

# Activities for Primary Students



## Mawson

Douglas Mawson led the Australian expedition to the Antarctic from 1911 to 1914. In February 1913 Mawson returned from a gruelling sledge expedition that claimed the lives of his two companions, struggling through blizzards back to base camp alone, on

the brink of death, only hours after the ship, *Aurora* had left. The following is an extract from a telegram he sent to his friend Professor Edgeworth David on 3 March 1913:

...on December fourteenth while exploring new coast line three hundred miles south east of winter quarters Ninnis with one dog team and almost all the food disappeared into an unfathomable crevasse Mertz and I with inadequate provisions and six starving dogs struck out over the plateau for the hut encountering unexpectedly bad weather retarding our progress we subsisted chiefly upon the dogs on January seventh Mertz died from causes arising from malnutrition...

NAA: MP341/1, 1915/2307



What personal qualities would Mawson have needed to endure this experience and to go on to lead further expeditions to Antarctica? List the qualities, and create a poem that captures Mawson's character.



Oversnow vehicle ANARE Weasel No. 2, Mawson Station, 1954 (detail). RG Dovers. AAD: I38A4

Weddell seal, Casey Station (detail). Photograph © C Wilson, AAD

## Transport

Even in summer the cold temperatures and strong winds in Antarctica make getting around a challenging experience. The exhibition includes a manhauling harness made of canvas and rope from the 1911-14 expedition. The harness was attached to the sled and each member of the sledging party would take turns to haul the sled. A sled would be heavily loaded with all the food and equipment needed by the sledging party.



What are the main differences between transport in Antarctica now and 100 years ago?

## Communication

In February 1913 the Australian Antarctic Expedition sent the first radio messages from Antarctica to the Australian mainland. These messages were tapped out in Morse code. Today expeditioners communicate with home by satellite phone and email.



How do you think that this change in technology has affected the life and work of Antarctic expeditioners? What are the advantages of regular communication? Can you think of any disadvantages?

## Soundscape

The exhibition includes sounds from Antarctica of wildlife (penguins and seals), nature (a gale and sea ice) and expeditioners at work (a helicopter and an icebreaker).



What would you include in a soundscape that captures some of the significant experiences in your life? Work with a group and record five different sounds to make a soundscape of your day.

## A challenging environment

You can see real time images from Mawson Station in Antarctica on webcam, by visiting [www.antarctica.gov.au/webcams/mawson](http://www.antarctica.gov.au/webcams/mawson).



What is the current outside temperature at Mawson? What is the wind speed? What would you need to wear for working in these conditions?



Imagine that you have been selected as an expeditioner to be stationed at Mawson for one year. How would you occupy the many hours that you will be forced to spend inside? What might you need to take with you to prepare for your free time?

## Preserving Antarctica

A century of exploration and scientific observations have led to greater understanding of the fragility of the Antarctic environment. One of the direct results is changes in the attitude to, and use of, animals in Antarctica.

Huskies are no longer a part of the Antarctic landscape. Although they provided valuable assistance by hauling sledges, and were valuable companions to Antarctic expeditioners, it was feared that huskies could have a negative impact on local wildlife such as penguins and seals. In 1991, the international Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty banned all introduced species from being taken into the Antarctic.



In a class discussion, list the advantages and disadvantages of taking huskies to Antarctica. Use a PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) activity to record your thoughts about the statement: 'Huskies have made a valuable contribution to Antarctic exploration'.

