IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(archived)**
Finalised on 09 November 2017

Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Uvs Nuur Basin. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Uvs Nuur Basin

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Mongolia, Russian Federation
Inscribed in: 2003
Criteria:
(ix) (x)

Site description:

The Uvs Nuur Basin (1,068,853 ha), is the northernmost of the enclosed basins of Central Asia. It takes its name from Uvs Nuur Lake, a large, shallow and very saline lake, important for migrating birds, waterfowl and seabirds. The site is made up of twelve protected areas representing the major biomes of eastern Eurasia. The steppe ecosystem supports a rich diversity of birds and the desert is home to a number of rare gerbil, jerboas and the marbled polecat. The mountains are an important refuge for the globally endangered snow leopard, mountain sheep (argali) and the Asiatic ibex. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2017 Conservation Outlook

Good with some concerns

Overall the conservation outlook for Uvs Nuur basin is good, but certain concerns exist. The main issue is related to continuous shrinking and degradation of the habitat of some endangered species such as Argali due to expansion of areas used for livestock grazing. The long-term impact of climate change on the vegetation and hydrological regime of the site remains uncertain, but might be negative. A management framework is in place, but my be outdated; significant budget constraints prevent the responsible protected areas administrations from carrying out conservation and research activities effectively. Protection of the site could be further strengthened through more sustainable financing. Furthermore, there is a need for the establishment of a joint management authority between Mongolia and Russia. A joint management plan for the whole site was approved in 2010, which was a very positive step. If this is updated and effectively implemented, it may improve the conservation status of the site. Taking all this into account, the conservation outlook of the Uvs Nuur basin narrowly meets the requirements of the category “Good with some concerns”.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Low Concern
Trend: Data Deficient

The unique climatic and hydrological regime of the Uvs Nuur basin might ultimately be affected by on-going climate change process and overall dryness in the area. However, at the moment there is no scientific evidence that would prove the tangible changes in the hydrological regime. Though it is apparent that the overgrazing affects greatly the vegetation growth and structure in the basin there are no sufficient data to make any definite conclusions on the status of the endemic plants. There is no evidence of population decline and/or significant problem recorded for the rare and endangered species of the bird. The illegal hunting and continuous shrinking of habitat area for the endangered mammals in

particular Argali (wild sheep) is of some concern, though.

Overall THREATS

Low Threat

The low level of urban population, negligible human impact and complete lack of industry in both Tuvan and Mongolian sectors ensure good protection of the site; its geographic isolation, climatic extremes, the limited surface water flow make it an unattractive locality for agricultural industries. Overall increase in annual temperature observed throughout the whole region. This might ultimately result in dryness of the area and increased frequency of forest and steppe fires. Illegal hunting is of some concern, however, its impact on the population of target species appears low. However, some of the threats that were considered potential in 2014 are in fact already a reality, albeit at low intensity. While this does not change the overall assessment, there is clearly a need to better understand some emerging threats.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Some Concern

The Governments of both countries are providing significant support to the protection and management of the site through an enabling legislative environment and some financing. Furthermore, regional and provincial governments have some understanding of the significance of the landscape and biodiversity conservation, even if cooperation has been characterized as weak, at least for the Tuvan component properties. The site had a joint management plan which ran out in 2014, but implementation was falling short of expectations due to budget and staff constraints. Full implementation of the plan was also dependent on additional funding from donor organizations. It is not clear if a new management plan has been approved since. The 85% of Uvs Nuur basin that lies outside the 9 protected areas seems to have no specific legal protection status. This issue is of some concern because of the threat of over-grazing, particularly in the desert steppe landscape around Uvs nuur in the vicinity of the capital of Ulaangom. There are also some concerns regarding the relationship with local people, cooperation, management effectiveness, staff training and development, and monitoring. This leads to an overall assessment of “some concern”.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

▶ **Diversity of landscapes, ecosystems and habitats**
Criterion:(ix)

Uvs Nuur basin is an ancient lake bed in the centre of Asia. It is remote, enclosed and pristine, and comprises a wide range of interconnected landscapes, ecosystems and habitats that jointly contribute to its Outstanding Universal Value under World Heritage criterion ix; the ecosystems enclose high-mountain, subalpine, tundra, mountain taiga, various steppe formations, river valleays with associated wetlands, and saline lakes (UNEP-WCMC 2011). The closed salt lake system of Uvs Nuur is of international scientific importance because of its climatic and hydrological regimes. Because of the unchanging nature of the nomadic pastoral use of the grasslands within the basin over thousands of years, current research programmes should be able to unravel the rate at which Uvs Nuur (and other smaller lakes within the basin) have become saline (and eutrophic). These processes are on-going and because of its unique geophysical and biological characteristics, the basin has been chosen as an IGBP site for monitoring global warming (WHC 2014).

▶ **Threatened and endemic plants**
Criterion:(x)

The flora and vegetation of Uvs Nuur reflects its wide range of habitats: 552 plant species have been recorded, 234 of them restricted to the mountains of southern Siberia and northern Mongolia; 52 are relict species, 19 are

recorded as endemic to Mongolia and Tuva, but only five are endemic to Uvs Nuur: Astrogalus polozhinae, Juncus salsuginous ssp.tuvinicum, Stipa barhanica, Astragalus tuvinicus and Zygophyllum pterocaprum ssp.tuvinicum (UNEP-WCMC 2011). The vegetation zones are clearly layered by altitude. The joint management plan of the site lists even higher species numbers, among them many “rare” ones (Anonymous 2010).

► Rare and threatened bird species

Criterion:(x)

The avifauna of the Uvs Nuur Basin series is similarly complex and habitat-depended as its mammal fauna. 359 bird species have been recorded (IUCN 2003). Many of these are of international conservation importance, including the globally critically endangered Siberian Crane (Leucogeranus leucogeranus), the globally endangered Red-crowned Crane (Grus japonensis), the globally vulnerable Dalmatian Pelican (Pelecanus crispus), the globally endangered White-headed Duck (Oxyura leucocephala), the globally , vulnerable Great and Asian Houbara Bustards (Otis tarda and Chlamydotis macqueenii), the globally vulnerable Relict Gull (Larus relictus), the globally vulnerable Eastern Imperial Eagle (Aquila heliaca), the globally near-threatened Asian Dowitcher (Limnodromus semipalmatus) and both Cinnereus and Bearded Vultures (Aegypius monachus and Gypaetus barbatus, both near-threatened) (IUCN 2017, UNEP-WCMC 2011). . Some of the migrating birds that use Uvs Nuur as a temporary habitat are rare: Bewick’s Swan (Cygnus columbianus), the globally vulnerable Lesser White-fronted and Red-breasted Geese (Anser erytrhopus and Branta ruficollis), and the Baikal Teal (IUCN 2017, UNEP-WCMC 2011).

► Rare and threatened mammals

Criterion:(x)

The various ecosystems of this complex serial property have distinct mammal faunas. 173 species of mammals have been reported for the Mongolian part of the property alone, while the corresponding number for the Tuvan reserves appears to be 72 (UNEP-WCMC 2011). These include the globally endangered Snow Leopard (Uncia uncia) (IUCN 2017). There is active research into the conservation of this species (Anonymous 2010). Other mammal species of global conservation concern include the globally

endangered Siberian Marmot (Marmota sibirica), the globally vulnerable Siberian Musk Deer (Moschus moschiferus), the globally vulnerable Marbled Polecat (Vormela peregusna), the globally near-threatened Argali (Ovis ammon), the globally near-threatened Pallas's Cat (Otocolobus manul), the globally near-threatened Eurasian Otter (Lutra lutra) and the rare Mongolian Gazelle (Procapra gutturosa) (IUCN 2017, UNEP-WCMC 2011). The presence of the globally endangered Asiatic Wild Dog (Cuon alpinus) is questionable (IUCN 2010, 2017). There are also many other charismatic mammal species typical for their habitats, including carnivores such as the Brown Bear and Eurasian Lynx, herbivores such as Siberian Ibex Reindeer, small mammals and bats. Monitoring of large mammals in the two protected areas indicated that Turgen Uul contains around 7,000 ibex and 200 argali, while Tsagaan Shuvuut probably holds 2,000 ibex and 800 argali (IUCN 2003).

▶ **Other rare and threatened fauna**
Criterion:(x)

Uvs Nuur basin also holds globally important herpetofauna, ichthyofauna and entomofauna. 16 out of the 20 rarely met species of beetle are endemic. Two endemic fish species (Oreoleuciscus potanini and O. pewzowi have been recorded. There are also four isolated populations of reptiles: Toad-headed Agama (Phrynocephalus versicolor), Multicellated Racerunner (Eremias multicellata), Gobi Racerunner (Eremias przewalskii), and patterned Grass Snake (Elaphe dione).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats
Low Threat

The low level of urban population, negligible human impact and complete lack of industry in both Tuvan and Mongolian sectors still ensure the protection of the site; its geographic isolation, climatic extremes, the limited surface water

flow make it an unattractive locality for agricultural industries. Except the over-grazing, which only affects some of the ecosystems of the property, there are very few serious threats to the natural environment of Uvs Nuur basin. Illegal hunting is of some concern, but its impact on the population of target species appears low. However, some of the threats that were considered potential in 2014 are in fact already a reality, albeit at low intensity. This might increase with increased localized visitation and related recreational resource use. While this does not change the overall assessment, there is clearly a need to better understand some emerging threats.

▶ Tourism/ visitors/ recreation

Very Low Threat
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

Controlled and uncontrolled tourism activities are already affecting some of the component areas of the series, such as Tore-Khol Lake (IUCN Consultation, 2017). They can cause a negative impact on the natural and cultural values of the site (Schuerholz et al 2007). However, the opportunities for large-scale tourism in the basin are very limited currently, due to its remoteness and lack of tourism infrastructure. This might, however, change in the future.

▶ Livestock Farming / Grazing

High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)

With the emergence of individual peasant economies after the collapse of collective system of animal husbandry, the number of moves and distance between seasonal pastures has been decreased substantially. This creates concentration of domestic animals in the vicinity of water sources. Consequently, due to the pasture competition, the habitat area available to wild ungulates, in particular Argali, is shrinking. The situation is exacerbated by the increase in livestock numbers which results in the expansion of rangeland for domestic animals and overgrazing and trampling in local areas. The water level in wetlands has lowered due to overgrazing, steppe fire and disturbance of the water regime of the rivers, streams and their sources (IUCN Consultation, 2013).

► Mining/ Quarrying

Very Low Threat
Inside site, localised(<5%)
Outside site

Small scale mining operates on both parts of the site (Schuerholz et al 2007, Butorin 2005). Illegal vehicle traffic from the salt mine traverses the northern section of the Special Protected Area (SPA) on the Mongolian side.

► Water Pollution

Data Deficient
Inside site, localised(<5%)
Outside site

Extensive recreational activities occur at the Lake Tore-Khol (Tsugeer Els cluster) during the summer season. As a result river and streams are polluted by domestic garbage and petrol from vehicles (Butorin 2005).The exact impact of this needs to be quantified.

► Logging/ Wood Harvesting

Data Deficient
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

There are concerns about illegal logging in some areas of the property (WHC 2014), which need to be understood better. With the increase of domestic need for timber the forest use could increase significantly.

► Other Biological Resource Use

High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)

Some wild plants, such as Altai onion and nuts, are gathered in reportedly large but unspecified quantity within the site (Anomymous 2000). There is reportedly a boom in non-timber forest product collection in the region (IUCN Consultation, 2017), which needs to be understood better in quantitative terms.

► Fire/ Fire Suppression

Low Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known

Outside site

Forest fires are frequent and cause harm to the forest areas in the site (Uvs basin Mgmt plan 2000). The incidence and frequency of forest and steppe fires increased in recent years due to dryness in overall climate and negligent human attitudes.

► Poaching

High Threat
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)
Outside site

Low-level subsistence and possibly recreational poaching exists on the territory of the site (UNEP-WCMC, 2011). Weak enforcement capacity in combination with increasing visitation (at least on the Russian side) leads to an increase in poaching (IUCN Consultation, 2017). WWF Russia supports anti-poaching activities in the area.

Potential Threats

Low Threat

Overall increase in annual temperature has been observed throughout the whole region, but localized projections of future climate change and its impacts were not available to this assessment. Climate change might ultimately result in dryness of the area and increased frequency of forest and steppe fires. However, there is still no proven evidence of a climate change impact, based on long-term monitoring and research on the natural environment of the site. There is little potential for commercial forestry in the site and the forest use has been limited by the collection of non-timber forest products, firewood and poles and fencing for livestock keeping.

► Temperature extremes

Data Deficient
Inside site, throughout(>50%)
Outside site

The rise in annual temperature and occurrence of consecutive dry years might cause increased risk of forest and steppe fire which ultimately may pose a threat to the OUV of the site (IUCN Consultation, 2013). However,

there are no reliable data on the projected climate change and its impacts in the region.

► Hunting (commercial/subsistence)

Low Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known

Limited trophy hunting of Argali and Siberian Ibex is allowed in the Mongolian sector of the site. The quota is strictly controlled by the Ministry and is not detrimental for the species survival. If the quota were uncontrolled and not backed up by scientific data, the trophy hunting could put these ungulates at risk.

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Relationships with local people

Some Concern

It has been noted that the management authority on the Russian side does not pay sufficient attention to the needs of local population wishing to generate income through their traditional ways of livelihood in the areas neighbouring to the site (Butorin 2005) There seems to have been a lack of participation during the development of a recent management plan for the Russian part of the property (or parts thereof); also, a general lack of cooperation with local self-government structures – and probably also with local inhabitants and resource users – was observed there (IUCN Consultation, 2017). Lack of cooperation with local government was also noted earlier (UNEP-WCMC, 2011). The park authority on the Mongolian part of the site is engaging local people in the conservation activities by allowing non-detrimental traditional use of natural resources. In addition, it is collaborating with local communities in the tourism development, by supporting traditional handicraft making of the local people for the sale to tourists.

► Legal framework

Mostly Effective

The 5 Tuvan cluster areas making up the Uvs Nuur Zapovednik were given protected area status by both the governments of the Republic of Tuva and the Russian Federation in 1993. The 4 cluster areas in Mongolia were listed under the Mongolian Law on Protected Areas as Strictly Protected Areas. However, the current legislation does not ensure the sustainable financing for the parks (Joint management plan, 2010).

► Enforcement

Some Concern

Detailed information on enforcement effectiveness – such as on the number of violations detected and brought to court, long term statistics in infringements etc. – is not available. According to the website of the Russian component PA, there is a lack of equipment for effective enforcement in some of the remote component areas of the series in Tuva Republic (Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve 2017). The geographical distance of the administration from the component areas, as well as the high staff turnover and lack of qualified staff have also been noted (IUCN Consultation, 2017), and are likely to limit enforcement effectiveness.

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Some Concern

On the Russian side, the nature reserve is poorly integrated into the regional programmes (socio-economic, conservation and educational). A lack of practical inter-institutional cooperation regarding the management of the Russian part of the property has been observed; there are also concerns regarding the practical cooperation between the Russian and Mongolian administrations of component areas (IUCN Consultation, 2017, UNEP-WCMC 2011). This may negatively affect the connectivity among the 12 component sites of this trans-boundary series, and is therefore of some concern.

► Management system

Some Concern

The component protected areas were given a status of Specially Protected Area in 1993. Since then, they have been under the management of their respective park administrations, which are financed by the state budget. The park management is appointed by the relevant Ministries and reports to the Protected Area Department at the Ministry. The management plan for the Tuvan section (Russian Federation) was approved in 2000 and covered the period up to 2004. The management plan for the Mongolian section has been developed and approved in 2009; it covered the activities until 2014. A joint management plan was approved by both Governments in 2010 and covers the period of 2010-2014 (Anonymous 2010). It is not clear if a new joint management plan was developed and approved since, and what its content is; management seems to consist of guarding, education and awareness raising activities, as well as some research and monitoring (Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve, 2017).

► Management effectiveness

Some Concern

There is no record of a formal protected areas management effectiveness assessment for either the Russian or the Mongolian component parts of the series. The administration of the Russian components listed imperfections of the legal basis (particularly regarding financial and legal obligations of land users), a lack of equipment of the protection service (vehicles, communications equipment, office equipment, uniforms and field clothing), a high staff turnover and low wages, and lack of qualified staff as factors limiting management effectiveness (Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve, 2017). It has also been noted that the geographical distance of the administration (based in the Kyzyl, the capital of the Tula Autonomous Republc) from the actual component areas, compromises effective management. Transboundary location of the Uvs nuur basin site creates difficulties in management since it involves cooperation between administrations in two different countries (Butorin 2005). In 2008 the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Nature and Environment of Mongolia, signed a protocol on establishment of trans-boundary Uvs Nuur Basin SPA. However, no such decision had been made by 2014 (see also Enkhtsetseg 2009), and it appears this has still not happened (Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve,

2017).

▶ Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Mostly Effective

The 27th Committee decisions and recommendations focused on (1) upgrading the Tes River Specially Protected Area in Mongolia, protected at a provincial level at that time, to a Specially Protected Area under State legislation (this has happened – WHC 2014); and (2) encouraging State Parties to ensure adequate resources made available quickly and maintained for the effective implementation of the management plans (this seems to have not fully been met – IUCN Consultation, 2017).

▶ Boundaries

Some Concern

Park boundaries are marked at the main entrance points with signboards. The participants of the workshop on the “Management problems and development perspectives of the Uvs nuur basin, WH site” noted that in the Tuvan side, the boundaries of the WH site were not well marked (Butorin 2005). No information that this has changed has become available since. There is an agreement between Mongolian and Russian parts of the site to conduct joint inspection along the both sides of the frontier, exchanging information on law infringement (Butorin 2005).

▶ Sustainable finance

Some Concern

There are no up-to-date figures available on the annual budget of the component PAs of the cluster in any of the recent documents (IUCN Consultation 2017, Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve 2017, UNEP-WCMC 2011, WHC 2014). This makes it difficult to assess the sustainability of current financing levels. However, there is concern because the high number of clusters that are remote requires effective transport and communication devices (Butorin 2005). Lack of investment into the infrastructure can negatively impact the monitoring and protection activities of the park administration (IUCN Consultation, 2013). In addition, the website of the Tuvan component PA states that there are resourcing shortfalls on equipment, infrastructure and salaries (Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State

Biosphere Reserve 2017), which suggests that the financing level is not fully sustainable long-term.

► Staff training and development

Some Concern

The reserve on the Tuvan side of the property had 83 staff in 2013. The remoteness of the site and the high cost for travel to the training centres limit professional training and capacity building of site managers and staff. Furthermore, the low level of remuneration for the park staff negatively influences the quality of their performance, leads to high staff turnover and hence to frequent losses of experienced staff (IUCN Consultation, 2013, 2017, Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve 2017). The size of the area monitored by each ranger is very large (between 7,500 and 22,000 ha per ranger, depending on PA category - Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve 2017). This discourages rangers to be committed for a long term (Enkhtsetsteg 2009). In overall the training program was considered satisfactory in 2014 but needs to be further improved with the integration of new subjects on monitoring, research, GIS and remote sensing. Uvs nuur basin SPAadministration has been paying particular attention to its staff development through providing external training at training institutions (Enkhtsetseg 2009).

► Sustainable use

Data Deficient

Park authority is allowing local people to carry out non-detrimental traditional use of natural resources, particularly through grazing; a need to regulate this more pro-actively has been acknowledged by the State Parties (WHC 2014). It has also been noted that there is a boom in harvesting of non-timber forest products in the region (IUCN Consultation, 2017), which also suggests a need for a more systematic, regulated approach. There may be potential for increased sustainable nature-based tourism in the region (IUCN Consultation, 2017). No detailed information about the arrangements for and extent of these uses is available.

► Education and interpretation programs

Mostly Effective

On the territory of the Mongolian section of the WH site, the environmental information centre is working with the aim to provide local population and visitors with the information on nature conservation, scientific literature and legislative acts. Educational programs are broadcasted regularly through local and national TV and radio. Roundtable discussions are organized with the involvement of scientists, researchers and protected area staff. Annual events such as visits to the most prominent spots in the site, consultation with the local communities and environmental action days are organized in order to raise public awareness on the site protection (IUCN Consultation, 2013). The website of the Russian component PA lists a range of education and awareness raising activities (Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve 2017). However, several reports refer to the fact that, in overall, the awareness of the local population on environmental issues particularly on the trans-boundary biodiversity conservation, landscape and water conservation (IUCN Consultation, 2013) and ecological knowledge remains low (Butorin 2005). It has also been noted that, on the Tuvan site, there is a need for closer integration of education and awareness raising activities with those of other local and regional players (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► Tourism and visitation management

Mostly Effective

Although the site possesses a variety of places representing diverse natural landscapes and historic importance and has a great potential for eco-tourism, its recreational resources are underutilized (IUCN Consultation, 2013). The tourism does not generate tangible benefits and income for local people and protected area management. Furthermore, there are no statistics and related information on the number of tourists, main tourist routes and possible impact caused by the tourism activities. It also appears that there is localized strong and unregulated tourism pressure in some areas, such as Lake Tore-Khol in the protective zone of “Tsuger Els” cluster, and that unregulated dirt roads are appearing in steppe and sandy areas along Tes-Khem River (IUCN Consultation, 2017). This points to a potential need for more systematic and proactive tourism management at the property.

► Monitoring

Some Concern

Both park authorities carry out monitoring activities on their respective territories (Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve 2017, WHC 2014, IUCN Consultation, 2017). However, no details are available on these monitoring programmes. Consultation reveals that the park administration lacks the adequate use of modern monitoring devices that include camera traps, genetic certification, GIS and remote sensing that are required for the monitoring of rare and endangered species (IUCN Consultation, 2013). Furthermore, there is a need to exchange research and monitoring/assessment data on trans-boundary endangered and migratory wildlife species, which could become a basis for the development of future joint management plans for the PAs. However, progress in this direction has been minimal in the past , due to lack of funding (Enkhtsetsteg 2009). It is also not clear how monitoring could be effective in informing management if there is no up-to-date, approved management plan and system, which may be the case (see above).

► Research

Mostly Effective

Research activities have been undertaken with the support from WWF and UNDP, and in cooperation with a range of research institutions predominantly in Russia (Ubsunurskaya Kotlovina State Biosphere Reserve 2017). There is also scientific cooperation between the Russian and Mongolian component PAs and their partners. Most research works are conducted for the Argali, Ibex, Snow Leopard and Musk Deer populations. A potential for improvement of research beyond narrow monitoring has been identified for the Russian component areas (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

Overall assessment of protection and management

Some Concern

The Governments of both countries are providing significant support to the protection and management of the site through an enabling legislative environment and some financing. Furthermore, regional and provincial governments have some understanding of the significance of the landscape and biodiversity conservation, even if cooperation has been characterized as weak, at least for the Tuvan component properties. The site had a joint

management plan which ran out in 2014, but implementation was falling short of expectations due to budget and staff constraints. Full implementation of the plan was also dependent on additional funding from donor organizations. It is not clear if a new management plan has been approved since. The 85% of Uvs Nuur basin that lies outside the 9 protected areas seems to have no specific legal protection status. This issue is of some concern because of the threat of over-grazing, particularly in the desert steppe landscape around Uvs nuur in the vicinity of the capital of Ulaangom. There are also some concerns regarding the relationship with local people, cooperation, management effectiveness, staff training and development, and monitoring. This leads to an overall assessment of “some concern”.

▶ **Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site**

Data Deficient

Since Mongolia privatized grazing herds in 1992, there has been a spectacular increase in the number of domestic livestock population from 20 million 1992 to 40 million in 2010. Mongolia’s most important sustainable natural resource is its fertile soils and grasslands, so the threat of continually increasing stock numbers leading to overgrazing (and rural conflicts over traditional family pasturage rights) is a very serious issue facing the country (IUCN Technical evaluation report 1999). It is a key issue in maintaining the integrity of the natural and cultural values of ecosystems of Uvs nuur, although its direct impact at the level of the property is unclear and in need of further study.

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ **Diversity of landscapes, ecosystems and habitats**

Low Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

Although it is difficult to predict, increase in the annual temperature might be

increasing overall dryness of the area. The process of desertification is gradually shifting from west to east on the Mongolian part of the Uvs nuur site and starts spreading to the area which was not covered by sand previously. Overgrazing in Mongolia (and possibly Tuva Republic) and the agriculture development through intensive use of water irrigation and conversion of natural areas into crop plantation on the Russian side could change the hydrological regime of the lakes (Anomymous 2010). Some small areas have been slightly to moderately damaged by uncontrolled visitation (IUCN Consultation, 2017). In view of the localized character of these deteriorations, the overall assessment is “Low Concern”.

► Threatened and endemic plants

Data Deficient
Trend:Data Deficient

The problem of overgrazing, disappearance and melting of glaciers, overall dryness in the area and lowering of water level of rivers and streams due to climate change effects are assumed to change the vegetation structure of the area. The situation is likely exacerbated by the anthropological impacts such as illegal artisanal mining, diverting rivers for agriculture use, removal of topsoil for reforestation and gardening activities in the cities and excessive extracting of medicinal plants (Compilation of Research Work 2011). However, due to the insufficient research data it is difficult to assess the current state of the value.

► Rare and threatened bird species

Good
Trend:Data Deficient

There are no systematic bird monitoring data to analyze bird population status and trends available, but there is also no evidence of any population decline of bird species and any concern and major problem raised by the park management and/or research communities. Therefore, the assessment of this value is a tentative “Good”, although systematic monitoring data would be very useful to confirm this.

► Rare and threatened mammals

Low Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

Although no comprehensive, systematic monitoring information is available, there is ample evidence of illegal hunting of Argali, recorded on the Mongolian part of the site. Furthermore, decrease of the habitat area due to overgrazing and competition for pasture with the domestic livestock has taken its toll on the population growth of Argali. It is likely that this also affects other ungulates and potentially even predators. It is not clear if this should be considered of low or high concern overall, but because of the large area and low population density of the property, the former is chosen as the assessment category.

► Other rare and threatened fauna

Data Deficient
Trend:Data Deficient

There is no detailed information about the current conservation state of herpetofauna, entomofauna and ichthyofauna inside the property.

Summary of the Values

► Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values

Low Concern

Trend: Data Deficient

The unique climatic and hydrological regime of the Uvs Nuur basin might ultimately be affected by on-going climate change process and overall dryness in the area. However, at the moment there is no scientific evidence that would prove the tangible changes in the hydrological regime. Though it is apparent that the overgrazing affects greatly the vegetation growth and structure in the basin there are no sufficient data to make any definite conclusions on the status of the endemic plants. There is no evidence of population decline and/or significant problem recorded for the rare and endangered species of the bird. The illegal hunting and continuous shrinking of habitat area for the endangered mammals in particular Argali (wild sheep) is of some concern, though.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

► Water provision (importance for water quantity and quality)

Water catchment, water flow regulation, climate amelioration. The site provides water source in the region for domestic use.

► Sacred natural sites or landscapes

Due to its nomadic way of living Mongolian and Tuvan people have a strong linkage and dependence on nature. The WH site includes sacred mountains, mountain passes and worshiped rivers and streams. The area provides a source of livelihood for local people and security, and also holds aesthetic and spiritual values for external people (WHC 2014).

► Outdoor recreation and tourism

The unique natural features, the presence of historical, cultural and archaeological monuments, a traditional nomadic lifestyle with its ethnographic peculiarities and traditional crafts provide an ample opportunity for development of various types of tourism. Cultural and ethnic tourism, hiking, trekking, mountaineering and bird watching are the main types of tourism currently developed in the region. There are multiple burial mounds and fields, deer stones, vertical memorial plates, man stone effigies, rock paintings (petroglyphs) and ancient human camps IUCN 2003, WHC 2014, IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► Tourism-related income

Revenues from trophy hunting are shared with the local community

according to the new legislation on Mongolian side.

▶ **Collection of wild plants and mushrooms, Livestock grazing areas**

The area is used for extensive traditional grazing, as well as the collection of non-timber forest products (WHC 2014).

Summary of benefits

Uvs Nuur basin provides considerable benefits to local people through water provision, grazing, forest resource collection and licensed trophy hunting (the latter on the Mongolian side only). It has also huge spiritual and cultural importance to the local people on the Mongolian and Tuvan side and a great potential (as yet only partially fulfilled) to provide benefits related to recreation and tourism to a wider international range of stakeholders. These benefits may be – to different and not always fully understood degrees – subject to threats from overuse, land use change, and climate change.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization / individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	WWF		Research projects on Snow leopard, Argali, and Manul
2	UNDP		Establishment of environmental information centres in Ulaangom airport and in soum centres (soum is the administrative unit, equivalent to the district) to raise ecological awareness
3	Mongolian Academy of Sciences		Annual conference is being convened since 10 years ago. The 10th international symposium on “Conservation and sustainable use of resources on the territory of the Ubs nuur basin and adjacent areas” was organized in Ulaangom and 11th conference was convened in Tuvan republic in 2012.

№	Organization / individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
4	Ubsunur International Center for Biospheric Research		Since its establishment in 1992, the center coordinates scientific research in the hollow and maintains relations with the scientific community worldwide. Center has own staff and financed by the Federal budget.

Compilation of potential site needs

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
1	Management effectiveness assessment	A standard management effectiveness assessment using either appraisal methods such as METT (WWF 2007) or RAPPAM (Ervin 2003) or – better – a systematic analysis using the Open Standards for thre Practice of Conservation (CMP 2013) would be a useful basis for further improvement of the management of the site.	
2	Sustainable tourism management plan	A sustainable tourism management plan should be drawn up and implemented for those few hotspots that are currently experiencing excessive tourism pressure (e.g. Tore-Khol Lake and Tes-Khem river areas).	
3	Staff training programme	An in-depth capacity needs analysis and staff training programme for the PA administrations of the component PAs would help to address identified shortcomings in management capacity and effectiveness. It should be noted that, in the long term, improved staff qualification will only result in improved institutional capacity if salaries become more competitive and staff turnover is reduced.	
4	Communication, education and awareness raising initiative	In order to engage local inhabitants and resource users more closely in decision making and management of the site, a communication, education and awareness raising initiative should be conducted by the PA administrations involved. This should be designed as a two-way process, in which local stakeholders also inform and educate the PA administrations about their perspectives on the area, and jointly develop appropriate formats for more active participation.	

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