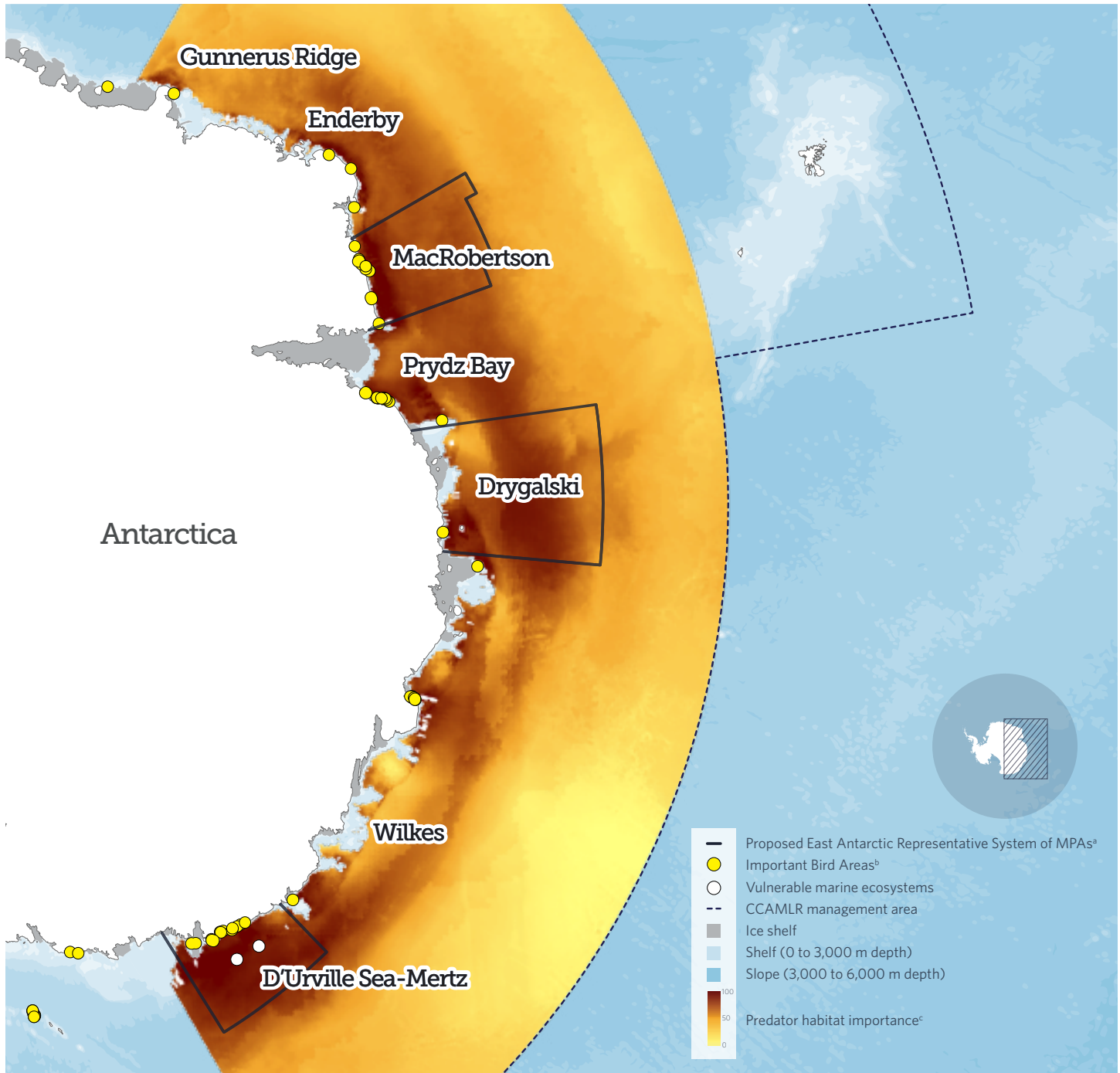




# Protection for East Antarctica

Continuing momentum for safeguarding vital Southern Ocean waters



Predicted habitat importance for predators in East Antarctica, including Antarctic fur seals, light-mantled albatrosses, Adélie and emperor penguins, and southern elephant and Weddell seals (modified after Raymond et al., 2014). Yellow circles represent Important Bird Areas, which are identified using an internationally agreed-upon set of criteria as being globally important for the conservation of bird populations.

Sources: <sup>a</sup> Australian Department of the Environment, "Proposed Marine Protected Areas"; <sup>b</sup> C.M. Harris et al., *Important Bird Areas in Antarctica 2014 Summary*, BirdLife International and Environmental Research & Assessment Ltd.; <sup>c</sup> B. Raymond et al., "Important Marine Habitat off East Antarctica Revealed by Two Decades of Multi-species Predator Tracking," *Ecography* 38, no. 2 (2014): 121-29, doi:10.1111/ecog.01021.

## Protection for East Antarctica

In the waters off East Antarctica, the MacRobertson, Drygalski, and D'Urville Sea-Mertz areas cover almost a million square kilometres. Together, they make up the current proposal for a system of marine protected areas (MPA) to be considered by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The Pew Charitable Trusts supports establishment of no-take marine reserves because evidence shows that they help strengthen ecosystems and rebuild biodiversity. Marine reserves also can boost climate resilience. Specifically, no-take reserves can help the oceans and the planet adapt to six key impacts of a changing climate: ocean acidification, sea level rise, increased storm intensity, shifts in species distribution, and decreased biological productivity, and oxygen availability.

## Recommendations

In 2017, CCAMLR should adopt permanent MPAs for the MacRobertson, Drygalski, and D'Urville Sea-Mertz regions. The Commission should clearly indicate which areas are fully protected from fishing. In particular, it should:

- Designate the shelf depressions in each of the three MPAs as no-take zones to safeguard shelf area habitats.
- Designate the entire D'Urville Sea-Mertz MPA as no-take to protect foraging and breeding grounds of emperor and Adélie penguins. Some Adélie colonies in the area have experienced significant chick die-offs in recent years.
- Create a no-take MPA in the D'Urville Sea-Mertz area, which in addition to providing protections for at-risk Adélie penguin colonies would best meet the critical conservation objectives to safeguard:
  - Food webs and foraging grounds for other seabirds and marine mammals.
  - The biodiversity associated with canyons and ice shelves.
  - Vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), both known and unknown.
  - Nursery areas for important Antarctic forage species, such as Antarctic silverfish.
- Adopt in subsequent years previously proposed MPAs in the Gunnerus, Enderby, Prydz Bay, and Wilkes areas to ensure full protection of East Antarctica.
- Increase no-take protections within the East Antarctic representative system of MPAs as new data and information about threats and risks to these ecosystems emerge, including the discovery of new VMEs.

**Contact:** Barbara Cvrkel, communications officer **Email:** [bcvrkel@pewtrusts.org](mailto:bcvrkel@pewtrusts.org) **Project website:** [pewtrusts.org/penguins](http://pewtrusts.org/penguins)

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