

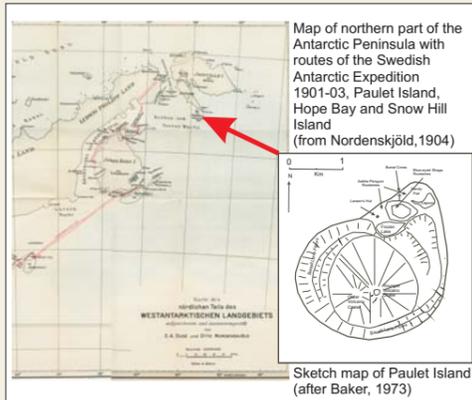
Paulet Island (63°35'S, 55°47'W) - landscape in conflict of tourism with conservation of nature and historical monuments

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Situation



Paulet Island: rookeries of Adélie penguins (foreground) and Blue-eyed Shags (on the slope in background)



Wintering hut of the crew of the expedition ship *Antarctic* on Paulet Island (from Nordenskjöld, 1904)

Wildlife

Major nesting places of sea birds are situated on the northern scree slopes of the island. The huge rookery of 95,000 to 105,000 pairs of Adélie penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliae*) is the second largest of this species in the area of the Antarctic Peninsula. The population of Blue-eyed Shags (*Phalacrocorax atriceps*) with about 400 nests is one of the largest in the Peninsula as well; Snow Petrel (*Pagodroma nivea*), Wilson's Storm-petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*) and Pale-faced Shearwater (*Chionis alba*) are also breed. Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) is a regular visitor. More than 1000 Weddell (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) and Leopard Seals (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) haul-out on the shoreline each year.

History

Paulet Island was discovered by the British Antarctic expedition (1839-43) led by James Clarke Ross and was named by him after a captain in the British Royal Navy. In February 1903 *Antarctic*, the relief ship of Otto Nordenskjöld's Swedish Antarctic expedition was crushed by the ice of the Weddell Sea and sank. The ship's crew of 20 managed to get ashore on Paulet Island and erected a stone hut in order to survive the Antarctic winter. This hut is also called Larsen's hut after the commander of the shipcaptain C.A. Larsen. Nordenskjöld's expedition was rescued in November 1903 by the Argentine vessel *Uruguay*.

Geographical setting

Paulet Island is a roughly circular islet with about 3 km diameter in the north-western Weddell Sea. It is a volcanic crater island with a lake which is about 500 m long and a conic summit rising an elevation of 385 m.

Tourism

Remains of the building are still evident and they attract together with the penguin colony yearly up to 5,000 tourists from cruise vessels. The hut is halfway between landing beach and lake on the northern shoreline amidst the colony of Adélie penguins. Visitors in guided groups can reach it with minimized disruptions of wildlife on the direct way. Boards in front of the ruin inform visitors about history of the Swedish Antarctic Expedition 1901-03.



Cruise ship *Hanseatic* anchored off Paulet Island. Tourists land on the shore using Zodiacs



The remains of Larsen's hut amidst the Adélie penguin rookery

References

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Erskine, A.B. (1988): The 1903 Swedish expedition hut on Paulet, Island, Antarctica. *Polar Record* 24 (149), 133-134
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Problems of conservation

Presumably in 2003 the hut was enclosed with prefabricated segments of fences by Argentinians (?) to keep away both tourists and penguins. In January 2005 only 2 segments were found standing with information boards on it. These were placed in such a way, that tourists can read the information only standing in between the nests of the penguins in a distance from birds less than 5 m. Trying to avoid this by staying on the other side people risk to damage the historical remains of the hut's walls consisting of stones and penguin guano. Unused metallic fence segments lying around create a harm risk for people and penguins.



January 2005: A pile of unused metallic fences and racks lying beside the hut. They endanger penguins and visitors.



2 metallic fences with information boards (left site) are installed in front of the Larsen's hut. The space between fences and the hut's wall is too small for a group of people. Photo: B. Weber, January 2005

Recommendation

A solution of the problem could be to install information boards separately on a proper place (e.g. at the landing side directly on the beach) and to enclose the hut by a chain similar as used to fence the 2nd hut of the Swedish Antarctic expedition (1901-03) on Esperanza. The existing fence segments are unsuitable and should be removed.



Ruin of the hut at Hope Bay (Esperanza) where the members of the Swedish Antarctic expedition (1901-03) J.G. Andersson, S. Duse and T. Grunden overwintered. The remains are protected by a chain only. Photo: B. Weber, January 2005



Information board about the Swedish Antarctic Expedition 1901-03