

**Management Plan for Specially Protected Area No. 16
Coppermine Peninsula, Robert Island, South Shetland Islands**

1. Geographical location

Coppermine Peninsula (62°23'S, 59°42'W) is situated on the west side of Robert Island, which lies between Nelson Island to the east and Greenwich Island to the west, midway along the South Shetland Islands archipelago.

2. Management Plan

(i) Description of Area

The Area comprises all land west of a north-south line across the isthmus between Carlota Cove and Coppermine Cove, 100m west of a small group of Chilean refuge huts. The Peninsula is about 1.7 km from south-east to north-west and up to 0.6 km from north-east to south-west, and is largely surrounded by precipitous cliffs. There are three prominent low hills which reach a highest point at about 220 m. The easternmost lies close to the isthmus; there is a central hill composed of basaltic columns referred to as “Neptune’s Cathedral”, and the westernmost is situated above Fort William at the extreme west of the Peninsula. The isthmus (mainly outside the Area) is a 250 m wide raised beach reaching about 10 m altitude. Much of the higher ground is permanently ice covered. There are numerous small streams and pools in summer.

(ii) Reason for designation

Coppermine Peninsula is a biologically rich area with a diverse biota typical of the South Shetland Islands. It supports a wide range of plant communities with associated invertebrate fauna; the vertebrate fauna is also particularly well represented. The outstanding feature of the vegetation is a 1.5 ha closed carpet of the mosses *Calliergidium austro-stramineum*, *Calliergon sarmentosum* and *Drepanocladus uncinatus*, representing one of the largest continuous moss stands in the Antarctic. It overlies a thick layer of wet moss peat. Large stands of the foliose cyanobacterium *Nostoc commune* occur on moist slopes and in depressions. A large number of bryophyte and lichen species occur within the Area, and Antarctic hair grass (*Deschampsia antarctica*) is frequent. A small colony of Chinstrap penguins (*Pygoscelis antarctica*) occurs at Fort William. There are about 30 small colonies of Southern Giant petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*). Other breeding species include about 2,000 nests of Wilson's storm petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*) in at least 13 colonies, up to 1,000 Antarctic terns (*Sterna vittata*) in nine colonies, 300-400 Dominican gulls (*Larus dominicanus*) in ten colonies, and numerous Brown skuas (*Catharacta lonnbergii*). Seals are common around the peninsula and frequently haul out at the isthmus, notably Elephant seals (*Mirounga leonina*), Weddell seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) and increasingly large numbers of Fur seals (*Arctocephalus gazella*).

(iii) Date of designation and originator

November 1966, Recommendation IV-10, by Chile.

(iv) Access points

Access should be from the isthmus outside the Area by sea from Coppermine Cove or Carlota Cove, or by helicopter also to the east of the Area.

(v) Entry permit requirement

Entry into the Area is only in strict accordance with a current permit, issued by a Participating Government or its authorised representative, specifically for a compelling scientific purpose which cannot be served elsewhere or for site inspection, and which will not jeopardise any aspect of the natural ecosystem or its biota within the Area (see Antarctic Treaty Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora, Article VIII). Details of the visit should be included in the national annual report of Exchange of information for the same Antarctic season in which the activities were carried out.

(vi) Prohibitions

To avoid or minimise human impact it is prohibited to:

- (a) drive any vehicle within the Area;
- (b) land a helicopter within the Area;
- (c) overfly the Area by any aircraft below 250 m above the highest point;
- (d) use any of the Area's coves or bays for anchoring or mooring seacraft, except in accordance with the permit;
- (e) incinerate, bury or otherwise dispose of any non-human waste within the Area; all such waste must be removed from the Area;
- (f) leave depots of fuel, food, or any other supplies within the Area, unless they are required within the same season, at the end of which they must be removed;
- (g) erect any form of building within the Area.

(vii) Pedestrian routes

None specified, but every precaution must be taken to avoid disturbance of any breeding bird (especially Giant petrels, which pedestrians should not approach closer than 100 m) or seal or stand of vegetation (especially the extensive carpet of moss on the isthmus), unless required as specified in the permit.

(viii) Scientific research and sampling

All activities must conform strictly with those specified in the permit to enter the Area.

(ix) Inspection and maintenance

Inspection visits to the Area should be made at least once every three years to assess the state of the site and to monitor any significant biological or environmental changes. Other visits should be made as necessary to maintain boundary markers, notices, etc.