

32. Mawson's Huts and Cape Denison

67°00'31''S, 142°40'43''E
Mawson's Huts and Cape Denison,
Commonwealth Bay, East
Antarctica, Antarctic Specially
Protected Area No. 162, and Historic
Site and Monument No. 77.

ANTARCTIC TREATY

visitor site guide



Key Features

- Historic huts and original contents from the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911-1914 led by Dr (later Sir) Douglas Mawson.
- A largely unmodified cultural landscape with expedition huts, objects and artefacts in their original context, demonstrating the living conditions, scientific research, isolation, and environmental extremes of the expedition.



Description

TOPOGRAPHY

Cape Denison is a largely ice-free peninsula adjacent to the polar plateau. The cape consists of rocky ridges and valleys. The Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) extends from Land's End to John O'Groats, and south to the moraine line.

FAUNA

Confirmed breeders: Adélie penguin, Snow petrel, South Polar Skua, Wilson's storm petrel.

Regularly haul out: Elephant seal, Leopard seal, Weddell seal.

Also present: Antarctic petrel, Cape petrel, Emperor penguin, Southern giant petrel.

FLORA

13 lichen species, and non-marine algae have been recorded in the area.

HISTORIC HUTS AND ARTIFACTS

Four huts from the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911-1914 stand at Cape Denison: the Main Hut and the Magnetograph House which are intact; and the Absolute Magnetic Hut and Transit Hut which are standing ruins. Also present are remains of scientific instruments and installations, wireless masts, a memorial cross, and scatters of artefacts. Three newer huts are used for research and management activities, or in case of emergency.

Visitor Impact

KNOWN IMPACTS

Disturbance of artefacts and wildlife.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Damage or disturbance to artefacts or structures through touching and other handling, theft and trampling. Deterioration of hut fabric and artefacts associated with increased humidity levels inside the huts. Fire. Disturbance of wildlife and damage to vegetation.

Landing Requirements

VISITORS

Comments: In accordance with the ASPA 162 Management Plan, those proposing to visit require a permit issued by an appropriate national authority, and should inform the Australian national program as far in advance of a visit as is practicable. Detailed illustrated instructions for access to the huts and securing them on departure are available (tourism@aad.gov.au).

Where authorised in a permit, visitors may enter the Main Hut and Magnetograph House located within the ASPA under the supervision of a hut guide (with approved cultural heritage skills) appointed by an appropriate national authority. A maximum entry number of 4

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people at a time (including the guide) applies inside the Main Hut, and a maximum of 3 people (including the guide) applies inside the Magnetograph Hut. Visits may occur only after visitors have received a briefing on the management plans and the values of the site. Artefact-rich areas (in particular the scatter immediately to the north of the Main Hut), bird colonies, areas of lichen, and routes used by penguins between nesting sites and the sea must be avoided.

Visitors accessing the Memorial Cross should follow a route that avoids disturbance to the Adelie penguins and petrels nesting in the vicinity. For large groups this may require direct supervision of visitors and/or the temporary marking of an appropriate route using canes or similar.

Visitor Area

LANDING AREA

Boat landing options may include Boat Harbour, and due north of the Sorenson Hut. The ASPA management plan designates a helicopter landing site and approach paths.

CLOSED AREA

Access to ASPA 162 Mawson's Huts, Cape Denison, including the historic huts, may only occur in accordance with the ASPA management plan, under a permit issued by a national authority. The other huts within the ASPA may only be entered for emergency use.

Visitor code of conduct

BEHAVIOUR ASHORE

- Contact with the huts and the handling, removal or disturbance of artefacts (and flora and fauna and parts thereof) requires specific prior authorisation by a permitting authority.
- Visitors should maintain a distance of at least 15m from nesting seabirds, penguins in colonies, and breeding Weddell seals and pups (including weaners). A distance of at least 5m should be maintained from mature seals, and Adélie penguins on ice or away from colonies.
- Care should be taken not to tread on artefacts or areas of snow and ice under which artefacts are likely buried.
- Boots and clothing should be cleaned of snow and grit before entering the huts. Backpacks and all bags should be left outside the huts.

CAUTIONARY NOTES

Boat landings are frequently hampered by heavy seas and prevailing or katabatic winds. Wet rocks, ice and snow mean that caution is required in disembarking boats and walking around this site. Caution must also be taken inside the huts because of icy conditions.

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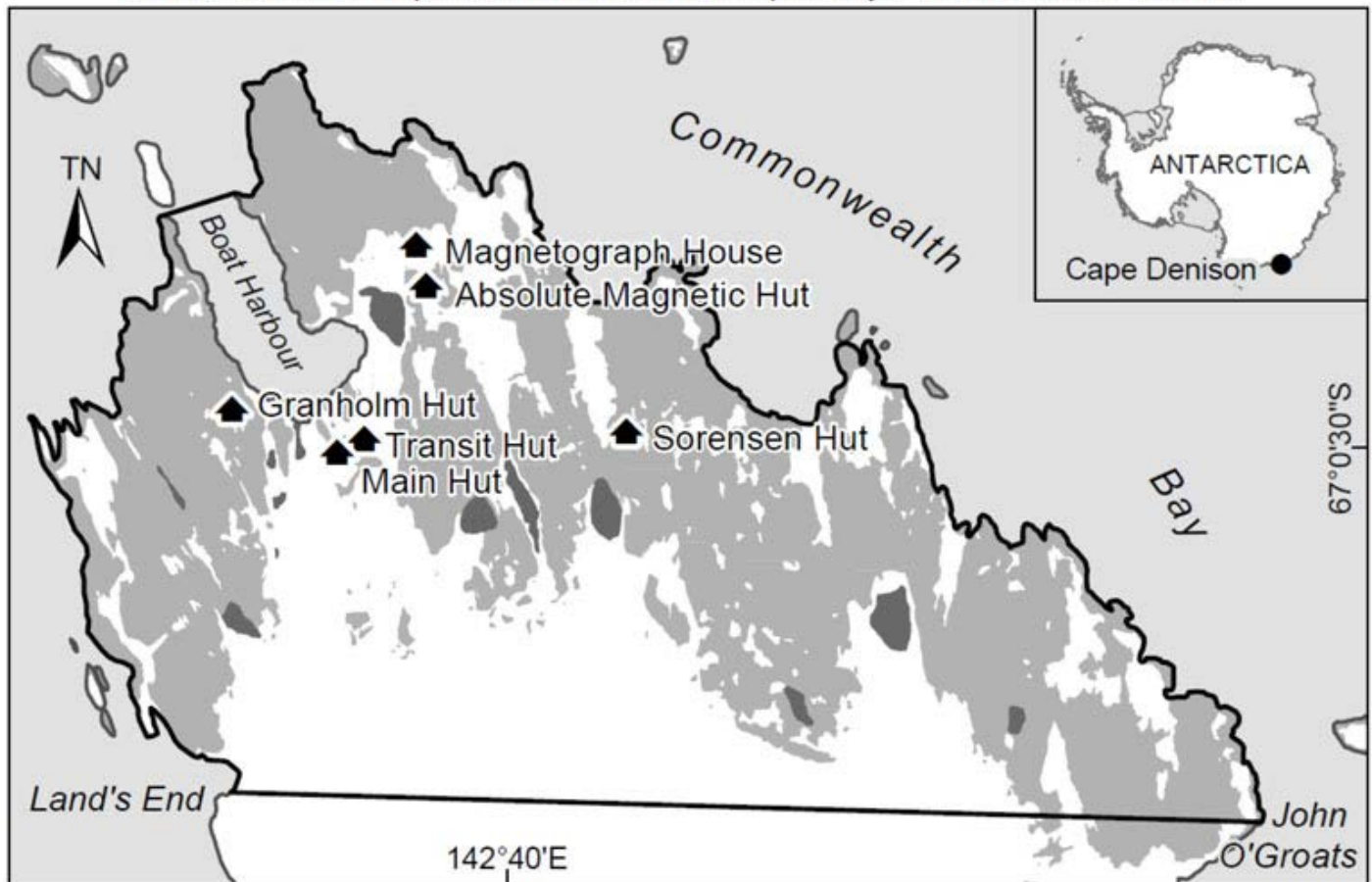


Main Hut. Photo: Michelle Berry



Interior of Main Hut. Photo: M. Berry

Mawson's Huts, Cape Denison, Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 162



- ASPA No. 162
- Lake
- Ice-free area

0 200 400
 Metres

Produced by the AADC,
 Australian Antarctic Division, March 2014.
 Map Catalogue No. 14282

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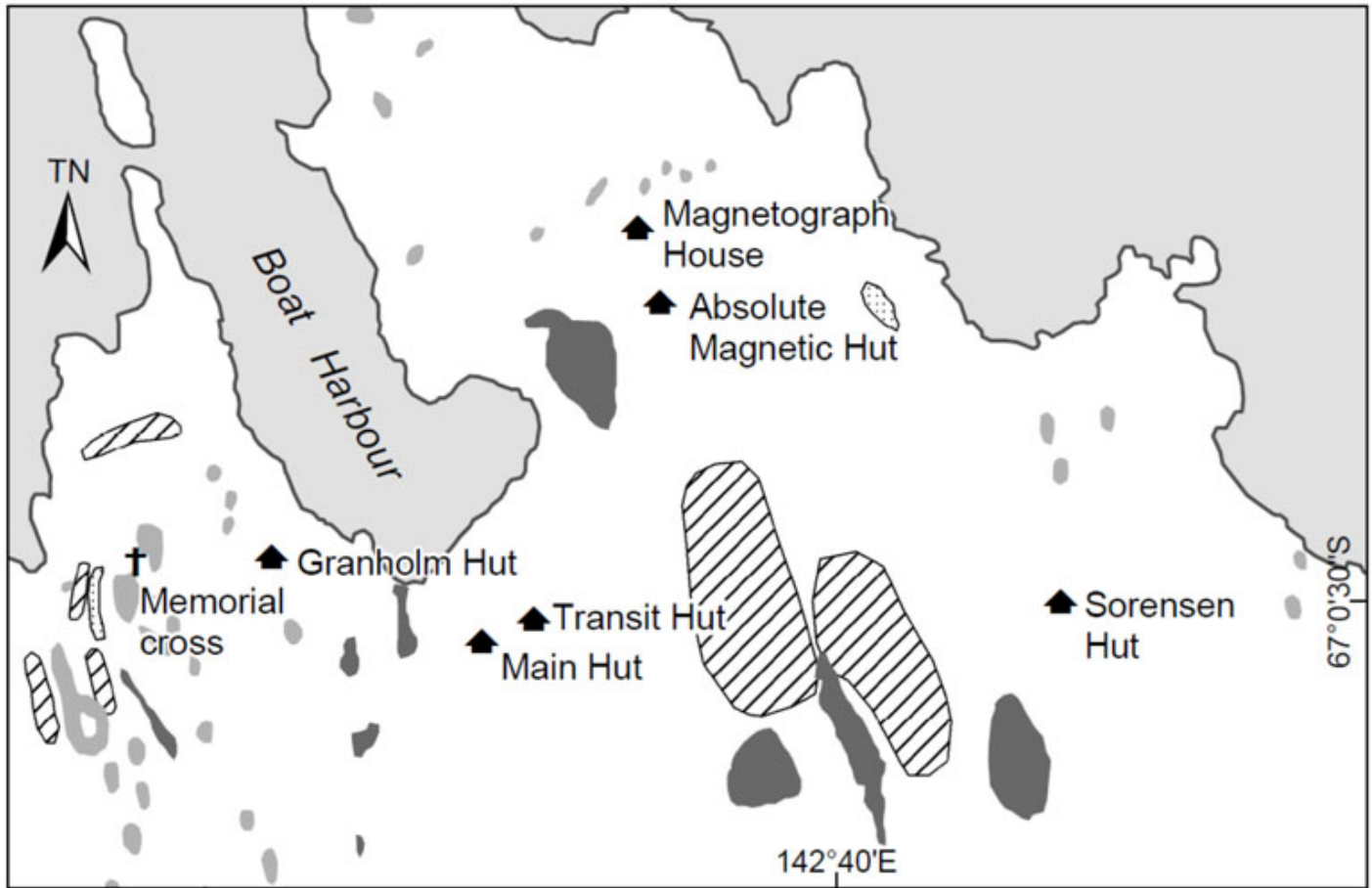
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Cape Denison Historic Huts and Wildlife



- Adélie penguin colony
- Snow petrel colony
- Wilson's storm petrel colony
- Lake

0 100 200 Metres

Produced by the AADC,
Australian Antarctic Division,
June 2011.
Map Catalogue No. 13956