

Teachers Notes

- There are only 4 "Scott's Huts" in the world, including the original. This is one of them.
- Scott's Hut was built in 1911 by Robert Falcon Scott at Cape Evans during his British Antarctic Expedition; it was a prefabricated house brought over from England. Insulation was provided by seaweed sewn into a quilt and placed in the walls and roof.
- Antarctica is one of the harshest habitats on the planet - the lowest recorded temperature is -89.6 degrees with winds getting up to 327 km/h. Despite these conditions Scott described being "*simply overwhelmed with [the huts] comfort*" after having spent several weeks on the boat they had sailed to Antarctica which was trapped in the sheet ice surrounding the continent.
- There was a complete scientific laboratory set up in the hut; it is the earliest complete record of climate in Antarctica. We can use it to compare to the modern day climate and see changes over time.
- In August of 1911, 12 men attempted to trek to the South Pole. With them they had dog teams, ponies and motorized sleighs. They broke into 3 groups of 4 with Scott's team using the motorized vehicles. These were a failure which left the men along with the dogs and ponies dragging all the supplies.
- The explorers used sleeping bags made of reindeer fur. Sleeping bags, boots and fur mitts would freeze solid and would break if roughly handled! It could take up to 45 minutes to break into a sleeping bag.
- They left supply deposits every 105 km for the return journey.
- By December the ponies had to be killed and used for food – both because they were short on supplies and also because the ponies could not stand the Antarctic climate.
- At 870km from the Hut one party were sent home – there were not enough supplies.
- At 1,207km from the Hut the second party were sent home.
- There were 5 left – Scott and 4 others. In January, just 43km from the South Pole, came a crushing blow – they encountered supplies left by the Norwegian explorer Amundson and his team. There was a note stating that they had been there just a month before. Scott had been beaten.
- They ventured on to the South Pole regardless, and then turned around to face the 1,450 km trek home.
- In February – Evans fell and suffered a concussion resulting in his death.
- In March, Oates celebrated his birthday by making the ultimate sacrifice. With supplies so low that he knew they couldn't all survive, he simply walked out to his death. He left behind a note simply saying "I am just going outside, and I might be some time..."

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- Later that same month, just 17km from one of their supply deposits, a blizzard hit the last 3 remaining men. This was the end for Scott and his team – all perished. In October a search party discovered their frozen bodies huddled in their tent.
- Abandoned since 1917, Scott's Hut remains well preserved due to the sub-freezing temperatures and efforts by New Zealand and the UK (mainly removing snow and ice build-up).
- Despite the harsh conditions that were the end for these early explorers, some animals flourish in sub-Antarctic habitats! Our penguins are 2 such species.
- The 2 species of penguins we have here are Gentoo penguins and King penguins. King penguins are the larger ones and are actually the second largest penguin in the world. Gentoos are the smaller ones and are the third largest in the world. Both of our penguins have come from zoos – none were taken from the wild. The Gentoo's came from Edinburgh zoo in 1994 and the Kings came from San Diego in 1995.
- Penguins are able to survive in this harsh habitat because of adaptations. They have a layer of blubber around their bodies that acts as insulation. In fact it can act a bit too well and if you see penguins lying down, this generally means they are a bit warm and they are cooling off on the ice.
- They are able to swim in very cold water – the water here is about 6 degrees – because they have a layer of oil over their feathers that make them water proof. You might see some rubbing their beak on the base of their tail – that is where the oil gland is located. They then spread the oil over their feathers.
- Penguins need water as well – but this is technically a desert since all the fresh water is frozen, so how do they get around this? There is a simple solution; they just eat the ice and snow. You might see them doing it now. The ice and snow will simply melt in their bodies to provide fresh water.
- At certain times of the year we have chicks in the enclosure. The brown fluffy ones are baby King penguins; as you can see they do not have oily feathers so they cannot swim yet. We run a breeding program which has been very successful. If you watch closely you can probably see the penguins "courting" each other! Males will present females with gifts like stones; they will sing to each other and make nests out of stones or even balls of ice.
- To identify the penguins we use the coloured tags on their wings. You can use the chart on the wall in the walkway to try and identify some.
- You can listen to the penguin feed at 11.30 for more information – ask our staff at the rock pools more about penguins. Interesting topics include same sex couples in penguins and enrichment.