



ALTAI TAVAN BOGD NATIONAL PARK

Geographical location



Altai Tavan Bogd National Park (NP) is located between 47°30' 49°15' N and 87°48' 90°00' E in the westernmost edge of Mongolia occupied the north-western and western parts of Mongol Altai Mountain Range which is stretched from the north to the southwest.

It covers an area 186 km long and 42 km wide area of Altai Tavan Bogd Mountain to Uvchuun Mountain (Ikh Davaat) along the Mongolian and Chinese border in the northwest of Mongol Altai Mountain Range.

Altai Tavan Bogd and Khuitnii Orgil

Altai Tavan Bogd Mountain, the westernmost edge and the highest point in Mongolia, is the *"khoimor"* (*"the place of honour"-the rear part of a yurt or ger opposite the entrance*) of the mountain, which is continued for over 900 km long started from the westernmost edge of Mongolia, which is called as "Mongol Altai Mountain Range", passing through a territory of Govi-Altai aimag. There are six permanent snow-capped high

mountains: Khuiten, Nairamdal, Malchin, Burged, and Ulgi. Amongst, the highest mountain peak is Khuiten Orgil (4374 m a.s.l.), which is located at the state border.

In 2012, the President of Mongolia made a Decree on worshipping the sacred Altai Tavan Bogd Mountain, the highest peak of Altai and the "umbrella" of Mongolia. Upon the Decree, its traditional worshipping ceremony was held in 2013.





Potanin Glacier

There are Potanin, Alexander, and Graneg glaciers, the biggest glaciers in Mongolia, located on Tavan Bogd Mountain of Mongol Altai Mountain Range. Potanin glacier covers 53.5 sq.km (N. Dashdeleg, R. Evilkhan, 1983). Altai Tavan Bogd Mountain supports few glaciers those are rarely found in the rest of the world. There are three biggest glaciers (Potanin, Alexander, and Graneg glaciers) in Mongolia on the mountain range.

These glaciers are named after the explorers who discovered them.

Among these glaciers, the biggest one is Potanin glacier which is about 20 km long and its total area is 24 sq. km.

Small Turgen Waterfall



One of the scenic areas in Altai Tavan Bogd NP is a waterfall of Small Turgen, which is located on the western shore of Khoton and Khurgan Lakes' valley.

Started from permanent snow-capped Small Turgen Mountain, this waterfall falls and runs down at 15 m height. It is specific with its extraordinary scenery, where its surrounding mountains are distributed by mixed larch and aspen forests, shrubs, semi-shrubs, bushy plants, boulders, and rocks.



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Khoton and Khurgan Lakes



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There are major lakes such as Khoton, Khurgan, and Dayan of glacier origins are located in Altai Tavan Bogd NP. Khoton Lake is a fresh watered lake and connected by a short channel (2 km long) with Khurgan Lake. These two lakes do feed Khovd River with water. Khoton and Khurgan Lakes are the lowest point (1800 m a.s.l.) in Altai Tavan Bogd NP.

Yolt Basin

Yolt Basin is one of the naturally beautiful areas in Altai Tavan Bogd NP. According to the forest-vegetation classification, it is included in Mongol Altai Khoshuun (district) of Central Asian province.

The basin's natural condition is relatively well preserved and provides for important distribution areas of globally endangered fauna and flora species and is widely covered by larch forest.

Altai soum's territory is located in the mid-latitude of the northern-hemisphere of the globe so that it is dominant by continental climate. Most of Yolt Basin is mountainous forests and is relatively cool and moist. Erchis River starts from Yolt and Songinot Rivers in the basin.

In a valley of Yolt River, spruce-larch and larch-spruce forest zones are distributed on the northern slopes of mountains (started at 2070 m) and grass-forb containing forest meadow vegetation is dominant underneath. These areas are rich in medicinal and food plants. Yolt Am and valleys of Bekht and Umhiit Rivers are distributed by the berries such as redcurrant, cowberry, barberry, and currant and northern parts of mountains are distributed by *Allium* spp.



Vegetation cover



There are over 1020 species of plants including 131 species of woody and shrubby plants and 889 species of herbal plant grown in Mongol Altai steppe district.

Mountainous steppe, alpine and desert plant species co-exist so that some researchers call it as “Flora Complex of Pleistocene’s”.

More than half of plant species compositions (671 species) are the perennial herbal plants, which include grass (79 species) and sedge (32 species) communities. In addition to the perennial plants, there are 103 species of annual and bi-annual plants, which are dominant by species of Cabbage and Goosefoot families.



Forest resource



Mongol Altai Mountain Range is sparsely distributed by larch forests. Pine is not so abundant in these forests. Along Khovd River, southern slopes and bottoms of the mountains in an upper area from Mogoit Bridge and Great and Small Turgen Am (mouths) are partially distributed by spruce forests while basins of Khovd, Khar Salaa, Tsagaan Salaa, Tsagaan-Uus, and Khoton Rivers and upper area of Khoromdog River are distributed by mixed poplar stands, shrubbery and woody plants, and larch forest.

Vegetation of this forest, whose natural condition is preserved in a quite limited area within Mongol Altai Mountain Range, plays an important role in protection of water sources and soils and is a home to nationally and globally endangered species (e.g. *Allium obliquum*, *Cadanopsis cladenifolia*, *Hegemone liliacina*, *Leuzea carthamoides*, and *Dendranthema sinuatum*).





FAUNA



Mongol Altai region namely Altai Tavan Bogd NP has the unique natural zones, where high mountain (alpine zone), boreal coniferous, forest steppe, semi-steppe vast depression, and mountain valleys co-exist. Because of these diverse natural formations co-existing, the region has a specific terio-fauna composition, which includes the northern and taiga mammals (e.g. brown bear, sable, wolverine, red deer, roe deer, Eurasian otter, wild pig, mountain hare, brown squirrel, and Siberian chipmunk) distributed in the north and the Central Asian steppe mammals (e.g. marmot, Siberian jerboa, corsac fox, red fox, Manul, Daurian pika, and tolai hare) and high mountainous mammals (e.g. Altai Argali sheep, ibex, stone marten, snow leopard, and Altai pika) in the south.

Mammals



There are 59 mammal species of 16 families of six orders recorded in this region. Amongst, there are 21 species of rodents, five species of lagomorphs, five species of insectivores, six species of bats, 17 species of predators, and six species of ungulates.

Among the mammals, there are two very rare species, five species listed in the Mongolian Red Book, two species listed in CITES Appendix I, two species listed in CITES Appendix II, and seven strictly protected species recorded.

Researches on the key rare and very rare fauna species in the NP such as Altai Argali sheep (*Ovis ammon*), snow leopard (*Uncia unica*), ibex (*Capra sibirica*), and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) have been conducted.





Birds



Covered a vast area, Mongol Altai Mountain Range is rich in lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, and natural springs, where a number of waterfowl and wetland bird species visit and stopover in summers for nesting.



The lakes, ponds, and rivers are abundant with aquatic molluscs, insects, and fish. Mountainous valleys, forest stands, and rocky areas are abundant by small mammals such as vole, Pallas' pika, and long-tailed souslik. Thus, waterfowl and wetland birds gather in large numbers at the lakes, ponds, and rivers and mountains, rocky areas, and forests are abundant by predator birds. According to the inventory carried out by the park administration in 1997 summer, over 60 species of mountainous, aquatic, and wetland bird species were recorded. Amongst, there were very rare and rare birds such as Bearded vulture, black vulture, eagle, common buzzard, kestrel, Eurasian dotterel, Altai snow cock, (*Tetraogallus altaicus*), Hodgson's stonechat (*Saxicola insignis*), mute swan (*Cygnus olor*), Dalmation pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*), black stork, bar-headed goose (*Anser indicus*), and great black-headed gull.

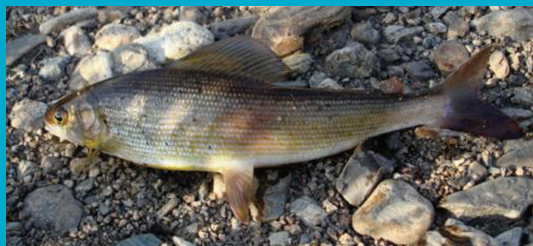
Fish



There are four species of fish recorded in lakes and rivers in Altai Tavan Bogd NP.

The region is included in the Central Asian internal drainage basin according to the watershed provinces of Mongolia. Lakes Khoton, Khurgan, Dayan, Khoromdog, and Khar are distributed by two species of Cyprinidae: *Oreoleuciscus pewzowi* Hevzenstein (fed on plants) and *Oreoleuciscus potanini* Kessler (fed on prey species). Moreover, they are distributed by *Thymallus brevirostris* of *Thymallidae*, an endemic to the region, and *Thymallus arcticus* Pallas and *Barbatula toni* rarely found in the rest of Mongolia, as well as *Thymallus arcticus* Pallas and *Barbatula toni* those are abundant in the Arctic Ocean basin.

There are 26 plankton species and 10 bottom species, prey species of fish, distributed in the lakes.



Amphibians and reptiles



A few species of reptiles are distributed in Altai Tavan Bogd NP.

Rare species with limited distributions in Mongolia (but no comprehensive studies have been conducted so far): European northern viper (*Viperidae*, *Viperaberus* L.), Central Asian viper (*Aqkistrodon halys*), Pallas' coluber (*Colubridae*, *Elaphedione Pallas*), Viviparous lizard (*Lacerta Vivipara Waldeideshse*), Multi-cellated racerunner (*Eremias multiocellata* Guntner), and toad-headed agama (*Phrynocephalus versicolor* Strauch.) are distributed.

Local indigenous people

Ethnic groups including Kazakh, Tuva, Uriankhai and Dorvod live and possess in these mountains slopes. Most of the ethnic groups engaged in the five kinds of livestock farming (sheep, goat, horse, camel, cow) to follow the tradition of ancestors. Up until now the Altai land has kept its culture and preserved its untouched wild nature.



NATURAL, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL MONUMENTS

The findings and artefacts dated to the Old and New Stone Ages are widely found within Mongol Altai Mountain Range specifically in areas along Sagsai and Khovd Rivers, Khar Lake, and small rivers and streams in the national park. Amongst, findings in Sagsai River valley are the most attractive and interesting. They are found in parts on highland or tops of the hills or the areas with alluvial sediments those were formed due to ancient glaciations.

Mongol Altai Mountain Range is also abundant by the findings such as deer stones, ochreous carvings and petroglyphs and the monuments showed images of traditional economic activities and arts dated to the Central Asian Bronze Age.

There are ancient people's culture related artefacts and findings such as red ochreous carvings on rocks, animal and human images on rocks abundant on Altai Mountain Range.

These petroglyphs are the historical and cultural monuments dated to 2500-3000 years ago.

Furthermore, the petroglyphs are abundant in Usaid area along upper part of Khar Yamaat River in a territory of Ulaankhus soum and Shiveet Khairkhan, Small Turgen, and Tsagaan Asgat areas in a territory of Tsengel soum of Bayan-Ulgii aimag.





Deer stones on Altai Mountain Range are quite different from those on Khangai Mountain Range in their images: they have horse images instead of deer images. There are also sword shaped monuments abundant. Deer stones are carved and made of grey granite. In sizes, the stones are 3 - 4.5 m long, 0.6-0.8 m wide, and 0.2-0.4 m thick. The stones have carvings of quite big sun and small moon images on upper front corners. Some stones have images of the arrows went through the sun images and numerous thumb sized holes in rows under the sun and moon images. A deer stone has 3-4 deer images carved round it and 2-3 of them are overlapped on both sides. There are also images of arrows and bows, swords, knives, grindstones, axes, and unique pentagon images below the deer images. While some of the deer stones have all the images above described, some others are blank or have no any images or have images of one or two stamps or one sword. Deer stones are dated to the centuries VII-V before Common Era.

There are rectangular or square graves dated to a period from ancient Skif to Pre-Hunnu Period and some other graves and burial sites of Hunnu, Tureg, Uigar, and Mongol Empires and unidentified periods found in Altai Tavan Bogd NP.

There are over 30 ancient graves and burial sites with human stones in Mogoit and Onkhot valleys. Moreover, there are two burial sites of very interesting shapes with human stones near Khoton Lake, four burial sites with human stones in Shar Bulag area, four human stones in Yolt Kharbain branch, burial sites with eight human stones in Chikhertei, Jalanash, and Songinot areas and some other burial sites with human stones in Khargant valley and Tsagaan River valley. They are all dated to Tureg Period.

ADMINISTRATION OF “MONGOL ALTAI NURUU” STATE PROTECTED AREA

Bayan-Ulgii aimag Citizen's Representative Khural submitted a proposal for taking areas under protection to the Government of Mongolia and the Parliament in 1994-1996 and the Parliament discussed and approved the proposal contained boundaries of Altai Tavan Bogd National Park with its Resolution No:43 in 1996. As the NP was established, a total of 656,106 ha starting from Altai Tavan Bogd Mountain to Uvchuun Mountain stretched over territories of four soums are included in the national protected area network.

A main purpose of the park administration is to protect and preserve naturally scenic state, specific formation, and natural zone characteristics of Mongol Altai Mountain Range for present and next generations and study their evolution process, reduce negative impacts, prevent from unsustainable use, and create favourable living environment by taking rare and endangered flora and fauna species, fresh water resource and the areas with historical and cultural monuments under state protection.



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