

Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 133 (Site of Special Scientific Interest No. 14)

Harmony Point, Nelson Island, South Shetland Islands

1. Description of Values to be Protected

This area was originally designated as SSSSI No. 14 in ATCM Recommendation XIII-8, after a proposal by Argentina and Chile, because of its diverse seabird community and extensive terrestrial vegetation cover and rich flora including mosses, lichens and two vascular plant species.

Ice free land supports large breeding colonies of 11 seabird species, and one of the largest single colonies of chinstrap penguin. The seabird colonies, and particularly the chinstrap penguin colony, are still important for scientific purposes, and have shown significant increases in the last decade. The Area supports a large giant petrel colony (500 breeding pairs), a species which is highly sensitive to any kind of human disturbance and is decreasing in many sites in Antarctica.

The Area is an excellent example of the South Shetland Islands maritime Antarctic seabird community and terrestrial ecosystem, allowing long term research without damage or interference.

2. Aims and Objectives

Management of Harmony Point aims to:

- Avoid major changes in the structure and composition of communities of flora and fauna;
- Prevent unnecessary human disturbance to the area;
- Permit scientific research which cannot be served elsewhere, and allow the continuity of the ongoing long-term biological and ecological research programmes established in the Area.

3. Management Activities

The following management activities will be undertaken to protect the values of the area:

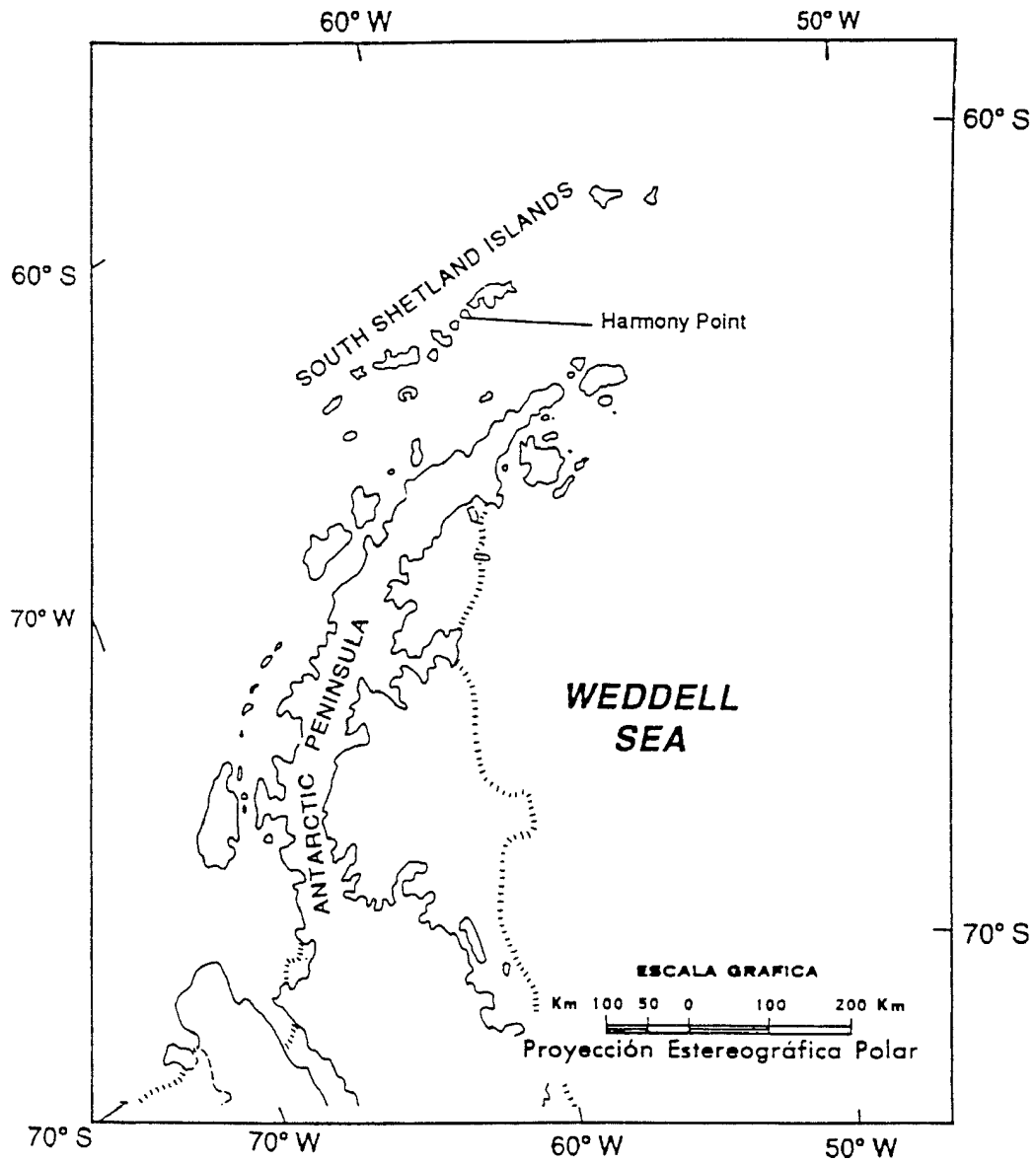
- A marker board will be placed at the principal access point illustrating the location, boundaries and stating entry restrictions;
- Access to the Area and paths will be marked;
- Preferred walking routes within the area will be established for transit to sample sites;
- Collection of samples will be limited to the minimum required for authorised scientific research;
- Visits shall be made as necessary to ensure management and maintenance measures are adequate.

4. *Period of Designation*

Designated for an indefinite period.

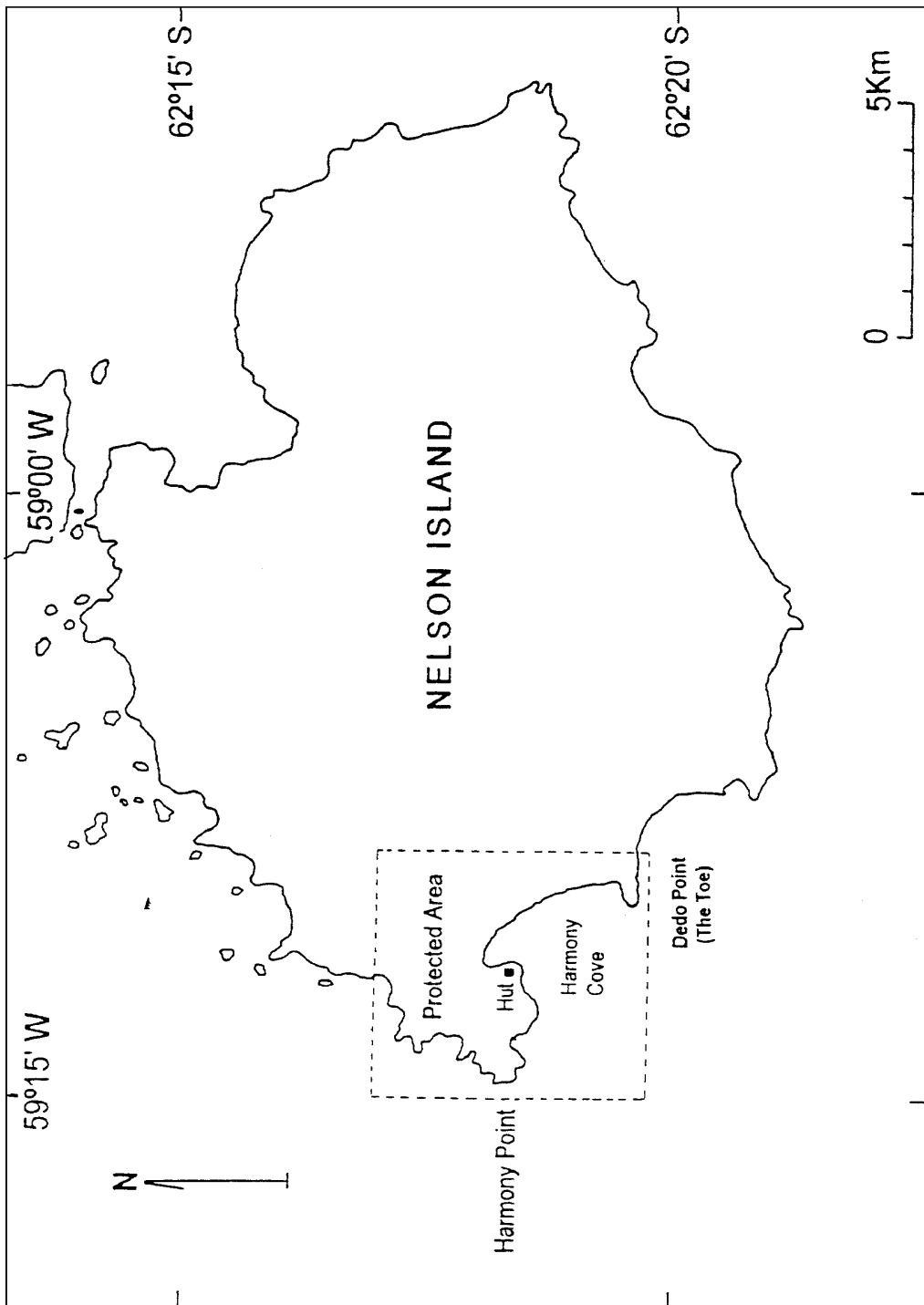
5. *Maps*

Map A: shows the location of Nelson Island in relation with the Antarctic Peninsula



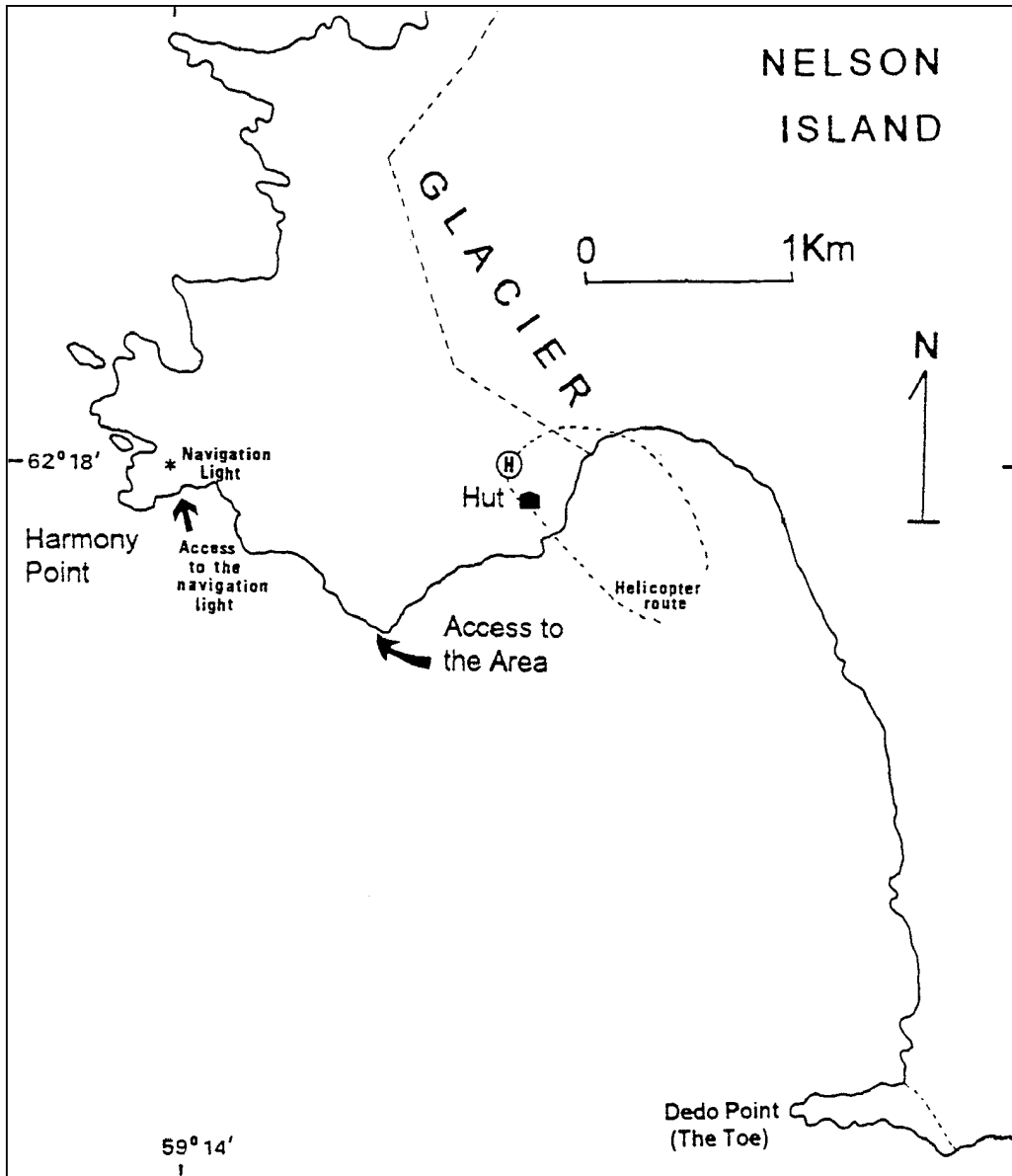
ASPA 133
Map A*

Map B: shows the location of Harmony point on Nelson Island.



ASPA 133
Map B*

Map C: shows the Protected Area in greater detail.



ASPA 133
Map C*

6. Description of the Area

6(i) Geographical coordinates and natural features of the Area

This Area is located in the west coast of Nelson Island, between 25 de Mayo (King George) Island to the Northeast and Robert Island to the Southwest (lat. 62°18'S; 59°14'W).

The Area includes Harmony Point and the Toe, the adjacent ice and surrounding marine zone within the rectangle showed on maps 2 and 3.

Geomorphologically Harmony Point presents three well defined units: an andesitic plateau, coastal andesitic outcrops and ancient sea levels (raised beaches). The plateau reaches 40 metres above sea level its area is covered by detritus resulting from the destruction of andeistic rock by freeze/thaw action, with a well-developed vegetation of mosses and lichens.

Lakes and streams with a limited flow appear on the undulations. Some isolated andesitic rocks stand out from the glacier ice, and some of them are formed on the degalciated plateau (ancient nuntaks), evidencing that the past extension of the glacier covered Harmony Point.

There are three successive raised beaches, between the coast and the westward extremity and the glacier. These beaches are defined by pebble accumulations of variable height.

The Area holds breeding colonies of eleven seabird species: gentoo penguin 4,000 pairs, chinstrap penguin 12,000 pairs, giant petrel 500 pairs, cape petrel 300 pairs, blue eyed shag 110 pairs, sheathbill 110 pairs, brown skua 40 pairs, Dominican gull 120 pairs, Antarctic tern 30 pairs. Other seabirds nesting in the Area are Wilson storm petrel and black-bellied storm petrel.

There are some extensive areas covered by a very rich and diverse development of bryophytes and lichen-dominated plant communities, including two vascular plant species, especially in the areas less affected by recent perturbation or breeding activities. Moss turf subformations are located in wind protected and moist places, whilst lichen-dominated subformations occur in places with a high wind exposure.

6(ii) Restricted zones within the Area

There are no prohibited zones within the Area, but access to bird breeding areas should be restricted during the breeding season (September to March) and damage to vegetation should be avoided by limited access to the marked paths.

6(iii) Location of structures within the Area

There is a refuge measuring 4.5 by 3.5m, that can house three scientists, and a storage building. The installations are used only during spring and summer. There is an Argentine navigation light on the westmost point of Harmony Point.

6(iv) Location of other Protected Areas within close proximity

SPA No. 16, Coppermine Peninsula, Robert Island lies about 30 km south-west. SSSI No. 13 Potter Peninsula, 25 de Mayo (King George) Island lies about 30 km east-north-east. SSSI No. 5, Fildes Peninsula, 25 de Mayo (King George) Island lies about 23km north-north-east. SSSI No. 8, Western Shore of Laserre/Admiralty Bay, 25 de Mayo (King George) Island lies about 45km east-north-east.

7. Permit Conditions

Entry into the Area is prohibited except in accordance with a permit issued by appropriate national authorities.

Conditions for issuing a Permit to enter the Area are that:

- It is issued to continue study of the natural history, biology and ecology of the flora and fauna of the area or for a compelling scientific purpose that cannot be met elsewhere;
- The actions permitted will not jeopardise the natural ecological system in the Area;
- Any management activities are in support of the objectives of the Management Plan;
- The actions permitted are in accordance with this Management Plan;
- The Permit, or authorised copy, must be carried within the Site of Special Scientific Interest;
- A report or reports are supplied to the authority that issued the Permit.

7(i) Access to and movements within the Area

Access to Harmony Point area from the sea, which is the preferred method, is restricted to the pebble beach 400m south-west to the refuge. There is a navigation light located in the westmost point of Harmony Point. Access to the navigation light is by boat from the coast at the south of the light. Special access points are not specified for the Toe, but access is limited to inflatable boats.

Aircraft landing should be avoided where practicable. Small planes could land on the glacier but flights over the Area are not allowed. Helicopters must not overfly any of the major bird breeding areas, and should land only in the vicinity of the refuge or landing beach. Map 3 shows proposed helicopter flight route. It is forbidden to overfly the Area below 250m above the highest point except for access to the landing point specified above.

Pedestrians must use established routes, particularly during the bird breeding season.

Vehicles are prohibited in the area.

7(ii) Activities which are or may be conducted within the Area including restrictions on time and place

Scientific study and monitoring of the populations of flora and fauna in the area and compelling scientific research which cannot be conducted elsewhere and which will not interfere with ongoing long-term research programmes or jeopardise the structure or dynamics of the ecosystem of the Area.

Essential management activities, including monitoring.

7(iii) Installation, modification or removal of structures

No additional structures are to be erected in the Area, or scientific equipment installed, except for essential scientific or management activities, as specified in a Permit.

7(iv) Location of field camps

No additional structures are to be erected in the Area, or scientific equipment installed, except for essential scientific or management activities, as specified in a Permit.

7(v) Restriction on material and organisms which may be brought into the Area

No living animals or plant material shall be deliberately introduced into the Area.

No poultry products, including food products containing uncooked dried eggs, shall be taken into the Area.

No herbicides or pesticides shall be brought into the Area. Any other chemicals, which may be introduced for compelling scientific purpose specified in the permit, shall be removed from the Area at or before the conclusion of the activity for which the Permit was granted.

As far as possible the use of chemicals should be clearly documented for the benefit of later researchers.

Fuel, food and other material are not to be stored in the Area, unless required for essential purposes connected with the activity for which the Permit has been granted. All such material introduced are to be removed when no longer required. Permanent depots are not permitted.

7(vi) Taking or harmful interference with native flora and fauna

This is prohibited, except in accordance with a Permit. Where animal taking or harmful interference is involved this should be in accordance with the SCAR Code of Conduct for Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes in Antarctica, as a minimum standard.

7(vii) Collection or removal of anything not brought into the area by the Permit holder

Biological specimens and samples may be collected and/or removed from the Area only according to a permit. Debris of human origin should be removed and reported to the authority that issued the permit. Dead biological specimens may be removed for pathological analysis.

7(viii) Disposal of waste

All non-human waste shall be removed from the Area. Human waste may be deposited in the sea.

Waste resulting from research activities in the Area may be stored temporarily beside the refuge to await its removal from the Area at the first opportunity. Any such stored waste must be adequately contained, marked as waste and secured against accidental loss.

7(ix) Measures that may be necessary to ensure that the aims and objectives of the management plan continue to be met

Permits may be granted to enter the area to carry out biological and ecological studies and monitoring, and site inspection activities, including the collection of small amounts of plant material and small numbers of animals for scientific purposes, to erect or maintain notice boards and protective measures.

All scientific structures and instrumentation, including research markers, installed in the Area must be authorised in a permit and clearly identified by country, name of investigator and year of installation. Research markers and structures must be removed at or before the expiry of the Permit. If specific scientific projects cannot be concluded within the permitted time, applications must be made for an extension to leave the items in situ.

7(x) Requirements for reports

The principal permit holder for each issued permit shall submit a report of activities conducted in the Area. This report shall be submitted to the authority named in the Permit as soon as practicable. Such reports should be stored indefinitely and made accessible to interested Parties, SCAR, CCAMLR, and COMNAP if requested, to provide the documentation of human activities within the Area necessary for good management.