

**IBA CODE:** MN012

**IBA NAME:** AIRAG LAKE

**Aimags(s):** Uvs **Criteria:** A1, A3, A4i, A4iii **Area:** 73,348 ha

**Coordinates:** 48°54'N 93°26'E **Altitude:** 1,030-1,079 m

### Protection status

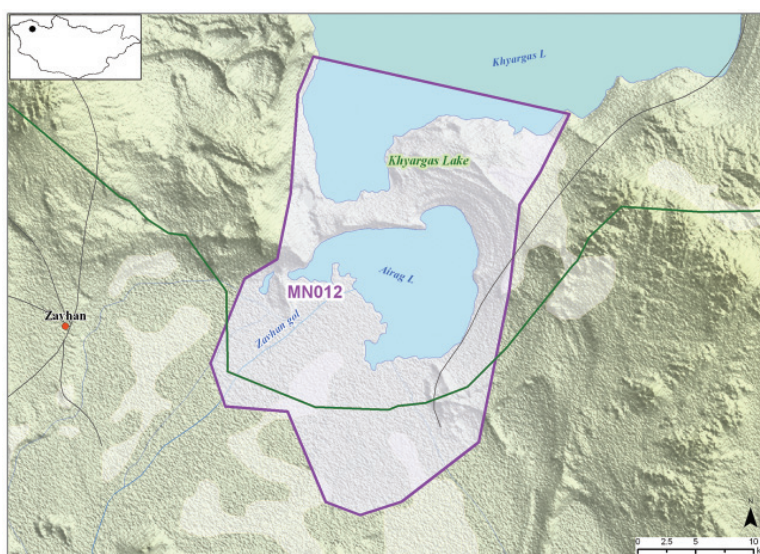
Partially protected by Khyargas Lake National Park

### Site description

Airag Lake is located in the Khyargas Lake Depression, and is an excellent example of the freshwater lakes of the Great Lakes Depression. The site comprises Airag Lake, the channel connecting it to nearby Khyargas Lake, the wet meadows of Zavkhan River delta, and the surrounding, sparsely vegetated, semi-desert landscape. Airag Lake is frozen from mid-November until April. The main land uses are livestock grazing and seasonal small-scale commercial fishing. Because of access difficulties, there is hardly any local tourism. The area is subject to overgrazing and pasture degradation leading to desertification. Although Airag Lake is under government protection, there are no management plans or protection measures in place at present. Hunting may be a threat at this site. For instance, in 2006, a juvenile Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* was hunted. Airag Lake is a Ramsar Site.

### Importance for birds

Several Globally Threatened species occur at the site, including Dalmatian Pelican (VU), White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (EN), Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides* (EN), Pallas's Fish-eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* (VU) and Relict Gull *Larus relictus* (VU). The site supports species typical of the Eurasian steppe and desert biome. The wetland regularly harbours more than 20,000 waterbirds. Congregatory waterbirds occurring in numbers exceeding 1% of their flyway populations are Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*,



White Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii* and Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*. The site also supports a colony of Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* (NT), and may trigger the A4i criterion for this species.

### Importance for other fauna and flora

Several nationally threatened fish species occur at the site, such as Mongolian Grayling *Thymallus revirostris*, Lake Osman *Oreoleuciscus angusticephalus* and Small Osman *O. humilis*. Some rare xerophytic plants grow in the surrounding semi-arid steppe. Rare mammals, such as Goitered Gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa* (VU), Mongolian Gazelle *Procapra gutturosa* and Thick-tailed Pygmy Jerboa *Salpingotus crassicauda* (DD) occur near to the lake.



Photo: Henry Mix