Best Practice for Minimising Remotely Piloted Aircraft System Disturbance to Wildlife in Biological Field Research
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A Background Paper submitted by SCAR

Background
The increasing use and utility of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), which are now preferably known as Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), across the globe, including in Antarctic, brings corresponding challenges to their management. The CEP has recognised on several occasions the need for more information to inform guidelines on RPAS use around wildlife in Antarctica, including a request for SCAR to present a summary of the current state of knowledge regarding wildlife responses to RPAS (see WP 20). Best practice guidelines for minimising RPAS disturbance to wildlife have been developed and published (see Attachment A) and should be considered in Antarctic biological field research.

Summary
The best practice guidelines presented in the peer-reviewed article by Hodgson and Koh (2016) cover seven main areas:

1. Adopt the precautionary principle in lieu of evidence.
2. Utilise the institutional animal ethics process to provide oversight to RPAS-derived animal observations and experiments.
3. Adhere to relevant civil aviation rules and adopt equipment maintenance and operator training schedules.
4. Select appropriate RPAS and sensor equipment.
5. Exercise minimum wildlife disturbance flight practices.
6. Cease RPAS operations if they are excessively disruptive.
7. Detailed, accurate reporting of methods and results in publications.

More details on these principles are provided in the paper at Attachment A.