WWF MONGOLIA

MONGOLIAN PROTECTED AREAS

WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

MONGOL DAGUUR

2021

CONVENTION ON THE WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT

What is the RAMSAR Convention?

The Convention on the Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl habitat was first adopted on a meeting held in the Iranian city of Ramsar in February, 1971. Governments and non-governmental organizations from countries around the world negotiated and adopted the global treaty concerned about increasing loss and degradation of the wetland habitat for migratory water birds, one of the most vulnerable and irreparable ecosystems on the planet, due to a number of factors such as global warming, climate change and improper human activities and recognized the wetland ecosystem must be protected. The Convention is so named for the city Ramsar in Iran, where the treaty came into force. As of 2021, there are 171 Contracting Parties (member countries) and a total of 2,418 wetlands covering 254,563,791 hectares of internationally importance in List in the Appendix to the Ramsar Convention.

Purpose of the Ramsar Convention

A purpose of the Convention is to provide a framework for national and international cooperation for conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Its activities are regulated by inter-governmental treaties and agreements.

A primary reason for global signing the international Convention is to recognize that water fowl in their seasonal migrations do transcend frontiers and so should be regarded as an international resource while considering that the wetlands, their key habitat, must be protected globally through the Convention.

What is the wetland?

Wetlands are basically transition zones between terrestrial and water environments, where a specific ecosystem is created, supported, and interacted by water flows, soil nutrient cycles, and solar energy.

The Ramsar Convention uses a broad definition of the wetlands which include all lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds and their floodplains, wet grasslands, peatland, oasis, estuaries, deltas, mineral water bodies, tidal flats, mangroves, and other coastline areas, coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and salt pans. The definition under the Convention encompasses a variety of the wetlands and encourages preservation, protection, and wise (balanced) use of the globally significant biodiversity thereof through enhanced wetland conservation framework.

How are areas designated and listed as the Ramsar sites?

Countries in the world signed the Convention do commit to designate and nominate suitable wetlands within their territories for the List of Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar List") based on the following nine criteria:

A **Sites containing representative, rare or unique wetland types:**

Criterion 1 Sites contain representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region;

Б Sites of international importance for conserving biological diversity:

Criteria based on species and ecological communities:

Criterion 2 Sites support vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities;

Criterion 3 Sites support populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region;

Criterion 4 Sites support plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provide refuge during adverse conditions;

Specific criteria based on water birds:

Criterion 5 Sites regularly support 20,000 or more individuals of a species or sub-species of water birds;

Criterion 6 Sites regularly support 1% or more of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of water birds;

Specific criteria based on fish:

Criterion 7 Sites support a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and /or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity;

Criterion 8 Sites are an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend;

Specific criteria based on other taxa:

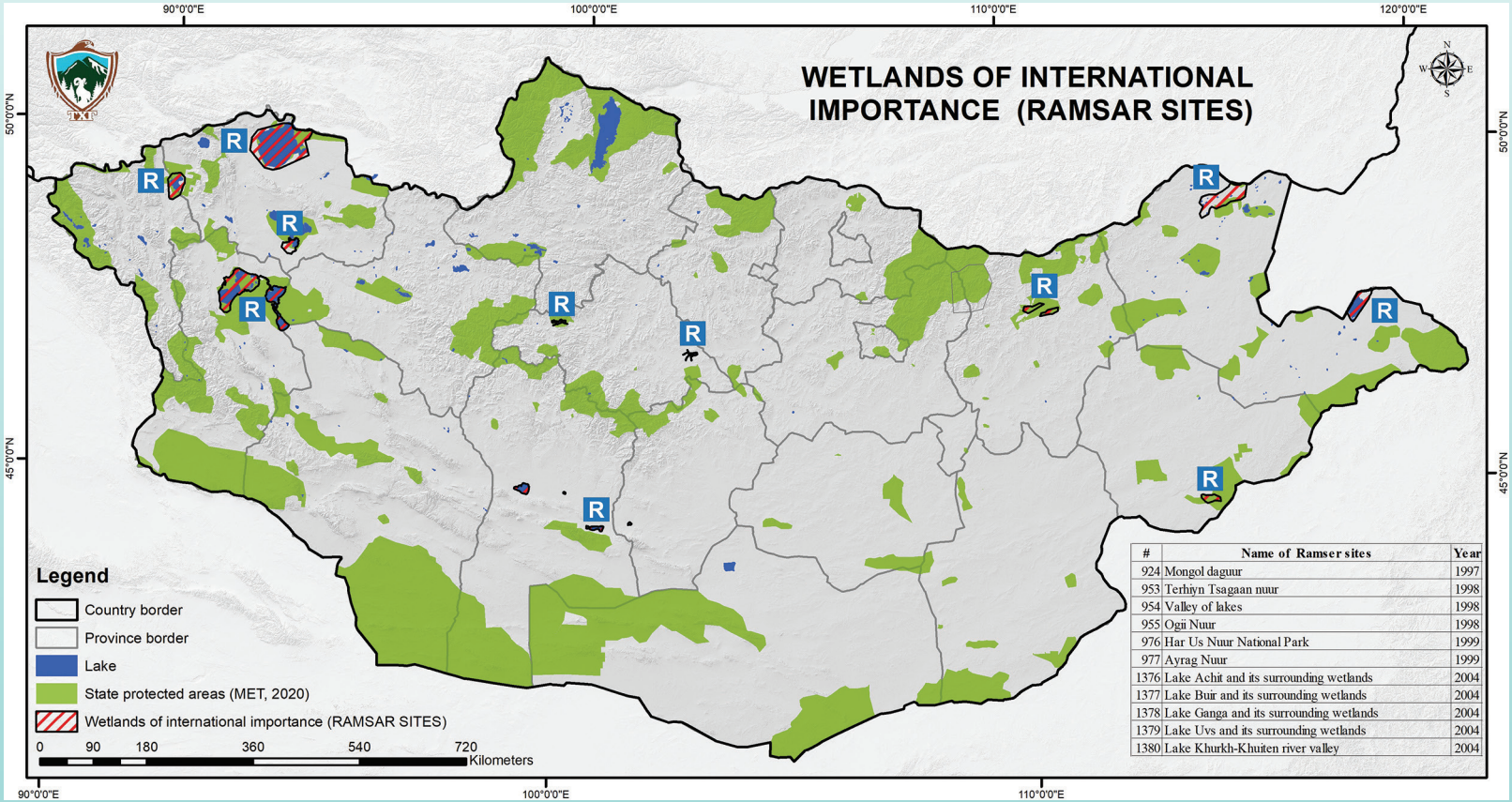
Criterion 9 Sites regularly support 1% or more of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species;

MONGOLIA AND THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

Mongolia officially signed the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl habitat on April 8, 1998 and became the 104th Contracting Party. The Contracting Parties to the Convention act as its policy making unit represented by the Governments of the countries signed. Thus, the officially recognized body representing Mongolia at the Ramsar Convention is the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

As the Contracting Party to the Convention, Mongolia commits to implement the wetlands conservation management, submit its performance progress reports, and regularly take part in implementation of the Convention activities under its commitment to the Convention.

Map 1. Sites in Mongolia designated in the Ramsar Convention Appendix List



WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE MONGOL DAGUUR

Name: Mongol Daguur
Ramsar site number: 924
Area: 210,000 hectares (ha);
Coordinates: 49°42'N 115°06'E
Altitude: 597-821m
Designation date: 08-12-1997

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WETLANDS IN EASTERN MONGOLIA AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

One of the primary roles wetlands plays is that it acts as an ecological regulator for maintaining water regimes and wildlife (Flora and Fauna) habitats. The Eastern Mongolia (steppe ecosystem) is home to 29.4% of the total lakes and wetlands in the country. The lakes and wetlands in the steppe region are basically dispersed according to their occurrence and rich in aquatic organisms. Thus, the lakes and wetlands in the region provide important stopover and resting sites to many species of waterbirds and shorebirds on their migration flyways. The lakes and wetlands in Eastern Mongolia lie along a main route of East Asian-Australian-Asian flyway (EAAF) become strategically important sites for stopover, resting, and forage of thousands of waterbirds and shorebirds migrating from South Asia, Australia to Siberia. As such, the region is a part of the important bird areas (IBA's). One of major wetlands in Eastern Mongolia is Mongol Daguur Ramsar site.

LOCATION

Mongol Daguur wetlands are the small sized lakes in Daurian Steppe and wetlands along Ulz River, its surrounding areas in territories of Dashbalbar, Chuluunkhoroot, and Gurvanzagal soums of Dornod province located in the north-eastern of Mongolia. The wetlands cover a total of 210 thousand hectares (ha) supporting small lakes along a tributary of Sevsuul River running at about 10 km in the east from a center of Dashbalbar soum and in an Ulz River valley as well as within 100 km distance up to Lake Burd located at 5 km in the west of a center of Chuluunkhoroot soum (Map 2).

JUSTIFICATION FOR DESIGNATION AS THE RAMSAR CONVENTION SITE

Mongol Daguur wetlands are specific with the vast steppe and wetland valleys of tectonic and volcanic origins supporting numerous rivers and lakes. The wetlands and their immediate vicinities are rich in endemic flora species and provide important nesting, breeding, distribution and stopover sites to the globally and regionally threatened bird species (according to the IUCN Red List criteria) on their seasonal migration. Amongst them, there are six species of crane occuring and stoping over at the wetlands during their migration and breeding seasons. Mongol Daguur wetlands were officially listed as the Ramsar site on December 8, 1997 as they met the first three out of nine criteria for designation and inclusion of areas in the Ramsar Convention List.

Map 2. *Wetland of Mongol Daguur*

INCLUSION OF THE WETLANDS IN THE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK

The Mongol Daguur representing a specific intact natural zone was first taken under state protection with a category of "Strictly Protected Area" (SPA) by the State Small Khural Resolution No.11 in 1992 to protect and preserve Daurian steppe wetlands, globally threatened biodiversity and the ecosystem balance. The SPA was established with parts "A" and "B" covered a total of 108.1 thousand hectares. The part "B" was expanded by 87.6 ha in its east and southeast with the State Great Khural Resolution No.41 in 2019, thereby, a total covering area of the SPA has increased to 195.7 thousand ha: 86.5 thousand ha in part "A" and 109.2 thousand ha in part "B". Mongol Daguur wetlands, the Ramsar site, are partially included in the Mongol Daguur SPA. Currently, 22.5% or 47,220 ha of the wetlands' total covering area belong to the SPA

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SPECIFIC FEATURES OF MONGOL DAGUUR WETLAND HABITATS

The wet Daurian steppe and wetlands comprised of lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams are specific with that they provide the important stopover sites to numerous species of birds migrating from South East Asia to Arctic Ocean and the nesting grounds to numerous species of the waterbirds and shorebirds from tropical countries on their migration flyways. Thus, the wetlands are important not only nationwide but also regionwide and worldwide.

Mongol Daguur wetlands supports 12 lakes and wetlands and some major natural springs such as Shandyn Bulag, Davsan Nuuryn Bulag (Tuurlait) Delger Bulag, Tevher Bulag (Khuiten), and Shar Burd Bulag. In addition, there are some other wetlands along some major rivers such as Ulz, Sevsuul, and Duch in the Mongol Daguur wetlands. Ulz River is listed as the 5th longest river in the country. Originated from Great, Middle, and Small Burds (Great Burd is frequently dry) collectively called as "Ekhen Burd" in a territory of Norovlin soum of Khentii province, the Ulz River runs through territories of five soums of Khentii and Dornod provinces and then inflows into Torey Lake in a territory of the Russian Federation having crossed the state border. A total length of the River is 520 km (of which: 495 km goes through the country's territory); its water drainage area is 37,391 км^2 and 0.32 km/km^2 according to the hydrological network density; and its average annual discharge is 7.25 m^3/sec with the maximum 575 m^3/sec (near Ereentsav) recorded in the highest rainfall storm run-off period. Surface water resource is an average of 0,23 км^3. Flows of Ulz River feed into Lake Duruu located at boundaries of Dashbalbar and Chuluunkhoroot soum of Dornod province and its flood storm runs-off feed into Khukh Lake, the lowest point in Mongolia. Bottom of Ulz River's bed is sandy and clayey.

BIODIVERSITY

MAMMALS

There are 39 mammal species of 29 genera recorded within Mongol Daguur wetlands. Amongst, there are the large mammals such as Mongolian gazelle *(Procapra gutturosa)*, Wapiti *(Cervis canadensis)*, Roe deer *(Capreolus pygargus)*, Corsac fox *(Vulpes corsac)*, Manul or Pallas' cat *(Otocolobus manul)*, and Mongolian marmot *(Marmota sibirica)* and the rare small mammals such as Whiskered bat *(Myotis mystacinus)*, Brandt's vole *(Lasiopodomys brandtii)*, Northern pika *(Ochotona hyperborea)*, Dwarf hamster *(Phodopus sungorus)*, Maximovich's vole *(Microtus maximowiczii)*, and Mongolian vole (*Microtus mongolicus)* are recorded. Moreover, the following species have been commonly occurred within the wetland, such as Roe deer *(Capreolus pygargus)*, Grey wolf *(Canis lupus)*, Wild boar *(Sus scrofa)*, Red fox *(Vulpes vulpes)*, Eurasian badger *(Meles meles)*, Siberian jerboa *(Allactaga sibirica)* and Daurian pika *(Ochotona daurica)*.

BIRDS

There are 267 bird species of 123 genera of 42 families of 16 orders recorded within Mongol Daguur wetlands. According to their occurrence, there are 34 resident species and 233 migratory species recorded. Amongst, there are 160 migratory and breeding visitor, 75 passage migrant, 23 vagrant species, and nine winter visitor. Besides, there are 18 globally and regionally threatened species according to the IUCN Red List criteria; seven species listed in CITES Appendix I; and 17 species listed in the Red Book of Mongolia.

Mongol Daguur wetlands provide an important habitat to the globally threatened bird species such as White-naped Crane *(Antigone vipio),* Hooded Crane *(Grus monacha)*, Siberian Crane *(Leucogeranus leucogeranus)*, Relict Gull *(Larus relictus)*, Swan Goose *(Anser cygnoides)*, Asian Dowitcher *(Limnodromus semipalmatus)* and Great Bustard *(Otis tarda)*. In addition, the wetlands are the important stopover sites for a large number of waterbirds on their flyways. For instance, there are 2000 individuals of Greylag goose *(Anser anser)* and Bean Goose *(Anser fabalis)*; 4000 individuals of Common shelduck *(Tadorna tadorna)* and Ruddy Shelduck *(Tadorna ferruginea)*; 20,000 individuals of Mallard *(Anas platyrhynchos)*, Spot-billed Duck *(Anas poecilorhynchos)*, Common teal *(Anas crecca)*, Falcated Duck *(Anas falcata)*, Baikal teal *(Anas formosa)*, Gadwall *(Anas strepera)*, Eurasian wigeon *(Anas penelope)*, Northern Pintail *(Anas acuta)*, Northern Shoveler *(Anas clypeata)*, Common Pochard *(Aythya ferina)*; 7,000 individuals of Common Coot *(Fulica atra)*; 5,000 individuals of White-naped Crane *(Antigone*

vipio), Hooded Crane *(Grus monacha)*, Common Crane *(Grus grus)*, and Demoiselle Crane *(Anthropoides virgo)*; and more than 10,000 individuals of Black-headed Gull *(Larus ridibundus)* and Mongolian Gull *(Larus mongolicus)* stopover at the wetlands (big and small lakes) during their migration seasons. From the shorebirds, there are 10,000 individuals of Pacific Golden Plover *(Pluvialis fulva)*, Grey Plover *(Pluvialis squatarola)*, Little-ringed Plover *(Charadrius dubius)* and Kentish Plover *(Charadrius alexandrinus)*; and 10,000 individuals of Green Sandpiper *(Tringa ochropus)*, Marsh sandpiper *(Tringa stagnatilis)*, Wood Sandpiper *(Tringa glareola)*, and Common Sandpiper *(Actitis hypoleucos)*; 6,000 individuals of Red-necked Stint *(Calidris ruficollis)*, Temminck's Stint *(Calidris temminckii)*, and Curlew Sandpiper *(Calidris ferruginea)*; two species of snipe: Common Snipe *(Gallinago gallinago)* and Pin-tailed Snipe *(Gallinago stenura)*; and three species of curlew: Little Curlew *(Numenius minutus)*, Eurasian Curlew *(Numenius arquata)*, and Far Eastern Curlew *(Numenius madagascariensis)* stopover at large and small lakes and water bodies and river valleys within Mongol Daguur wetlands for resting and foraging during their migration seasons.

FISHES, AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

There are 7 fish species of 5 genera of 2 families of one order recorded in Duruu Lake and Ulz River within Mongol Daguur wetlands. Amongst, the Prussian carp *(Carassius gibelio)* and Amur carp *(Cyprinus carpio haematopterus Temm)* are mostly distributed. There are two species of amphibians: Radde's toad *(Bufo raddei)* and Siberian wood frog *(Rana amurensis)* and three species of reptiles: Pallas' coluber *(Elaphe dione)*, Central Asian viper *(Agkistrodon halys)*, and Mongolian racerunner *(Eremias argus)* recorded within Mongol Daguur wetlands. These species are abundant throughout the country


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PLANTS

There are 349 plant species of 52 families recorded. Amongst, the wetland and steppe plant species are predominant. Daurian steppe is dominant by Carex, Sedges, Filifolium, and Forbs. The species include Stipa krylovii, Stipa sibirica, Poa botryoides, Cleistogenes squarrosa, Leymus chinensis, Artemisia frigida, Caragana micropylla, Filifolium sibiricum, Polygonum divaricatum and Iris dichotoma, Clematis hexapetala and Serratula centauroides. The wetlands are abundant by Phragmites communis, Calamagrostis purpurea, Agrostis trinii, Hordeum brevisubulatum, and Polygonum amphibium.

Overgrazed areas or the areas that are subject to anthropogenic effects are distributed by Carex duriuscula and Elymus repens along river banks and lake shores depending on extents and degrees of overgrazing. The medicinal plants such as Equisetum arvense, Lilium pumilum, Pulsatilla turczaninovii, Dasiphora fruticosa, Glycyrrhiza uralensis, Thymus gobicus, Plantago major, and Artemisia macrocephala are abundant and used by locals for traditional medicine. Mongol Daguur wetlands are also distributed by the endemic plants such as Oxytropis gracillima, and Sophora flavescens, and the species such as Astragalus

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brevifolius, Astragalus galactites, Leonurus mongolicus and Saposhnikovia divaricata listed in the Red Book of Mongolia. Moreover, the rare and very rare plant species such as Allium odorum, Allium anisopodium, Iris flavissima, Gentiana barbata and Scutellaria baicalensis are distributed within the wetlands.

There are also the plants such as Hedysarum fruticosum and Lilium dahuricum (by the IUCN Red List criteria) grown in the wetlands. All these plant species recorded in the wetlands represent the ecosystem's specific features.

CULTURE AND TRADITIONAL

Dornod province is a home to diverse ethnic groups. Likewise, Mongol Daguur wetlands are resided by the ethnic groups such as the Khalkhs, Buriads, Bargas, Tsakhars, and Durvuds that have their specific characteristics of traditions, habits, and customs. An indispensable part of Mongol Daguur steppe ecosystem is the cultural heritage, in particular the nomadic livestock herding and intangible cultural heritage. Existence and preservation of this intangible heritage in the region is greatly contributed by Ulz River. The major ethnic group residing in the region is the Buriads, to whom they do honor the nature, environment, and fresh water bodies having legendarily called themselves as “the people, who have a origin from swan and the hitching posts made of birch”.

DESIGNATION OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

1994

Daurian International Trans-Boundary Protected Area

Daurian International Protected Area (DIPA) was established in trans-boundary areas of Mongolia, Russia, and China under the framework of their inter-governmental agreement, in 1994. A key approach of the co-management is to protect and restore the connectivity and a barrier-free mobility of migratory wildlife populations within their adjacent Daurian Steppe ecological region

1997

North East Asian Crane Site Network

Mongol Daguur wetlands provide nesting and congregating site of the endangered crane species such as White-naped Crane, Common Crane and Demoiselle Crane, whose populations mainly are distributed in East Asia. In particular, the wetlands represent critically important breeding habitat for the western most population of White-naped crane. Thus, the wetlands were listed in the network in 1997.

1997

East Asian-Australian Flyway Network (EAAF024)

Large populations of the migratory waterbirds such as Common Coot, White-naped Crane, Hooded Crane and Demoiselle Cranes, and Black-headed Gull stopover and some of them breeding at Mongol Daguur wetlands during their migration seasons.. In addition, numerous species of shorebirds such as Grey plover, Pacific Golden Plover, Little-ringed Plover, and Kentish Plover stopover and rest at the wetlands. Thus, the wetlands were included in the network site in 2016

2000

- WWF Global 200 Eco-Regions

Geographical location of Mongol Daguur wetlands gives unique or transitional nature to the Mongol Daurian Region situated along the Siberian taiga boreal forest in the north of Mongolia and along Central Asian Dry Desert and Steppe and their valleys and depressions intruded in the south of the country. Wildlife (flora and fauna) species compositions in the wetlands are specific with that they encompass Daurian-Manchurian forest steppe plants.

2007

Man and Biosphere Reserves, UNESCO;

Mongol Daguur Man and Biosphere Reserve (MAB) contains Daurian steppe and wetlands in combination. A main purpose of the MAB is to protect the Stipa steppe ecosystem co-existing with the wetlands and the traditional livestock husbandry heritages while maintaining their ecological role essential to the function of the ecosystem

2008

- Important Bird Areas in Mongolia (MN066)

Mongol Daguur wetlands are distributed by the large populations of the globally threated bird species such as Great Crested Grebe *(Podiceps cristatus)*, Great Cormorant *(Phalacrocorax carbo)*, Whooper Swan *(Cygnus cygnus)*, Bean goose *(Anser fabalis)*, Ruddy Shelduck *(Tadorna ferruginea)*, White-naped Crane *(Antigone vipio)*, Common Crane *(Grus grus)*, Hooded Crane *(Grus monacha)*, Demoiselle Crane *(Anthropoides virgo)* and Northern Lapwing *(Vanellus vanellus)*. Populations of these bird species at the wetlands often exceed 1% of their populations occuring in the geographical region. Thus, the wetlands are listed a part of important bird areas in Mongolia.

2017

World Heritage, UNESCO

Daurian landscape is the integrated ecosystem that support forest, forest steppe, steppe, and wetlands ecosystem co-existing, occurrence and distribution of numerous species of birds, seasonal movements of Mongolian gazelle in trans-boundary areas, and diverse species of flora species in Daurian Steppe. Upon consideration of these values, Mongolia and Russia have the landscape of Dauria adopted by the 41st meeting of the World Heritage Committee as a site of Natural Heritage in trans-boundary areas. The World Natural Heritage site situated in trans-boundary areas of the Russian Federation and Mongolia covers a total of 912.624 ha including 279.023 ha in the Russian territory and 633.601 ha in the Mongolian territory, namely in territories of Gurvanzagal, Dashbalbar, and Bayandun soums of Dornod province.

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THREATS

Mongol Daguur wetlands are one of the few remaining wetlands enduring the current climate change and dryness. However, numbers of herder families and their livestock around wetlands and their surrounding areas are increasing, lately. The exponential growths of human and livestock are resulting in overgrazing, habitat loss and degradation as well as wildlife population declines. Natural regeneration and restoration of wetlands are needed, so that sustainable use of the wetlands is vitally important in practice. Accordingly, a wise use of wetlands is defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development". Wise use can thus be seen as the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and all the services they provide, for the benefit of people and nature.

Unfortunately, unsustainable use by human is likely to cause more damages and negative impacts on the valuable ecosystem in the future. Therefore, the wetlands need to be protected and preserved through climate change adaptation or implementation of action plan, policy and legal framework on sustainable land and pastureland management and improved public ecological education in the region.

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CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT AND COOPERATION

Conservation management of Mongol Daguur Ramsar site lies with Eastern Mongolia State Protected Area Administration under direct supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET). As a part of the trans-boundary Protected Area, the Daurian Steppe ecosystem and its biodiversity conservation has been addressed and managed under the cooperation of three neighbouring countries: Mongolia, Russia, and China for the last two decades. Researchers and specialists from the PA's Administrations in the three countries have been carrying out joint research and monitoring on globally and regionally threatened birds and their breeding populations. In addition, the environmental educational programmes including study tours and special educational programmes have been successfully implemented for school children in adjacent areas in the three neighbouring countries.


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