

Key Site 23: Cape Parry, Northwest Territories

Location: 70°11'33"N, 124°40'2"W

Size: 8.2 km²

Description: Cape Parry consists of three points at the northern tip of the Parry Peninsula, 100 km north of Paulatuk. The underlying limestone forms three outcrops of coastal cliffs that rise 20 m above sea level. The coastline has beaches of sand and gravel and is deeply incised, forming numerous bays and small inlets. The peninsula is sparsely vegetated and is dotted with small lakes and ponds. A Distant Early Warning (DEW) site was located 3 km south of Police (West) Point from the 1950s to the 1980s.

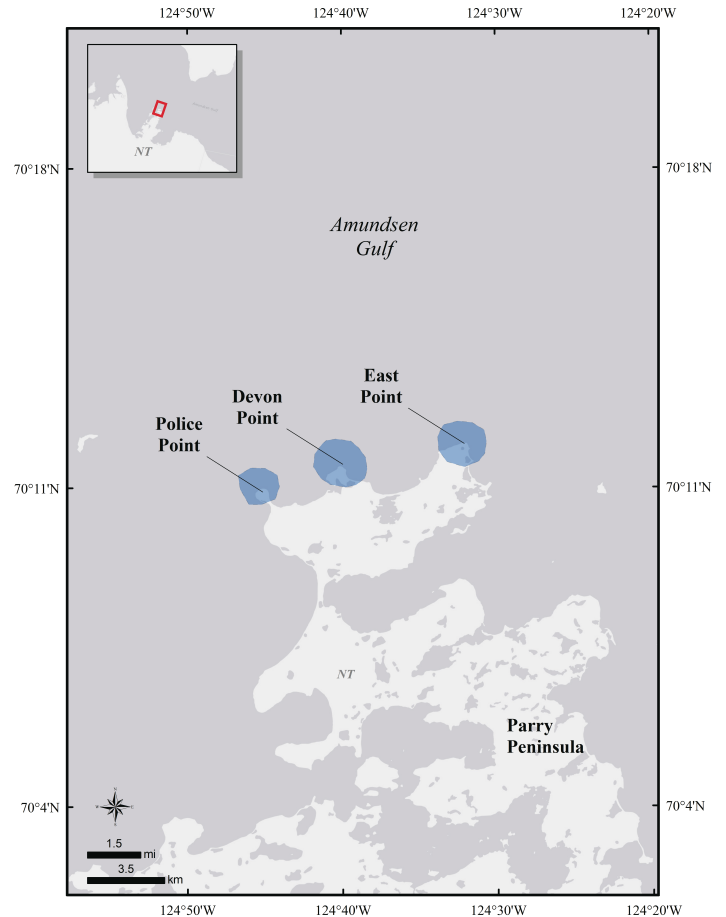
Marine currents and a variable bathymetry result in marine upwellings that produce a rich marine environment in the vicinity of Cape Parry. Offshore, a series of lead and polynya systems form annually, typically coinciding with the 30-m depth contour (Marko 1975). These provide critical habitat for migrating sea ducks (summarized in Mallory and Fontaine 2004). Open water usually persists between May and November (Smith and Rigby 1981).

Precision and Correction of Abundance

Estimates Presented: Abundance estimates presented for this key habitat site have not been adjusted to account for incomplete detection or other biases. Abundance estimates should, therefore, be treated as minimum estimates.

Biological Value: The recurrent leads immediately north of Cape Parry serve as a migration corridor for 20,000 Western King Eiders (*Somateria spectabilis*), Pacific Common Eiders (*S. mollissima v-nigra*), and Long-tailed Ducks (*Clangula hyemalis*) (Barry and Barry 1982, Alexander et al. 1988, Alexander et al. 1991). Densities at this site can reach 8500 sea ducks per square kilometer in spring and represent over 1% of these species' continental populations (NAWMP 2012).

Sensitivities: Migrating sea ducks are heavily dependent on open leads for feeding and resting. In a warming and increasingly variable climate, unpredictability of access to leads and open water areas may be greater due to effects of shifting winds on unconsolidated ice, which could result in severe negative impacts on the birds (Lovvorn et al. 2015).



Sea ducks using these offshore foraging areas are susceptible to pollution, disturbance, and collisions from increased vessel traffic.

Potential Conflicts: Extensive offshore drilling and ship traffic occur throughout the area, although mostly west of Hutchison Bay on the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula (Alexander et al. 1997). Exploitation of hydrocarbon resources in the Beaufort Sea increases the possibility of oil spills in these sensitive areas. In 2016 Canada designated the Arctic waters indefinitely off limits to new offshore oil and gas activities and in 2019 suspended the terms of all active oil and gas licenses in the western and eastern Arctic offshore areas. The moratorium will be in place until a review process for existing licenses is completed, which is expected in 2022.

Status: This key site is within the Cape Parry Migratory Bird Sanctuary, an International Biological Programme Site (Site 4-11; Eng et al. 1989), an Important Bird Area in Canada (NT041; IBA Canada 2004), a Key Marine Habitat Site (Site 19;

Mallory and Fontaine 2004), and the Anguniaqvia Niqiyuam Marine Protected Area. It has been identified as Class D (“lands where cultural or renewable resources are of particular significance and sensitivity throughout the year”) in the Paulatuk Community Conservation Plan (WMAC 2016). Marine waters surrounding Cape Parry are under federal jurisdiction.

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