’22.9E, 77°33’03.5S, see map 2), 250m northeast of the northern point of Pony Lake. Over flight of ASPA 121 is prohibited for single engine helicopters below 750m (2,500’) and for dual engine helicopters below 1,000m (3,300’). Minimum horizontal approach to ASPA 121 is 500m (1,600’) for single and 750m (2,500’) for dual engine helicopters.

CLOSED AREAS
ASPA’s are closed except to permit holders. Permit holders must be careful to adhere to the requirements and visitor numbers specified in the management plans.

GUIDED WALKING AREAS
Visitors entering the hut must be accompanied by a guide. Particular care should be taken when guiding passengers along the preferred walking routes to the areas suitable for viewing penguins, to the helicopter landing site and to Backdoor Bay to avoid skua nesting sites and vegetation and to ensure visitors stay on the preferred walking routes.

* A ship is defined as a vessel which carries more than 12 passengers.
**Visitor Code of Conduct**

**BEHAVIOUR ASHORE**

Clean boots and remove any wet clothing before entering the hut and leave packs and bags outside. Do not touch, move or sit on anything in the hut. All visitors to the hut must sign the log book. Take care not to tread on any artefacts obscured by snow. No plant or animal materials, food products or chemicals are to be taken into the area, nothing is to be taken from the area, and use of combustion style lanterns, naked flames is prohibited, as is smoking. All waste including human waste must be removed from the area. Do not approach wildlife closer than 5m (or viewing distance consistent with your national programme’s code of conduct), increase the distance if the animal is disturbed, and take particular care around nesting birds. Keep noise to a minimum. Do not leave preferred walking routes.

**CAUTIONARY NOTES**

Be aware of the ASPA boundaries, especially the boundary between the ASPAs and the marine extent of ASPA 121.