

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

January 1999

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Designation date

2 m n 0 0 5

Site Reference Number

2. Country: Mongolia

3. Name of wetland: Har Us Nuur National Park

4. Geographical coordinates: Whole Area: 92°50'E / 47°58'N

Har Us Nuur Lake: 92°19'E / 48°05'N; Har Nuur/Dorgon Nuur Lakes: 93°17'E / 47°51'N

5. Altitude: Har Us Nuur: 1160m

6. Area: 3213.6 km²

Har Nuur/Dorgon Nuur: 1106 m

7. Overview: The area belongs to the Central Asian Internal Drainage Basin. It is characterized by the three large but shallow lakes Har Us Nuur, Har Nuur and Dorgon Nuur and their tributaries from the surrounding Altai mountains. Vast reed beds and numerous water plant communities offer various habitats for a large number of waterfowl. It is a regular breeding site or at least summer resting site for 9 nationally and 4 globally endangered waterbird species. Three fish species occur here that are endemic to Western Mongolia.

8. Wetland Type: Inland wetland, L, M, O, Q, Sp, Ss, Tp,

9. Ramsar Criteria: 1a, 1c / 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d / 3a, 3b, 3c / 4a

10. Map of site included? Please tick yes -or- no

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

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12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page.

Criteria 1a and 1c: The lakes of Har Us Nuur National Park are a substantial part of the biogeographical region of the Great Lakes Basin in West Mongolia and highly representative for this area.

Criteria 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d: The area is home to a large number of rare and endangered plants, birds and mammals (2a). A number of endemic plants and fish occur here (2d). The ecological diversity is extremely high as is reflected in the list of observed waterfowl in two short time periods (2b). Many of the species breed our moult in the area (2c).

Criteria 3a, 3b, 3c: The wetland regularly supports more than 20,000 waterfowl (3a). It regularly supports 11 nationally and 5 globally endangered waterbird species or wetland related raptors and some other occur in substantial numbers. The diversity is very high (3b). The area regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of 9 waterbird species (3c). Especially for the application of criterion 3 see the report of LIEGL (1998).

Criteria 4a: The diversity of fish species is with only five quite low, but they are all endemic to West Mongolia.

13. General location: The site is located in the northwest of Mongolia. It belongs to the Hovd province, the capital, Hovd City, is situated 30 km west of the area.

14. Physical features:

Please note the following Mongolian words: nuur = lake, gol = river

The area is part of the Hyargas depression, which is the center part of the West Mongolian Great Lakes Basin. The Mongolian Altai in the west, the Saján Mountains in the north, the Khangay Mountain range in the east and the Gobi Altai in the south surround the basin. The mountains rise up to 3000 and 4000 masl, while the elevation of the basin is between 1000 and 1200 masl. The main water inflow comes from the Mongolian Altai by the permanent rivers Hovd Gol and Bujant Gol. They drain into Har Us Nuur Lake, which has an outflow -Chono Khariakhin Gol - at its northeastern end into Har Nuur Lake. From here on the water feeds the saline Dorgon Nuur, while Har Us Nuur and Har Nuur are freshwater lakes. The lakes are shallow with maximum depth from 4.5 m (Har Us Nuur), 7 m (Har Nuur) to 27 m (Dorgon Nuur). The water level of the lakes is slightly changing during the year due to summer rainfalls and is highest in the months of August to October (Data for Har Us Nuur in BRÄUNLICH (1995).

Average temperatures are low with the coldest month in January (mean monthly temperature -25.5°C) and the warmest in July (mean monthly temperatures 19.1°C). The winters are long and cold and keep the lakes covered with ice from mid of November

until April. Precipitation is low throughout the year (annual average in Hovd City 122 mm) and most of it falls during summer between June and August.

15. **Hydrological values:** The lakes of Har Us Nuur, Har Nuur and Dorgon Nuur belong to an internal drainage basin and are therefore of fundamental importance for the ground water recharge of the area.

16. **Ecological features:** Large areas of the lakes are covered by floating and submerse vegetation (*Nymphaea spec.*, *Nuphar spec.*, *Potamogeton spec.*). The marshes are dominated by *Phragmites communis*. A list of the wetland plants of South Har Us Nuur is appended.

17. **Noteworthy flora:**

Endangered plants according to the Red Book of Mongolia:

Nymphaea candida

Cynomorium songaricum

18. **Noteworthy fauna:**

Mammals: The Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa nigripes*) is an endangered species in Mongolia and listed in the Red data book of Mongolia as rare. Nowadays it only occurs in the Hovd Gol Delta in remarkable numbers. A survey in 1997 found about 40 to 60 animals in that area.

Birds: The following list includes the most interesting waterbird observations, a complete list of the waterbird census in 1998 is appended:

| Species | Red Book MGL | Glob. threatened | Ramsar 1%-level |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> | | | X |
| <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | | | X |
| <i>Casmerodius albus</i> | X | | X |
| <i>Platalea leucorodia</i> | X | | X |
| <i>Cygnus olor</i> | X | | X |
| <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> | X | | |
| <i>Anser cygnoides</i> | X | X | |
| <i>Anser anser</i> | | | X |
| <i>Anser indicus</i> | X | | |
| <i>Anas strepera</i> | | | X |
| <i>Netta rufina</i> | | | X |
| <i>Aythya nyroca</i> | | X | |
| <i>Oxyura leucocephala</i> | X | X | X |
| <i>Limnodromus</i> | X | X | |
| <i>Larus ichthyaetus</i> | X | | |
| <i>Larus relictus</i> | X | X | |
| <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i> | X | | |
| <i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i> | | X | |

The area is a former breeding site of the Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*). Pelicans have been hunted in Mongolia for their beaks, because the upper mandible is a desired status symbol for race horse owners. In the last years there have been no more breeding records, but passing birds are sometimes sighted. A return of the pelican to Har Us Nuur National Park is still possible.

Fish: Five fish species live in the waters of Har Us Nuur National Park. That are all endemic to West Mongolia: *Thymallus brevirostris*, *Oreoleuciscus pewzowi*, *Oreoleuciscus humilis*, *Oreoleuciscus potanini* and *Noemacheilus strauchi*.

19. Social and cultural values: The area has high social values for tourism, recreation, scientific research, education, water supply, fishing and grazing. The last two factors might affect the wetland negatively (illegal fishing, overgrazing of the reedbeds). An important cultural value of the area is the high number of different ethnic groups that are living here together. A number of sacred places (small hills and sacrifice places) and archeological sites (stone carving and deerstone near Telin Gol) are spread in the area.

20. Land tenure/ownership of: The wetland and the surrounding are state owned.

21. Current land use: The general form of land use is semi-nomadic animal husbandry. The herdsmen breed sheep, goats, camels, horses and cattle. The annual nomadic migration system is very complex. Main moving directions are from the lake shores to the foothills of the adjacent mountains and vice versa, but not all families are moving into the same direction at the same time of the year. Main patterns are a regular distribution at the lakes in spring and autumn, a movement out of the wetland in summer (mid June to September) and a concentration of families in winter at the vast reed beds, which are used as grazing areas than. Hunting and fishing is of little importance.

Also in the surroundings and the catchment areas of the wetland, animal husbandry is by far the dominating factor. There is some crop production near the village of Chandman and along Bujant River, where near the settlements of Mjangad and Bujant about 600 ha of land are under cultivation. There is only little industry in Hovd City.

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

At the site: A hydroelectric power plant is in planning at Chono Khariakhin Gol, the connection between Har Us Nuur and Har Nuur. The construction of a dam would have a serious impact on the water level, the aquatic plants, the limnofauna and the migration ways

of fishes. The place where the power plant is planned to be, has already been excluded of the proposed conservation area during the establishment period of the national park.

Livestock numbers have drastically risen in the last years. Overgrazing of pastureland is therefore a problem along the shorelines and the reedbeds of the wetland as well as in the surrounding areas.

In 1967, the Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*) was introduced to Har Us Nuur for fur production. Since then it has widely spread in the whole area and the massive appearance regularly destroys parts of the reedbeds.

23. Conservation measures taken: The area was set aside as national park in 1997. According to the Mongolian Law on Protected Areas a national park is the second highest conservation category. A park administration with 5 fulltime employees is established. The ranger system includes 5 rangers in the 5 surrounding settlements (=somens) and is provided with some equipment (horses, binocular, info material about the legal status etc.). The rangers are trained in enforcement of environmental legislation.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: A general management plan and a public awareness program are in preparation. At the moment an information center is being established at the national park administration building in Hovd City. The park administration began to take agreements with the herdsman about using of pastureland. At present, WWF Mongolia is trying to raise funds for a comprehensive environmental impact assessment for the hydroelectric power plant in planning at Chono Khariakhin Gol.

25. Current scientific research and facilities: A botanical survey, a survey about zooplankton, a census of wild boar and a waterbird census have recently been carried out. In Hovd City a university is situated, but there are no special research facilities inside the national park.

26. Current conservation education:

For the park staff: Several training for the members of the park administration (PRA training, public awareness) and ranger training has been carried out since the establishment of the national park.

For the public: Training for biology teachers of the 5 concerned settlements took place in Mai 1998. Community meetings in the wetland area, called up for several issues, are used by park staff members for introductions or explanations about the national park whenever possible.

27. Current recreation and tourism: The remoteness of the area from the capital Ulaanbaatar or other big cities keeps the using of the wetland for recreation and tourism very low. There is no public transport to the wetland from Hovd City and tourist facilities like camp sites, tented camps, hotels, bird observation hides etc. are not available at the moment. A small number of guided tours from Ulaanbaatar touch the area for a short time stay mostly in the month from June to September. The interests of tourists are the beauty of the landscape, bird watching and very rarely sport fishing.

28. Jurisdiction:

Territorial: The wetland area belongs to five different somons (= settlements), which are the smallest administrative units in Mongolia (Manchan, Buyant, Myangad, Dorgon and Chandman).

Functional: Nature and Environmental Protection Agency of the Ministry for Nature and the Environment, Governmental House No. 3, Baga Toiruu 44, Ulaanbaatar 11, Tel: 00976-1-326617, Fax: 00976-1-328620, E-mail: Baigyam@magicnet.mn

29. Management authority:

Har Us Nuur National Park Administration,
P.O. Box 151,
Hovd Aimag, Mongolia

30. Bibliographical references:

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