

IBA CODE: MN051**IBA NAME:** EEJ KHAD**Aimag(s):** Tov **Criteria:** A1 **Area:** 36,867 ha**Coordinates:** 47°19'N 106°53'E **Altitude:** 1,400-1,885 m

Protection status

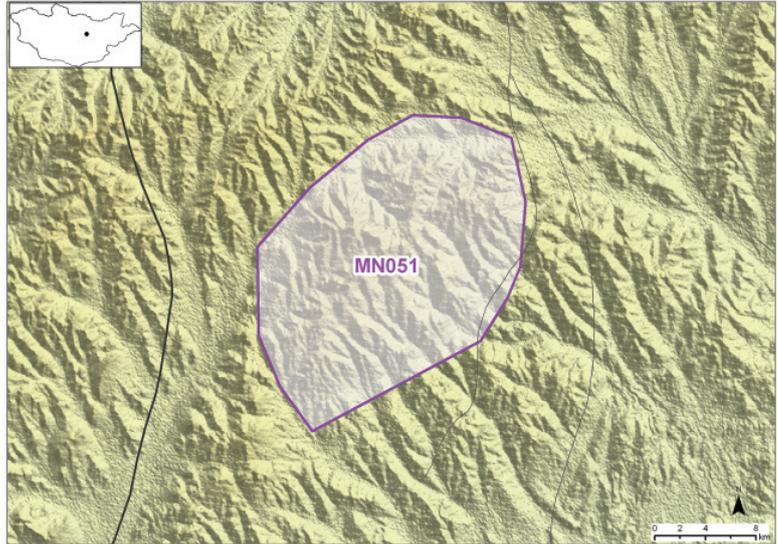
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Site description

The site comprises an area of mountain steppe with rolling hills. Rocky outcrops, located on hill tops, provide suitable nesting habitats for various birds of prey. The IBA contains a sacred site, known as Eej Khad or 'Mother Rock'. Mongolians visit this rock to make offerings and seek solace and advice. Pilgrims ask for three wishes to be granted, circle the rock three times and make three separate visits. There are several other places within the IBA that are thought to generate good luck, including 'Dog Rock', which Mongolians rub their body against to cure ailments, and 'Rich Rock', which locals touch their wallet against to ensure financial security. According to local tradition the earth around the Mother Rock is sacred, so any rubbish that is dropped cannot be picked up. Because of this tradition the area is now extremely dirty with rubbish and broken bottles laying everywhere. Although the main wildlife habitat is away from the Mother Rock area, the increasing number of visitors has a negative impact on wildlife. For instance, nesting attempts by raptors often fail due to disturbance.

Importance for birds

Two Globally Threatened bird species use the site:



Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* (EN); and Lesser Kestrel *F. naumanni* (VU). Other raptor species found at the site include Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*, Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and Steppe Eagle *A. nipalensis*.

Importance for other fauna and flora

Rare mammals include Argali *Ovis ammon* (NT) and Daurian Hedgehog *Mesechinus dauuricus*. Small herds of up to 200 Mongolian Gazelles *Procapra gutturosa* can be seen year around. Common mammals include Brandt's Vole *Lasiopodomys brandtii*, Grey Wolf *Canis lupus*, Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* and Corsac Fox *V. corsac*.



Photo: Gabor Papp