

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

2. Country: Mongolia

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

3. Name of wetland: Ayrag Nuur

4. Geographical coordinates: 93°25' E / 48°53' N

5. Altitude: 1030 m

6. Area: 450 km²

7. Overview: Ayrag Nuur is a shallow freshwater lake in the Mongolian Great Lakes Basin. It is an exceptionally important breeding and resting site for a great variety of waterbirds and the last place in Mongolia, where the Dalmatian Pelican regularly comes to breed. Several endemic fish species occur here.

8. Wetland Type: Inland wetland, L, M, N, O, 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: Ayrag Nuur is a representative example for the shallow lakes that are characteristic of the Great Lakes Basin in West Mongolia.

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

Criteria 3a, 3b, 3c: The wetland regularly supports more than 20,000 waterfowl (3a). It regularly supports 10 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 6 waterbird species (3c). Especially for the application of criterion 3 see the report of LIEGL (1998).

Criteria 4: With 5 species the diversity of fish species is low, but all of them are endemic to West Mongolia.

13. General location: The site is located at the South of the large Hyargas Nuur Lake in West Mongolia, about 150 km southeast of Ulaangom, the capital of Uvs Province and about 150 km northeast of Hovd City, Hovd Province. The small settlement of Dzavkan is about 20 km west of the lake.

14. Physical features:

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

Ayrag Nuur is situated in the northern half of the Hyargas Depression, which is the center part of the West Mongolian Great Lakes Basin. The Mongolian Altai in the west, the Sajon 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 water inflow to Ayrag Nuur comes from the Khangay Mountains by the big Dzavhan Gol and the smaller Khungi Gol. It is connected with the large saline Hyargas Nuur by a deep short channel. The maximum depth of Ayrag Nuur is 10 m, while Hyargas Nuur is up to 80 m deep. The delta of Dzavhan Gol has a very high dynamic due to summer rainfalls. The water level can change quickly and muddy oxbows can be filled with water in a few hours. Precipitation is highest in the months of June to August, but over all low during the year (annual average in Hovd City, about 150 km southwest of Ayrag Nuur: 122mm)

Average temperatures are low with the coldest month in January (mean monthly temperature -25.5°C, Hovd City) and the warmest in July (mean monthly temperatures 19.1°C, Hovd City). The winters are long and cold and keep the lakes of the Hyargas Depression covered with ice from mid of November until April. More details can be found in BRÄUNLICH (1995).

15. Hydrological values: Ayrag Nuur belongs to an internal drainage basin and is therefore of fundamental importance for the ground water recharge of the area.

16. Ecological features: The marshes are dominated by *Phragmites communis*. Floating and submerse vegetation are sparse. Semidesert plant communities surround the wetland.

17. Noteworthy flora: No information available at the moment.

18. Noteworthy fauna:

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

Species	Red Book MGL	Glob. Threatened	Ramsar 1%-level
<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	X	X	X
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			X
<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	X		
<i>Platalea leucorodia</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>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	

Fish: Five fish species live in the waters of Ayrag Nuur, that are all endemic to West Mongolia: *Thymallus brevirostris*, *Oreoleuciscus pewzowi*, *Oreoleuciscus humilis*, *Oreoleuciscus potanini*, *Noemacheilus strauchi*.

19. Social and cultural values: The area has a high value for tourism, recreation, education, scientific research, water supply and fishing. It is also used as pasture land.

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.

In the surroundings and the catchment areas of the wetland, animal husbandry is also by far the dominating factor. There is no crop production or industry near by. Hunting and fishing are of little importance.

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

There has always been grazing of livestock inside the wetland. Raising of livestock numbers might cause overgrazing of the wetland plant communities or disturbance of breeding birds.

23. Conservation measures taken: none

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: The area is planned to be protected as a part of Hyargas Nuur National Park, that will hopefully be set aside in 1999.

25. Current scientific research and facilities: The last survey about waterfowl has been carried out in 1998. There are some older studies about zooplankton and fish.

26. Current conservation education: none

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 Ulaangom or Hovd City and tourist facilities like camp sites, tented camps, hotels, bird observation hides etc. are not available at the moment.

28. Jurisdiction:

Territorial: Dzavhan Sum, Uvs Province

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: At present none. As soon as the area is set aside as national park, management authority will probably be the Uvs Lake Basin strictly protected area administration.

30. Bibliographical references:

BAASANJAV, G. (1998): Study on the biology and ecology of fishes in some larger lakes in the Great Lakes Basin. - WWF Mongolia.(In Mongolian)

BRÄUNLICH, A. (1995): Report on the first WWF Expedition to the Great Lakes Basin, Western Mongolia, May - July 1995, and preliminary recommendations for the establishment of a new protected area. - WWF Mongolia.

DAVIES, J. (1989): Mongolian People's Republic. Pp. 1-30 in: Scott, D.A. (1989): A directory of Asian wetlands. - Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, U.K.: I.U.C.N., the World Conservation Union.

DULMAA, A. (1973): Zur Fischfauna der Mongolei - Mitt. Zool. Mus. Berlin, Bd. 49

LIEGL, C. (1998): Waterfowl in Har Us Nuur National Park and at Ayrag Nuur (Western Mongolia). Report on two Expeditions in June and September 1998. - WWF Mongolia.

SHIIREVDAMBA, Ts. et al. (1997): Mongolian Red Book - Ministry for Nature and the Environment of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.