

Management Plan for Antarctic Specially Protected Area No. 116

NEW COLLEGE VALLEY, CAUGHLEY BEACH, CAPE BIRD, ROSS ISLAND

1. Description of values to be protected

An area of 0.33 km² at Cape Bird was originally designated in Recommendations XIII-8 (1985, SSSI No. 10, Caughley Beach) and XIII-12 (1985, SPA No. 20, New College Valley) after proposals by New Zealand on the grounds that these areas contain some of the richest stands of mosses and associated microflora and fauna in the Ross Sea region of Antarctica. This is the only area on Ross Island where protection is specifically given to these 'cold' ground plants. SPA No. 20 was originally enclosed within SSSI No. 10 in order to provide more stringent access conditions within this part of the Area. SSSI No. 10 and SPA No. 20 have been merged in the current plan, and a Restricted Zone provides the more stringent access conditions within the former SPA. The boundaries of the Area have been revised in view of improved mapping and to follow more closely the ridges enclosing the catchment of New College Valley. Caughley Beach itself was adjacent to, but never a part of, the original Area, and for this reason the entire Area has been renamed as New College Valley, which was within both of the original sites.

Mosses (bryophytes) are the most highly evolved terrestrial plant life in this region, restricted to small, localised areas of water-flushed ground. In addition to rich moss cushions and carpets up to 20m², a diverse range of algal species inhabit streams in the Area, and collembolans (*Gomphiocephalus hodgsoni*) and mites (*Nanorchestes antarcticus* and *Stereotydeus mollis*) are plentiful on water surfaces and underneath rocks. The absence of lichens makes the species assemblage in this Area unique on Ross Island.

The proximity of the Cape Bird Hut (New Zealand) and the possibility of visits by tourists to Cape Bird mean that this vulnerable area could easily be damaged by human impact if not provided with adequate protection. Designation of this Area is designed to ensure examples of this habitat type are adequately protected from casual visitors and overuse from scientific investigations. The susceptibility of mosses to disturbance by trampling, sampling, pollution or alien introductions is such that the Area requires long-term special protection. The ecosystem at this site is of exceptional scientific value for ecological investigations and the Restricted Zone is valuable as a reference site for future comparative studies.

2. Aims and objectives

Management at New College Valley aims to:

- avoid degradation of, or substantial risk to, the values of the Area by preventing unnecessary human disturbance to the Area;

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- preserve a part of the natural ecosystem as a reference area for the purpose of future comparative studies;
- allow scientific research on the ecosystem, in particular on plants, algae and invertebrates in the Area, while ensuring protection from over-sampling;
- allow other scientific research provided it is for compelling reasons which cannot be served elsewhere;
- minimise the possibility of introduction of alien plants, animals and microbes into the Area;
- allow visits for management purposes in support of the aims of the management plan.

3. Management activities

The following management activities are to be undertaken to protect the values of the Area:

- Signs showing the location of the Area (stating the special restrictions that apply) shall be displayed prominently, and a copy of this Management Plan shall be kept available, in all of the research hut facilities located within 10 km of the Area.
- Signs showing the location, boundaries and clearly stating entry restrictions shall be placed at appropriate locations at the boundaries of the Area and the Restricted Zone within to help avoid inadvertent entry.
- Markers, signs or structures erected within the Area for scientific or management purposes shall be secured and maintained in good condition.
- Visits shall be made as necessary (no less than once every five years) to assess whether the Area continues to serve the purposes for which it was designated and to ensure management and maintenance measures are adequate.
- National Antarctic Programmes operating in the region are encouraged to consult together with a view to ensuring these steps are carried out.
- Up to date Management Plans, maps and other relevant information shall be made available on National Programme websites.

4. Period of designation

Designated for an indefinite period.

5. Maps and photographs

Figure 1: Perspective view of Cape Bird. The perspective is from an elevation of 350 m,

3. 8 km out from the Area at a bearing of 190° SW. The perspective is from almost directly over Inclusion Hill looking north toward Cape Bird.

Figure 1a: An alternative perspective shows the preferred aircraft approach path from approximately 200 m offshore. The perspective is from an altitude of 420 m (1378 ft), 4 km out from the Area at a bearing of 210° SW.

Map A: New College Valley, Cape Bird, Ross Island, regional topographic map. Map specifications: Projection - Lambert conformal conic. Standard parallels - 1st 76° 40' 00" S; 2nd 79° 20' 00" S. Central Meridian - 166° 30' 00" E. Latitude of Origin - 78° 01' 16.211" S. Spheroid - WGS84.

Map B: New College Valley protected area topographic map. Specifications are the same as those for Map A. Contours prepared at 1:2500 with a positional accuracy of ± 1.25 m (horizontal) and ± 1.25 m (vertical). Map includes vegetation and streams mapped in the northern zone of the ASPA.

Map C: New College Valley site topographic map – enlargement. Details include an enlargement of the northern zone of ASPA 116 showing vegetation and stream locations. Also shown are the approximate penguin distribution of the northern colony and helicopter landing pads.

6. Description of the Area

6(i) Geographical coordinates, boundary markers and natural features

Cape Bird is at the NW extremity of Mt. Bird (1800 m), an inactive volcanic cone which is probably the oldest on Ross Island. New College Valley is located south of Cape Bird on ice-free slopes above Caughley Beach, which lies between two Adélie penguin rookeries known as the Cape Bird Northern and Middle Rookeries (Maps A and B). The Area, comprising veneered glacial moraines at the fore of the Cape Bird Ice Cap, consists of seaward dipping olivine-augite basalts with scoriaceous tops erupted from the main Mt. Bird cone.

The NW corner of the north boundary of the Area is approximately 100 m south of the Cape Bird hut, while the southern boundary is about 700 m north of Middle Rookery (Map A). The north boundary of the Area extends upslope and eastward toward a prominent terminal moraine ridge 20 m from the Cape Bird Ice Cap. The boundary follows this ridge SE until the ridge disappears where it joins the glacier, from where the boundary continues SE following the glacier edge to the southern boundary. The south boundary is a straight line crossing the broad southern flank of New College Valley, and is marked at either end by two cairns, one in the western corner of the Area and the other on the hilltop 100 m from the Cape Bird Ice Cap glacier edge. The west boundary of the Area follows the top of the coastal cliffs of Caughley Beach for a distance of 650 m.

Northwest-facing New College Valley carries meltwater from the Cape Bird Ice Cap during the summer. Streams in the Area are fed by melt from persistent summer snow drifts and have eroded their own shallow gullies and channels. The ground is largely covered by stones and boulders of volcanic origin which have been reworked by glacial action.

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The Area contains the most extensive ephemeral stream course distributions of the moss *Hennediella heimii* on Ross Island. Surveys have shown that this moss, together with much lower occurrences of two other species – *Bryum subrotundifolium* and *Bryum pseudotriquetrum* – are confined almost entirely to the stream courses across the steep till and scoria covered slopes. The Area includes the full course of three stream systems that contain significant growths of algae, together with the mosses. The mosses are generally associated with algal growths, namely rich, red-brown oscillatorian felts and occasional reddish-black growths of *Nostoc commune*.

The microfauna consists of abundant populations of Collembolans (*Gomphiocephalus hodgsonii*) and mites (*Nanorchestes antarcticus* and *Stereotydeus mollis*) found on water surfaces and beneath rocks. Nematodes, rotifers, tardigrades and protozoa are also found within the Area.

Skuas (*Catharacta maccormicki*) frequently rest on Caughley Beach and overfly, land and nest within the Area. Adélie penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliae*) from the nearby rookeries do not nest in the Area, but have been observed occasionally to traverse across New College Valley.

6(ii) Restricted and managed zones within the Area

Restricted Zone

An area of New College Valley is designated a Restricted Zone in order to preserve part of the Area as a reference site for future comparative studies, while the remainder of the Area (which is similar in biology, features and character) is more generally available for research programmes and sample collection. The Restricted Zone encompasses ice-free slopes within New College Valley above Caughley Beach some of which are north-facing with snow drifts which provide a ready supply of melt water to foster moss and algal growth.

The NW corner of the Restricted Zone is 60 m to the south and across a small gully from the NW corner of the Area. The north boundary of the zone extends 500 m upslope from the NW corner, following a faint but increasingly prominent ridge SE to a point in the upper catchment of New College Valley marked by a cairn approximately 60 m from the ice terminus of the Cape Bird Ice Cap. The Restricted Zone boundary extends 110 m SW across the valley to a cairn marking the SE corner of the zone. The south boundary of the Restricted Zone extends in a straight line from this cairn 440 m NW down a broad and relatively featureless slope to the west boundary of the Area. A cairn is placed on the SW boundary of the Restricted Zone to mark the lower position of the south boundary.

Access to the Restricted Zone is allowed only for compelling scientific and management (such as inspection and review) purposes that cannot be served by visits elsewhere in the Area.

6(iii) Structures within and near the Area

Structures known to exist in the Area include a United States Navy Astrofix marker, cairns marking the boundaries of the Area and the Restricted Zone, a signpost situated at the NW corner of the Area and an approximately one meter square wooden frame marking the site of an experimental oil spill from 1982. The toilet and stores hut are located 40 m north of the NW

corner of the Area with the Cape Bird hut located a further 20 m north. (Map B and C). A water tank and associated hosing servicing the hut were removed from the Area in the 1995-96 season.

6(iv) Location of other protected areas within close proximity of the Area

The nearest protected areas are: Lewis Bay, Mount Erebus, Ross Island (ASPA No. 156), approximately 25 km SE; Tramway Ridge, Mount Erebus, Ross Island (ASPA No. 130) 30 km SSE; Cape Crozier, Ross Island (ASPA No. 124) 75 km SE; Cape Royds, Ross Island (ASPA No. 121) and Cape Evans, Ross Island (ASPA No. 155) 35 km and 45 km south on Ross Island respectively; and Beaufort Island, Ross Island (ASPA No. 105) 40 km to the north.

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:

- outside of the Restricted Zone, it is issued only for scientific study of the ecosystem, or for compelling scientific reasons that cannot be served elsewhere, or for essential management purposes consistent with plan objectives such as inspection or review;
- access to the Restricted Zone is allowed only for compelling scientific or management reasons that cannot be served elsewhere in the Area;
- the actions permitted are not likely to jeopardise the ecological or scientific values of the Area or other permitted activities;
- any management activities are in support of the objectives of the Management Plan;
- the actions permitted are in accordance with the Management Plan;
- the Permit, or a copy, shall be carried within the Area;
- a visit report shall be supplied to the authority named in the Permit;
- the Permit shall be issued for a stated period.

7(i) Access to and movement within the Area

Vehicles are prohibited within the Area and access shall be by foot. Helicopters are prohibited from landing within the Area. A helicopter landing site is located outside the Area below the cliffs on Caughley Beach, 100 m west of the west boundary of the Area. Between October and February the preferred flight path is an approach from the south above Middle Rookery. Flights north of the helicopter pad may be necessary under certain wind conditions but should follow the recommended aircraft approach and departure routes. See Figures 1 and 1a and Map A for the recommended aircraft approach routes into and out of Cape Bird. Overflight of the Area lower than 50 m (~150 ft) above ground level is prohibited. Hovering over the Area is not permitted

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lower than 100m (~300 ft) above ground level. Use of helicopter smoke grenades within the Area is prohibited.

Access into the Area should preferably follow the path from the Cape Bird Hut (New Zealand). Visitors should avoid areas of visible vegetation and care should be exercised walking in areas of moist ground, particularly the stream course beds, where foot traffic can easily damage sensitive soils, plant and algal communities, and degrade water quality: walk around such areas, on ice or rocky ground. Pedestrian traffic should be kept to the minimum necessary consistent with the objectives of any permitted activities and every reasonable effort should be made to minimise effects.

Access to regions south of the Area from the Cape Bird Hut should be made by a route below the cliffs along Caughley Beach.

7(ii) Activities that are or may be conducted in the Area, including restrictions on time or place

- Scientific research that will not jeopardise the ecosystem of the Area;
- Essential management activities, including monitoring and inspection.

7(iii) Installation, modification or removal of structures

No structures are to be erected within the Area except as specified in a Permit. All scientific equipment installed in the Area must be authorised by Permit and clearly identified by country, name of the principal investigator and year of installation. All such items should be made of materials that pose minimal risk of contamination of the Area. Removal of specific equipment for which the Permit has expired shall be a condition of the Permit.

7(iv) Location of field camps

Camping within the Area is prohibited.

7(v) Restrictions on materials and organisms which can be brought into the Area

No living animals, plant material or microorganisms shall be deliberately introduced into the Area and precautions shall be taken against accidental introductions. No live poultry shall be brought into the Area. Dressed poultry should be free of disease or infection before shipment to the Antarctic and, if introduced into the Area for food, all parts and waste of poultry shall be completely removed from the Area, and incinerated or boiled for long enough to kill any potentially infective bacteria or viruses. No herbicides or pesticides shall be brought into the Area. Any other chemicals, including radio-nuclides or stable isotopes, which may be introduced for scientific or management purposes specified in the Permit, shall be removed from the Area at or before the conclusion of the activity for which the Permit was granted. Fuel is not to be stored in the Area, unless required for essential purposes connected with the activity for which the Permit has been granted. All materials introduced shall be for a stated period only, shall be

removed at or before the conclusion of that stated period, and shall be stored and handled so that risk of their introduction into the environment is minimised.

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

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

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

Material may be collected or removed from the Area only in accordance with a Permit and should be limited to the minimum necessary to meet scientific or management needs. Material of human origin likely to compromise the values of the Area, which was not brought into the Area by the Permit holder or otherwise authorised, may be removed from any part of the Area, including the Restricted Zone, unless the impact of removal is likely to be greater than leaving the material *in situ*: if this is the case the appropriate authority should be notified.

7(viii) Disposal of waste

All wastes, including all human wastes, shall be removed from the Area.

7(ix) Measures that are necessary to ensure that the aims and objectives of the Management Plan can continue to be met

- Permits may be granted to enter the Area to carry out biological monitoring and site inspection activities, which may involve the collection of small samples for analysis or review, to erect or maintain signposts or for management activities.
- Any specific sites of long-term monitoring shall be appropriately marked.
- To help maintain the ecological and scientific values of the isolation and relatively low level of human impact at the Area visitors shall take special precautions against introductions. Of particular concern are microbial or vegetation introductions sourced from soils at other Antarctic sites, including stations, or from regions outside Antarctica. To minimise the risk of introductions, visitors shall thoroughly clean footwear and any equipment to be used in the area — particularly sampling equipment and markers — before entering the Area.

7(x) Requirements for reports

Parties should ensure that the principal holder for each Permit issued submits to the appropriate authority a report describing the activities undertaken. Such reports should include, as appropriate, the information identified in the Visit Report form suggested by SCAR. Parties should maintain a record of such activities and, in the Annual Exchange of Information, should provide summary descriptions of activities conducted by persons subject to their jurisdiction,

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which should be in sufficient detail to allow evaluation of the effectiveness of the Management Plan. Parties should, wherever possible, deposit originals or copies of such original reports in a publicly accessible archive to maintain a record of usage to be used both in any review of the management plan and in organising the scientific use of the Area.

8. Bibliography

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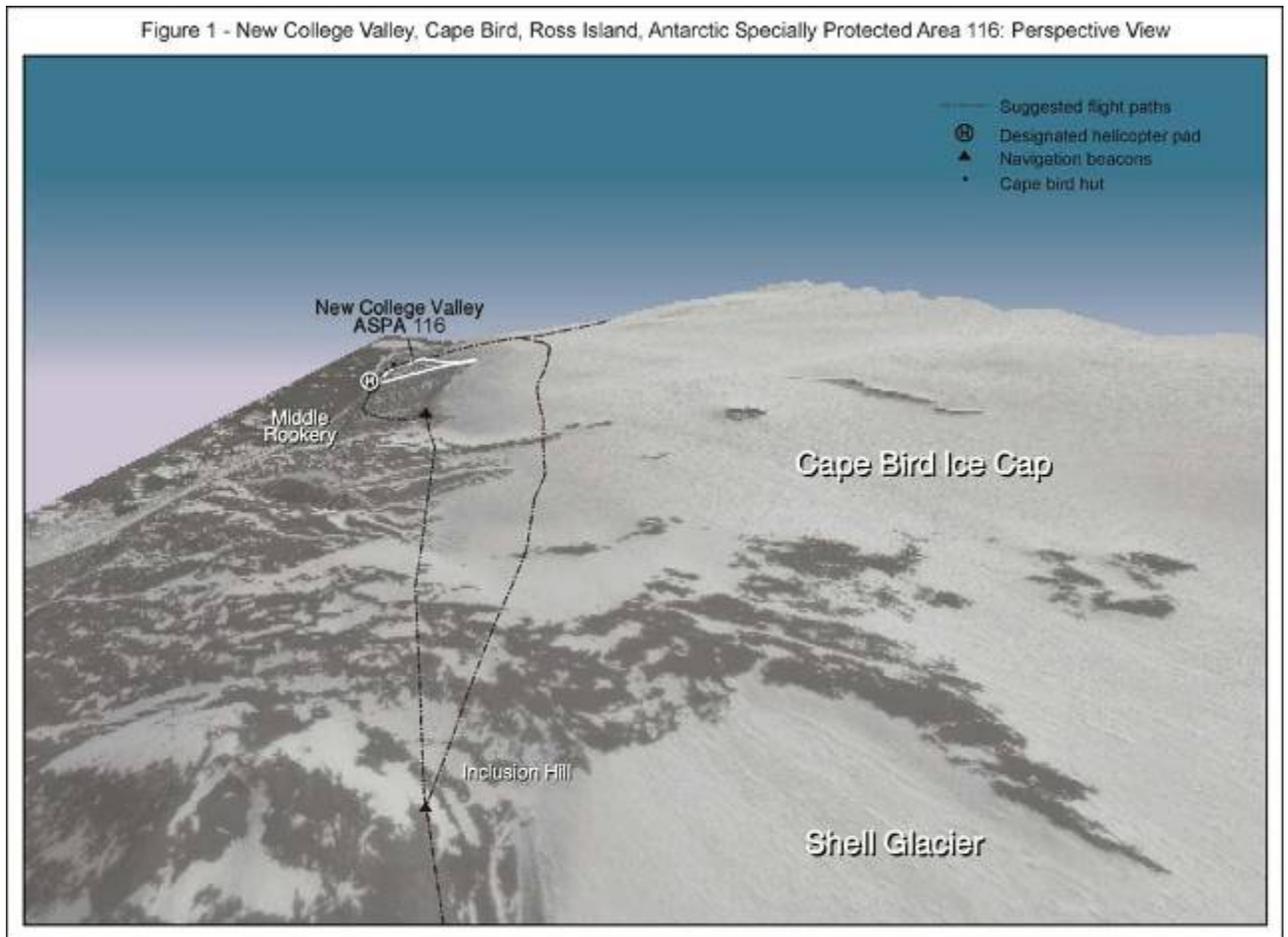
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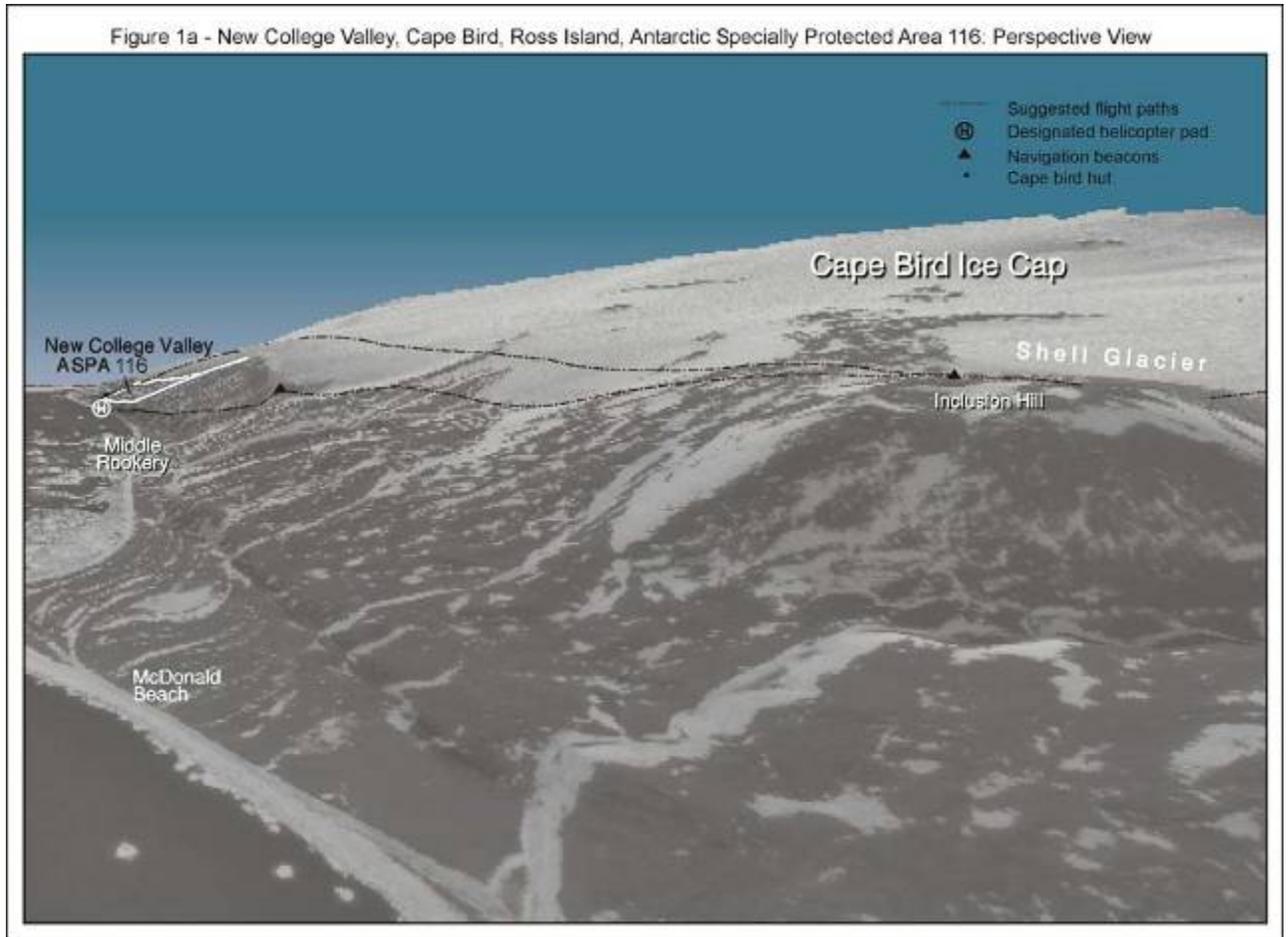
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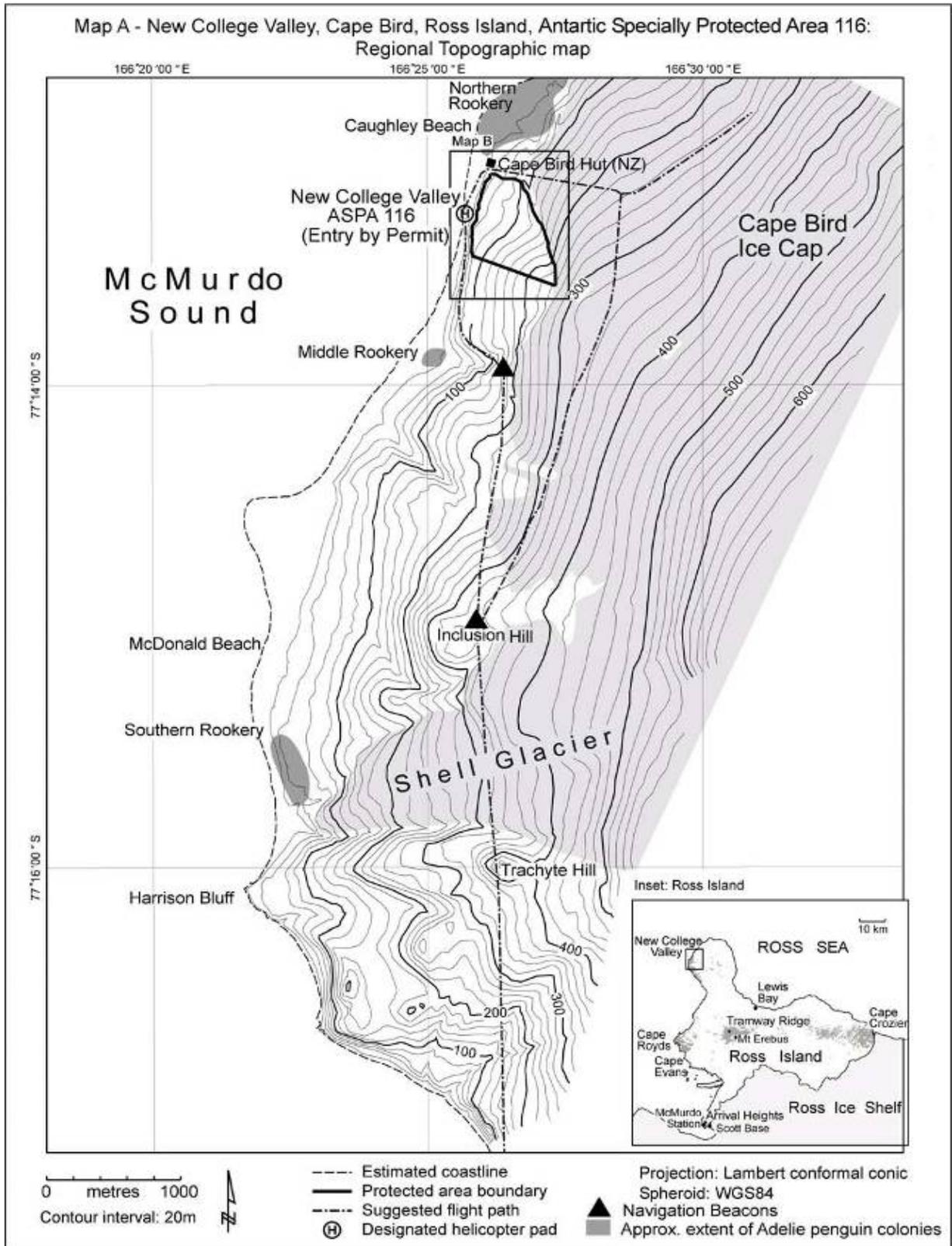
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