

IBA CODE: MN014

IBA NAME: KHAR US LAKE

Aimags(s): KHOVD **Criteria:** A1, A3, A4i, A4iii **Area:** 297,265 ha

Coordinates: 47°45'N 92°10'E **Altitude:** 1,157-1,452 m

Protection status

Partially protected by Khar Us Lake National Park

Site description

Khar Us Lake lies 20 km to the east of Khovd City. It is a freshwater lake, fed by the Khovd, Buyant and Tsenkher Rivers, and drained by the Chono-kharaikh River. There are over 20 islands in the lake, of which Agbash Island is the largest. The lake is frozen from November until April. There are extensive reed beds along the southern, western and eastern shores. Surrounding the lake is desert steppe, dry steppe, and semi-desert. At the southeastern edge of the lake is a high mountain, Jargalant Khairkhan, with mountain steppe vegetation. The site is used mainly as pasture for livestock. Problems at the site include burning of reeds, off-road driving and clear-cutting of vegetation, resulting in desertification around the lake. Muskrat *Ondatra zibethicus* was introduced to the lake in the 1980s, and is now having a negative impact on the lake ecosystem. The IBA overlaps with Khar Us Lake National Park Ramsar Site. There is an elevated concern about the construction of Dorgon Hydropower Project. Although the dam is outside of the IBA, the water level increase after the dam is built may cause some environmental problems. WWF is conducting a monitoring project at the dam site.

Importance for birds

Globally Threatened species include Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* (VU), White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (EN), Swan Goose *Anser cygnoides* (EN), Pallas's Fish-eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* (VU), Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (VU), White-naped Crane *Grus vipio* (VU) and Relict Gull *Larus relictus* (VU). The site also supports species typical of the Eurasian steppe and desert biome. The site regularly supports at least 1% of the flyway populations of Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps*

cristatus, Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Great Egret *Egretta alba*, White Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Bar-headed Goose *A. indicus*, Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Common Shelduck *T. tadorna*, Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Eurasian Wigeon *A. penelope*, Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata*, Northern Pintail *A. acuta*, Green-winged Teal *A. crecca*, Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*, Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*, Common Crane *Grus grus*, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyæetus* and Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*.

Importance for other fauna and flora

Several fish species endemic to western Mongolia inhabit the lake, namely Lake Osman *Oreoleuciscus angusticephalus*, Potanin's Osman *O. potanini*, Small Osman *O. humilis* and Mongolian Grayling *Thymallus revirostris*.

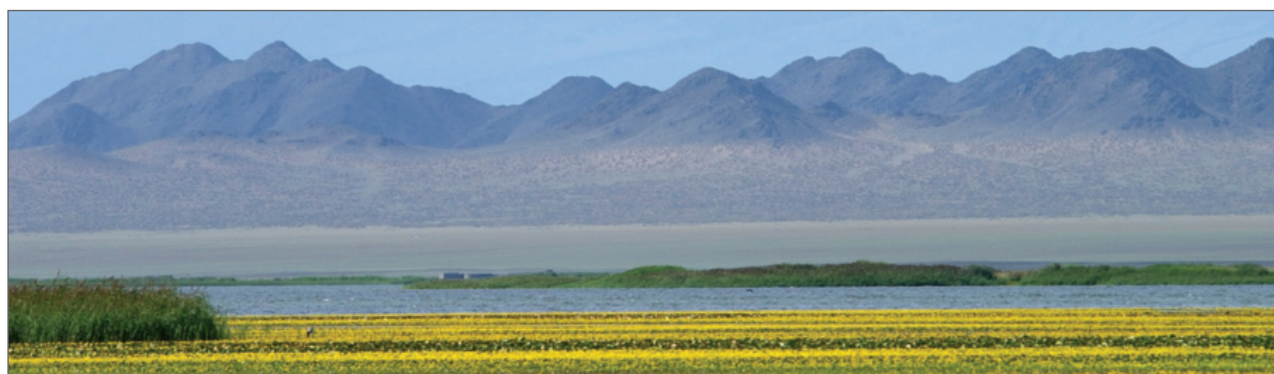
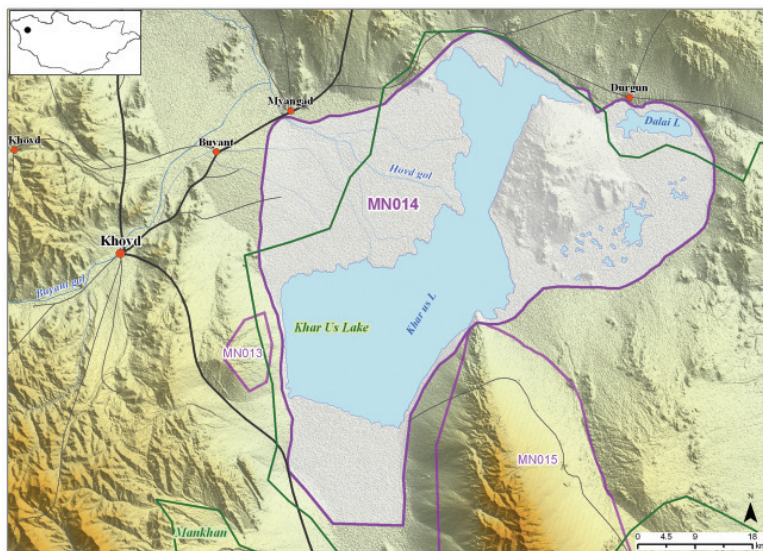


Photo: B.Nyambayar