

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Note for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

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2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

1 February, 2003 (Updated: 19 March 2004)

3. Country: Mongolia

4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Lake Achit and its surrounding wetlands. ("Nuur" stands for lake in Mongolian)

5. Map of site included:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.

a) hard copy (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes* -or- *no*

b) digital (electronic) format (optional): *yes* -or- *no*

6. **Geographical coordinates** (latitude/longitude): N49°40", E90° 35"

7. General location:

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

The Lake Achit Nuur is located in western part of Mongolia, at province borders between Bayan-Ulgii and Uvs *Aimags* (provinces), about 60 km from Ulgii town (about 21,000 inhabitants) and about 110 km from Ulaangom town (about 26,500 inhabitants). From the lake about 20 km to the northwest located Bokhmuren *Soum* (county) and Nogoon-nuur *Soum* centers. In the south-east of the lake Khovd *Soum* center is located at a distance of 25km.

8. Elevation: (average and/or max. & min.) **1,435 m a.s.l.**
ha

9. Area: (in hectares) 73,730

10. Overview:

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

This is a freshwater lake in the Khovd River basin, in the west of Mongolia. The total area of the wetland consists of Achit lake area-29,680 ha, Lake Usan Khooloi-450 ha, Island Devel Nature Reserve in Khovd River-1,030 ha and surrounding wetlands of the lake Achit. It is one of important breeding and resting place for a great variety of water birds. Several endemic fish species occur in the lake.

11. Ramsar Criteria:

Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

Criterion 1. The Achit Lake is the largest freshwater lake in the Mongolian Altai Mountain range. The lake itself and the surrounding areas is area unique for this region attracting a lot of waterbirds in summer time. This lake belongs to *Altai-Sayan* Ecoregion, one of 200 Eco-regions identified by the WWF.

Criterion 2: The Achit lake supports 3 species classified as very rare and 8 species as rare by f the Mongolian Law on Fauna (Environmental Laws of Mongolia, 1999); 15 species included in the Mongolian Red Book (Red Book of Mongolia, 1997) such as Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*), Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*), Whooper Swan (*Cygnus Cygnus*), Bar-headed Goose (*Eulabeia Indica*), Swan Goose (*Cygnopsis cygnoides*), White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), Common Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*), Houbara Bustard (*Chlamidotis undulata*), Asian Dowitcher (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*), and Great Black-headed-Gull (*Larus ichtyaetus*); 9 species - in the Asian Red Book (Threatened birds of Asia, 2001); 3 species - in the CITES Appendix I, 25 species - in CITES Appendix II (CITES Handbook, 2001); 2 and 28 species in the Appendix I and II of the Convention on Protection of Migratory Fauna, respectively. (See table 1 and 2 *Birds of Achit Lake.xls*)

Criterion 3. The Common Pheasant (*Phasianus Colchicus*) inhabits only in two places in Mongolia and one of them is in the island *Devel* in Khovd River and in the lake *Usan-Khooloi*, flowing out from *Achit-Nuur*. This bird is enlisted in the Red Book of Mongolia. There exists beaver (*Castor Fiber Birulai*), which is also enlisted in the Red Book of Mongolia. This place attracts a lot of waterbirds, which spend summer here for laying their eggs. This lake has rich fish resources. *Oreoleuciscus pewzowi*, *O.potanini*, *O.humilis* and *Thymallus brevirostrus* are found in the lake and surrounding wetlands. In former time there was state owned and operated fishing enterprise, which exported fish to former Soviet Union.

Criterion 6. The site supports the following species whose populations exceed 1% of the relevant biogeographic population (see Table 2): Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) 300 (1.7%), Black Stork (*Ciconia Nirga*) 4 (4%) and Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) 500 (1%)

Criterion 7.

A number of endemic fish species occur in the lake such as *Oreoleuciscus pewzowi*, *O.potanini*, *O.humilis* and *Thymallus brevirostrus*.

13. Biogeography (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

a) biogeographic region:

By general bio-geographical classification Mongolia belongs to the Holarctical region (Voronov, A.G. 1963, 1985, Lame, 1966) and Achit Lake basin is a region with flora and fauna influenced by European type from north-west, by Siberian type from north, by Central Asian type from the south.

Achit lake region belongs to Central Asian Mountainous-desert's bird region, Mongol Altain Mountainous-desert's provinces, since here occurs *Melanitta deglandi*, *Phasianus colchicus* etc (Bold A. 1990).

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

14. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

The Lake located in the intermountain basin, surrounded by Mongolian Altai Mountains in the west, Mungen Taiga Mountain in the north and Kharkhiraa-Turgen Mountain in the east. Lake area is 296.8 sq. km. The length of lake is 24.0 km, width is 18.0 km and perimeter is 90.0 km. Average depth is 2 m, and the maximum depth is 5 m. pH=8.2. Mineralization is 180 mg/liter. (J.Tserensodnom, 2000).

Along the northern part of the lake, there are many small lakes and wetlands. There is also *Usan Khooloi* lake (1460 m. a.s.l) in the south of the lake Achit. The area of this lake is 4.5 sq.km, length is 4.1 km, and width is 2.4 km. The *Achit-Nuur* and its marshy territory belong to the *Devel* Nature reserve and its area is 10.3 sq.km.

About 50 % of the lake area supports aquatic vegetation, particularly in the southwestern and southeastern parts. There are extensive marshy areas around the lake, especially in the northwest. The lake reaches its maximum temperature of 19.2-21.1°C in June and July, frozen from November to May. Ice depth reaches 1.1–1.3 m. Extreme continental climate, modified by altitude. Coldest air temperature observed in January and the warmest in July.

15. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

Total lake watershed area is 10,500 sq.km. The Lake receives inflows of rivers Tsagaan, Hatuu, Bokhmuren and Uliastai from the northwest. The rivers are forming large deltas with trees and bushes, which are attracting many species. The outflow in the southeast forms the Usan-hooloi Lake, which is a tributary of the Khovd River. Regarding the climate condition of the basin, average temperature in January is -17.6- 19.8° C, in July +14-+16.5° C and the annual average temperature is -1.8° C. The warm period lasts 88-110 days. The annual average precipitation is 90-170 mm. The permafrost widely spread and the depth of frozen soil in winter is 2.9-4.5 m below land surface. Close to the lake, mostly distributed light brown, brown and green brown soils (Dorjgotov D. 1976).

16. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

The lake belongs to the Internal Drainage basin in Mongolia and is therefore of fundamental importance for the ground water recharge of the area.

17. Wetland Types

a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar “Classification System for Wetland Type” present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K •
Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Ip • Ts • U •
Va •
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

O, L, M, Ip, W

18. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

The principle habitats occurring with Achit Lake desert steppe, saline steppe, salt marsh, fresh water marsh and riparian zones. Develin aral Natural Reserve is located directly south of Achit Lake. This unique riparian environment is home to increasingly rare animal species in Mongolia including the ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa nigripes*) and beaver (*Castorfiber birulai*). In addition, the Achit Lake provides important habitat for many migratory birds

19. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

Semi-desert plant communities surround the wetland. The flora of Achit-Nuur area is unique by its composition and there are many representatives of Altai-Sayan and Zhungar-Turan flora.

Comment: Is it right?

The rare plants as Shining Water Lily - *Nymphaea candida* and Dwarf Dock - *Nuphar pumila* are of great importance in this marshy place. There are bushes, red-Kharagana, broom grasses that grow on stream banks and marshy ground around the lake Achit-Nuur.

20. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

There are some endemic fish species: *Oreoleuciscus pewzowi*, *O.potanini*, *O.humilis* and *Thymallus brevirostrus* are found in Achit lake and rivers. The Usan khooloi Lake (river), which flows out from Achit-Nuur, flows into Khovd river shelters a lot of fauna representatives. For instance, beaver which has become very rare in Mongolia and the reedbed wild boars. From the fishes, Mongolian grayling (*Thymallus brevirostris kessler*) inhabits the lake and rivers.

There are 158 species of birds of 100 geniuses from 41 families of 18 orders, inhabiting the Achit-Nuur Lake and Devel island. 34 bird species of them are settled and 124 are migratory. 97 migrating bird species lay eggs, 10 passing by, 1 passes winter, 1 is observed accidentally in the area, and for another 15 species it has not been identified the style of inhabiting yet. (Sushkin P.P., 1938, Piechoki, 1968, Piechoki, Bolod, 1972, Fomin B. E., Bold A. 1991, Tseveenmyadag N., 1993). In the table 1, shown the names of birds in Latin, and English and the international documents and acts, protecting these birds, classified by Stepanyan L.S. (1990)

21. Social and cultural values:

e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc. Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

The wetland has a high potential for eco-tourism, recreation, environmental education and scientific research and fishing.

The inhabitants around the Achit-Nuur Lake are engaged in livestock breeding and agricultural production. People like to come to this site for fishing and recreation. However because of weak infrastructure development and remote location, the tourism has not been

developed in this area. There are secondary schools, hospitals, cultural centers and kindergarten in the center of *Soums*.

Paleontologists found remains of ancient Turkish scripts, named *Shanagankhev*, in north-western part of *Achit-Nuur* Lake.

22. Land tenure/ownership:

(a) within the Ramsar site:

(b) in the surrounding area:

The wetland and the surrounding areas are state owned.

23. Current land (including water) use:

(a) within the Ramsar site:

The general form of land use is nomadic and animal husbandry in the surrounding areas. The herdsmen breed sheep, goats, camels, horses and cattle. There is no crop production or industry near by the lake. Commercial fishing was not developed, at the present. However, there is former experience in commercial fishing in the lake. There are no settlements within the wetlands.

Comment: Check!

(b) in the surroundings/catchment:

The 2 small *Soum* centers (Nogoon-Nuur and Bukhmuren) located about 20 km in the north-west of the lake. In the south-east of the lake in about 25 km located Khovd *Soum* center. Altantsogts *Soum* located in about 40 km in the south-west of the lake. There is some small scaled agricultural land near by settlements in the lake basin. Main business of local people is livestock breeding.

The following is some detailed information about the 2 *Soums* (Altantsogts and Nogoon-Nuur). (Mongolian Statistical Book-1999, 2000)

Altantsogts soum has 1.8 thousand sq.km territory. Its population is 3259 people and there are 762 families.

- 52.2 percent of the population live in the soum center and 47,8 per cent live in the countryside. Most soum people are engaged in livestock breeding. This soum has in total 67890 livestock and there are 454 camels, 3565 horses, 3074 cattle, 26805 sheep, 33992 goats. The soum residents grows potatoes and other vegetables in a small scale, only for their own need. In 2001 they planted potatoes in 35 hectares and harvested 445 tons of potatoes, cultivated vegetables on 16.5 hectares and harvested 16.3 tons of vegetables. Annually, they make hay in the valley of rivers. In 1996-2000 harvested about 2 thousand tons of hay at an average and in 2001 harvested 86.4 tons of hay. There is only one secondary school with 522 pupils.

Nogoon-Nuur soum has 5.2 thousand sq.km territory. Total population is 7268 people.

- 30.2 percent of the soum population live in the soum center and 69,8 percent live in the countryside. Most inhabitants are engaged in livestock breeding. The soum has one secondary school with 1246 pupils. Soum's total livestock is 110,457 and from them camels are 456, horses 5147, cattle 5351, sheep 45587, goats 53916. In 2001, totally 5070 heads of livestock were decreased, because of cold winter. 5700 tons of hay is harvested in 2001. Local people grow potatoes. In 2001 harvested 400 tons of potatoes from 20 hectares and 200 tons vegetables from 10 hectares.

24. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:

(a) within the Ramsar site:

(b) in the surrounding area:

The local people live mostly in marshy areas around the lake. They use trees and bushes, growing near the lake and river valleys as firewood. Sometimes, they hunt on beavers and reed boars and collect wild fruits. These are usually controlled by local Soum authorities. Local people make hay mostly in the valley of *Khovd* river. Domestic cattle use lake and rivers as a water source. There is no detailed information on factors adversely affecting the environment. At the moment ecological conditions of the wetland are good.

25. Conservation measures taken:

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

Southern part of the wetland is the *Devel* Natural Reserve, which was taken under the State protection in 2000. This natural reserve occupies 1,030 ha. (Oyangerel B. 2000). In the *Devel* island inhabits reed boars, beavers. Traditional livestock breeding is allowed in the Reserve, so that it will not harm the natural condition, its resources, living condition of certain animals and plants. It is prohibited within the Reserve to build any constructions, to maintain production, to dig the land, to make geological survey, to mine, to hunt, to prepare fire woods etc.

Management of the Reserve belongs to the Administration Office of the Special Protected Areas in Mongol Altai Mountain Range, in Ulgii town, Bayan-Ulgii Aimag. There is not yet developed management plan for the Reserve. It is time now to work out the *Devel* natural reserve management plan. The management plan should cover the issues for improving the protection and environmental studies of the *Achit-Nuur and Devel* island.

26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

It is necessary to protect marsh place of *Achit-Nuur* Lake in order to create favorable condition for the reproduction of breeding of the water birds, especially to carry out biotechnical activity in this area where the migrating birds gather in a huge number to nest their eggs. By making biotechnical measures, to lay down channels for open stream of water from the lake along the reeds so that the migrating birds could nest their eggs or to create artificial nests for them. It is quite possible to widen the *Devel* natural reserve by including the marsh area of *Achit-Nuur* lake. Once a proposal was worked out to take under the state protection the territory around *Achit-Nuur* Lake covering 841,000 sq.km land, but this proposal was not supported.

27. Current scientific research and facilities:

e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

There are no current research projects and field station within the wetland. However, scientists began to study the *Achit-Nuur* Lake since 1962, mainly for determining basic morphological characteristics, such as area, depth etc. (J.Tserensodnom, 1971, 2000).

28. Current conservation education:

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

There are no educational facilities, e.g. visiting centers, observation hides etc.

29. Current recreation and tourism:

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

For the time being, there is no any tourist or recreation centre. Only during the summer season, tourists and hunters are used to visit the place. This lake has very good potential to attract future development of tourist facilities.

30. Jurisdiction:

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

Territorial: 2 *Soums* (Nogoon-nuur, Altantsogts) of Bayan-Ulgii Aimag and 2 *Soums* (Bukhmuren and Khovd) of Uvs *Aimag* are within the lake basin.

Functional: The *Soum's* Governor Office in each 4 *Soum* centers. Administration of the Devel Nature Reserve is under the Division on Management of Special Protected Areas of the Ministry of Nature and the Environment. Government House No.3, Baga toiruu 44, Ulaanbaatar 11, MONGOLIA .

The nature protection activity is being carried out in line with the law on Environment and Nature of Mongolia, as well as State Administration Law of Mongolia. The law about special protected area of Mongolia is being applied in the Devel Nature Reserve.

31. Management authority:

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Local management of the wetland and its surrounding areas are belonging to the Ministry for Nature and Environment Mongol Altai Mountain range Special Protected Areas Administration,
Director A.Atai
P.O.Box-103 Olgii sum, Bayan Olgii aimag
Phone: 976 01422 22111
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E-mail: manspaa@mongol.net

Soum's Governor office in Nogoonnuur sum, Bayan Olgii aimag M.Aldanish
Phone: 976 01422 26514

32. Bibliographical references:

scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

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17. **Sushkin, P.P., 1938.** Birds of the Soviet Altai and adjacent parts of north-western Mongolia. Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of USSR Press. [In Russian]
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20. **Tserensodnom J., 1971**, Mongolian lakes, "Ulsiin Hevlel" Publishing, Ulaanbaatar, (in Mongolian)
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23. **Tugarinov, A.Ya. 1932.** Birds of East Mongolia on the results of the 1928 year expedition in Procs of Mongolian Commission. Acad. Sci. Publ. House, Leningrad (1):46 pp. [In Russian]
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26. **Wetlands International 2002 .** Waterfowl Population Estimates-Third Edition. Wetlands International Global SeriesNo12 Wageningen, The Netherlands

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