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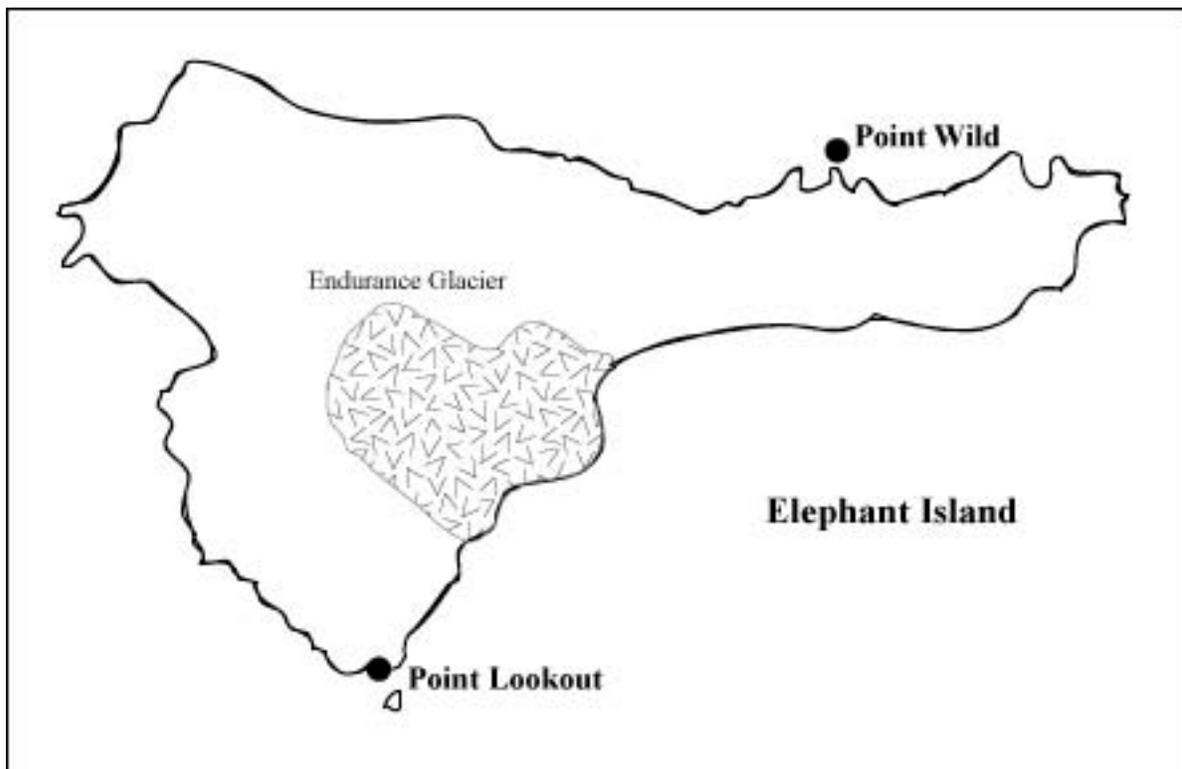
## ELEPHANT ISLAND (EI) Subarea

### Subarea Map

#### Site Descriptions (2)

- Point Lookout (LOOK)
- Point Wild (WILD)

Elephant Island is indelibly linked with Sir Ernest Shackleton's famous expedition of 1914-17. Leaving 22 of his men on the island's northern coast under Frank Wild's command, Shackleton, Frank Worsley, Tom Crean, Harry McNeish, John Vincent, Tim McCarthy departed from Point Wild on the lifeboat *James Caird*, heading for South Georgia, an unprecedented, 800-mile — and successful — open boat voyage. Ultimately, Shackleton's men were rescued from Point Wild. This rugged island teems with breeding chinstrap penguins and increasing numbers of Antarctic fur seals.



#### Keys:

For acronyms of Antarctic Site Inventory researchers, see Appendix 1 p. 39.

For codes relating to penguin/seabird census/population data, see Table 3, p. 49.



## Point Lookout, Elephant Island (LOOK)

61°17'S, 55°13'W

Magnetic declination: 8.7°E

Inventory subarea: EI

Inventory acronym: LOOK

Species Diversity: MEDIUM

Site Sensitivity: LOW

**NOTE:** Restricted visitor space

### Location — History — Features

This steep, 240-meter-high bluff marks the S end of Elephant Island. The site name first appears on an 1822 map of the British sealer, Captain George Powell. The narrow spit W of the bluff may be used for zodiac landings, but only in the best of sea state and weather conditions, and when the rocky beach is not overrun by fur seals. Zodiac operations are likely to encounter high swell and spray. Nesting macaroni penguins may be observed more readily than in the Antarctic Peninsula, where they are much rarer.

### Landing Characteristics

Uncharted water near shore. Hazardous rocks along the shoreline may be exposed, depending on the tide. Landing on exposed, rocky beach, surrounded by water on three sides, and often subjected to high swell and wind; beyond the beach, difficult hiking and walking because of the very rocky terrain and steep scree slopes. Very restricted visitor space because of topography, tide, swell, density of nesting penguins, and hauled-out seals.

### Antarctic Site Inventory Effort

*Visits by Antarctic Site Inventory researchers, 1994-2003:*

1.	November 21, 1995	BH SF	W. Discoverer
2.	November 27, 1995	BH SF	W. Discoverer
3.	December 30, 1996	LB	Hanseatic
4.	December 28, 2002	RP	Endeavour

*Assessment and monitoring.* Prospective chinstrap penguin control colonies have been identified and preliminary censuses achieved, but this site has not been visited regularly by Inventory researchers. Additional characterization needs include: photodocumentation of ground features; photodocumentation and survey of floral communities; and a more complete description of geological features.

### Fauna — Flora — Censuses

*Penguins & flying birds.* Chinstrap, gentoo, and macaroni penguins are confirmed nesters. No site-specific censuses of penguin breeding populations are reported in Woehler (1993) and Woehler & Croxall (1996). Pintado petrels may be found in large, offshore feeding flocks, and nest in the cliffs to the S of the landing beach. Wilson's storm-petrels also are confirmed nesters in the talus at the base of these cliffs. Snowy sheathbill nesting also confirmed.

*Seals.* Antarctic fur seals and southern elephant seals haul-out regularly. Weddell seals have been observed on the landing beach.

*Flora.* Crustose lichens observed on exposed rocks.

### Conservation Aspects

*Site sensitivities.* Large numbers of chinstrap penguins in densely packed colonies, and smaller numbers of gentoo and macaroni penguins; all are easily approached and disturbed, especially in November and early December when adults will be incubating eggs; subsequently, adults will be guarding and provisioning chicks at the nest, then in crèche. Wallowing southern elephant seals are easily approached and disturbed. Favored haul-out site for Antarctic fur seals.

*Pointers for avoiding disruptions:*

- Avoid congestion by alternating zodiac tours with brief landings, at staggered intervals, ashore.
- Do not impede penguins' access to and from the water.
- Walk slowly and carefully around nesting, crèching, or molting penguins.
- Avoid and stay clear of wallowing elephant seals.

# POINT LOOKOUT

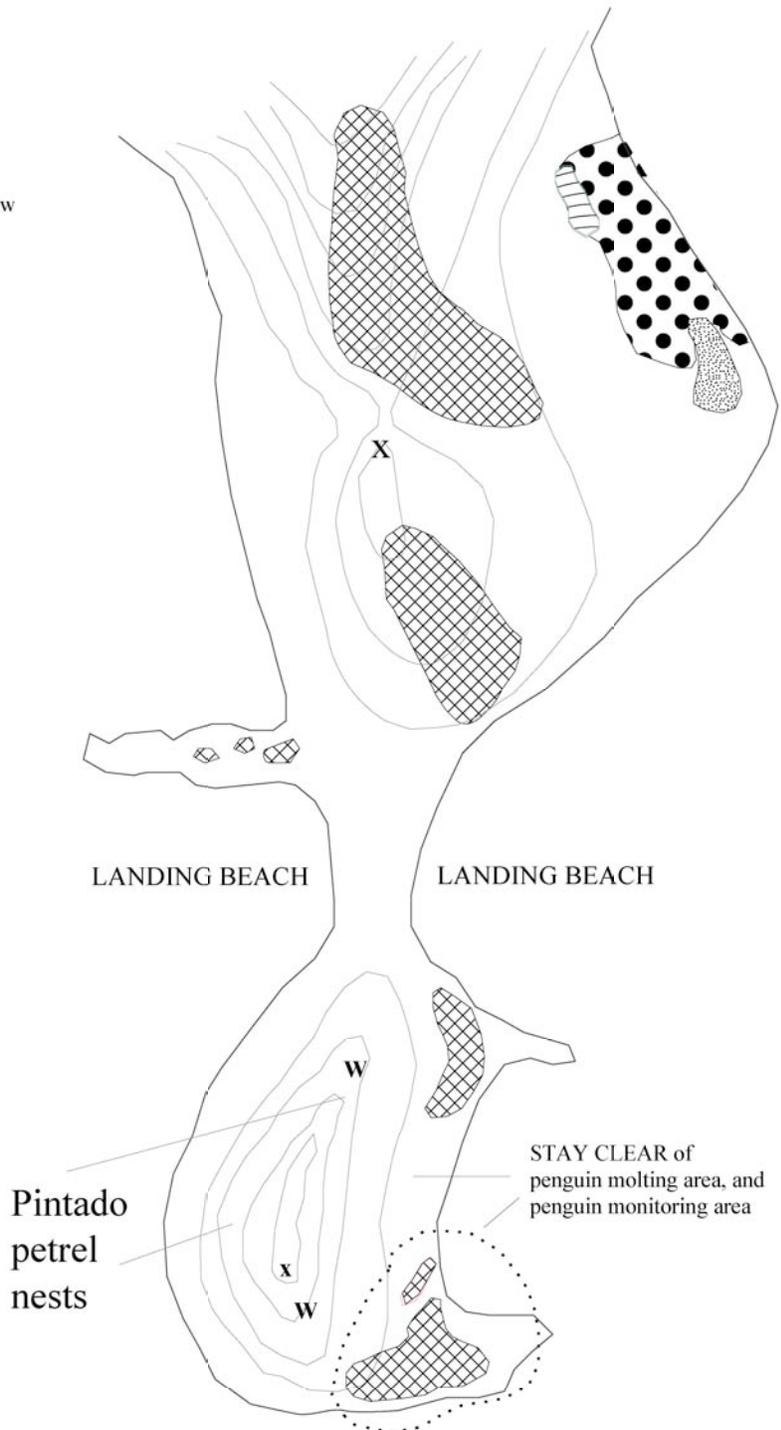
-  Chinstrap penguins
-  Gentoo penguins
- W** Wilson's storm petrel nest crevices
-  So. elephant seal wallow
-  Melt pond
-  Restricted zones
- x** Antarctic Site Inventory stake



Contour intervals =  
5 meters (16 feet)

Map ©2003 OCEANITES, Inc.  
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This map is to be used for  
orientation purposes only.



- Avoid and stay clear of Antarctic fur seals, which should be given a wide berth and should not be approached.
- Strictly control landings on the narrow, exposed beach by organizing small, guided groups, which are well spaced, all following the same path, and not allowing any free wandering over the very rocky terrain and slopes.

### Visitation Aspects

*Numbers of tourist zodiac landings and participating visitors, 1989-2003:*

	<b>Zodiac Landings</b>	<b>Participating Visitors</b>
1989-90:	5	541
1990-91:	2	124
1991-92:	5	579
1992-93:	4	271
1993-94:	6	1,131
1994-95:	9	951
1995-96:	4	442
1996-97:	8	818
1997-98:	7	749
1998-99:	9	983
1999-2000:	11	1,095
2000-01:	11	1,083
2001-02:	4	300
2002-03:	10	958
14-Season Total	95	10,025

*Proximate visitor sites.* Point Lookout and Point Wild are the Elephant Island sites most frequently visited by expedition ships. Point Lookout has more visitors, in great part because it lies closer to the South Shetland Islands in the Antarctic Peninsula. The landing beach at Point Wild (where Shackleton's men camped) lies at a greater distance from the Peninsula, on the N side of Elephant Island, is frequently awash in surf, and may be overrun with fur seals.

## Point Wild, Elephant Island (WILD)

61°06'S, 54°52'W

Magnetic declination: 8.3°E

Inventory subarea: EI

Inventory acronym: WILD

Species Diversity: LOW

Site Sensitivity: LOW

Note: Restricted visitor space

### Location — History — Features

A point six miles W of Cape Valentine on the N coast of Elephant Island. This site was made famous during Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition (1914-17). It was the jumping-off spot for Shackleton and five of his men in the lifeboat *James Caird*. They successfully negotiated the 800-mile passage to South Georgia, and Shackleton ultimately returned to rescue the 22 men stranded at this rugged location. The site is named for Frank Wild, who was leader of the stranded party that camped here for four months until they were rescued in August 1916. The Chileans have erected a monument on site with a bust of Capt. Pardo, the master of the vessel *Yelcho* who successfully rescued these men. In the early 1980s, it was much easier to make shore landings at the Point, and to stand at the exact spot from which Hurley's classic photographs of the *James Caird* launch were taken; now however, the beach is overrun by nesting penguins and fur seals.

Elephant Island supports an active ice dome and several glaciers. Ice cliffs fringe much of the coastline. Nunataks project through the ice in the interior, but the only main ice-free areas are lowland peninsulas, headlands, coastal cliffs, scree, and boulder beaches. Point Wild is a low, narrow ridge of boulders and gravel between rocky, high, nearly vertical cliffs on the island side and steep, rocky masses of bedrock on the seaward side. To the W is the arc of a deeply indented bay whose N shore is formed by a massive glacier, which in comparison to historical photographs from the Shackleton expedition, appears to have receded. Many crevasses are exposed in the ice face. Vertical cliffs extend around the shore on the W side of this bay. On the E side of Point Wild, steep mountainsides rise almost directly from the sea. The ridge of Point Wild appears to be mainly rock with abundant guano and mud. There is a narrow, rocky beach of coarse, dark pebbles and cobbles, with occasionally exposed bedrock. The cliffs at Point Wild also expose well-foliated, layered metamorphic rocks. Outcrops at sea level contain many streaks of quartz.

On site is an Antarctic Historic Site and Monument, a monolith and commemorative plaque celebrating the rescue of Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition on August 30, 1916 by the Chilean Navy cutter *Yelcho*, under the command of Captain Luis Pardo Villalon. A bronze bust of Captain Pardo was placed on the monolith by the XXIVth Chilean Antarctic scientific Expedition in 1987-88.

### Landing Characteristics

Point Wild presents a difficult zodiac tour, even in the best of weather. Landings are few because of the increase in numbers of hauled-out fur seals. If landings are negotiated, there is limited visitor space because of the high concentration of on-shore animal life. Zodiac tours are the more regular routine, which enable excellent looks at the site's penguin-packed shoreline and active glaciers. Frequent glacier-calving and avalanches often fill the bay with brash ice and growlers, and potentially render zodiac travel more difficult.

### Antarctic Site Inventory Effort

*Visits by Antarctic Site Inventory researchers, 1994-2003:*

1.	December 2, 1995	RN LB	Explorer
2.	December 14, 1995	LB	Explorer
3.	January 17, 1999	RN	Endurance
4.	January 15, 2000	SF	Cal Star
5.	December 10, 2000	RN	Cal Star
6.	December 9, 2001	RN SF CE	Endeavour
7.	January 8, 2002	SF	Endeavour
8.	February 21, 2002	RN	Endeavour
9.	December 6, 2002	RN	Endeavour
10.	December 28, 2002	RP	Endeavour

*Assessment and monitoring.* The glacial recession between Point Wild and Cape Belsham suggests the utility of season-to-season photodocumentation. Preliminary surveying and population estimates only. Regular chinstrap penguin census colonies not identified. Preliminary ground level and aerial photography achieved.

### **Fauna — Flora — Censuses**

*Penguins & flying birds.* Chinstrap penguins are abundant breeders, and macaroni penguins occasionally are noted. Pintado petrels are numerous and may be seen flying onto cliffside nests.

No site-specific counts of chinstrap, gentoo, or macaroni penguin breeding populations are reported in Woehler (1993) and Woehler & Croxall (1996).

*Seals.* Antarctic fur seals and southern elephant seals regularly haul-out on the site's rocky beaches.

*Flora.* None noted.

### **Conservation Aspects**

*Site sensitivities.* Restricted visitor space. The receding glacier W of Point Wild, between Point Wild and Cape Belsham, has enabled seawater to reach the landing beach more readily, and considerably decreased available landing space. Chinstrap penguins crowd the available space, along with elephant seals and increasing numbers of fur seals.

*Pointers for avoiding disruptions:*

- Restricted landing space suggests a reliance on zodiac tours to explore the vicinity.
- If landings are achieved, do not impede penguins' access to and from the water.
- If landings are achieved, walk slowly and carefully around nesting, crèching, or molting penguins.
- If landings are achieved, avoid and stay clear of wallowing elephant seals.
- If landings are achieved, avoid and stay clear of Antarctic fur seals, which should be given a wide berth and should not be approached.
- Strictly control any landings on the small, and do not allow any free wandering over the very rocky terrain and slopes.

### **Visitation Aspects**

*Numbers of tourist zodiac landings and participating visitors, 1989-2003:*

	<b>Zodiac Landings</b>	<b>Participating Visitors</b>
1989-90:	2	265
1990-91:	2	151
1991-92:	2	268
1992-93:	1	95
1993-94:	1	108
1994-95:	3	185
1995-96:	1	26
1996-97:	0	0
1997-98:	2	267
1998-99:	1	59
1999-2000:	0	0
2000-01:	5	638
2001-02:	1	92
2002-03:	20	1,992
14-Season Total	41	4,146

*Proximate visitor sites.* Tourist visits to Elephant Island generally make only one landing, either here or at Point Lookout on the S end of the island. Because of Point Wild's farther distance from the South Shetlands, there have been fewer tourist visits.

