

Asian Waterbird Conservation Fund

Support of HUN Club's conservation and public awareness activities in western Mongolia

Progress Report : December 2006

1. **Contact person**

Axel Braunlich on behalf of Har Us Nuur (HUN) Club

2. **Project commencement date**

30th June 2006

3. **Expected project completion date**

31st December 2007

4. **Summary of activities organised:**



There's nothing like starting young!
South-eastern Khar Us Nuur National

a) **Acquisition of optics**

Ten Audubon Vector 10x42 **binoculars**, two Kowa **spotting scopes** TSN-601, one Kowa **eye piece** 20x, one Kowa **eye piece** 30x WA, and two Manfrotto **tripods** 190D/3001BN, both with Manfrotto **tripod heads** 128 RC were purchased in the USA for 3000 US\$ (good optics are very difficult to find in Mongolia; and they are very expensive here). Purchase and free transport to Mongolia was kindly organised by Dr Richard Reading from the Denver Zoological Foundation. No duty had to be paid to the customs. Transport from the capital Ulaanbaatar to Khovd in western Mongolia was also organised for free through overland transport by a project consultant. **WWF Mongolia kindly supplemented 600 US\$ to the 2600 US\$ allocated from the AWCF funds for the purchase of the optics!** A member of HUN Club manufactured bags for the tripods and stay-on-cases for the telescopes to protect them from sand, moisture, scratches and shock.



One of the new Kowa telescopes, protected by a stay-on-case made by a HUN Club member. Khovd, November 2006.

b) [Field Trip 1 \(Link to Field Protocol\)](#)

Site: **Khar Us Nuur National Park**, south-western side (Khovd province)

Date: **21 July 2006** (day trip)

Participants: **9 people** (students 5, biology teacher from Khovd State University 1, biologist from the Khar Us Nuur National Park Administration 1, adviser to WWF Altai-Sayan Field Office 1, WWF driver 1)



HUN Club members during the AWCF-sponsored field trip to Khar Us Nuur National Park. This tower near the sagaan gol area is probably the only bird observation tower in the whole of Mongolia. July 2006.

During this day trip the south-western corner of Khar Us Nuur National Park was visited. The area comprises of reed (*Phragmites*) – island zone of over 200 km². Birds 4 observed included 9 species of waterfowl and 9 species of waders. Several globally threatened species were seen: White-headed Duck, Lesser Kestrel, Pallas's Fish Eagle, and Saker Falcon. Due to the super abundance of mosquitoes we returned already in early afternoon from the field.

c) Field Trip 2

Site: **Airag Nuur** (Uvs province), on the way back also **Khar Us Nuur National Park**

Date: **23 / 24 September 2006**

Participants: **9 people** (students 4 male, 2 female, biology teacher from Khovd State University [different teacher from July] 1, biologist from the KUNNP Administration 1, adviser to WWF Altai-Sayan Field Office 1, officer from Anti- Poaching Unit 1)



A group of students and teachers from Khovd State University, members of HUN Club, at the lake Airag nuur, one of Mongolia's most bird-rich wetland reserves (IBA & Ramsar site). September 2006.



Western Mongolia's second **Whited-naped Crane** (left, with Common Cranes to the right) was observed at Airag nuur during the AWCF-sponsored tour.

This trip was a bit longer. We visited Airag nuur, a 143 km² (14,300ha) lake at 1030 m.a.s.l. to the north of Khar Us Nuur National Park. The lake is an IBA and Ramsar Site and is part of the Khan Khokhij - Khjargas Nuur "A" National Park. A roost of 11,000 Cormorants, hunting Pallas's Fish Eagle,

Golden Eagles, White-tailed Eagles and a White-naped Crane, only the second for western Mongolia were unforgettable sights. We camped at the edge of the lake and got visits from local herdsmen.



Local herders, interested in our activities, cross a river to reach our field camp. Airag Nuur, September 2006.

Apart from bird watching a Sumo- and traditional Mongolian style wrestling competition added to the fun of the trip. On the way back we stopped at Khar Us Nuur



HUN Club members observing Eurasian Spoonbills and other waterbirds at Schar nuur in Khar Us Nuur National Park. September 2006.

d) Field Trip 3

Site: **Khar Us Nuur National Park**, south-eastern side.

Date: **7 / 8 October 2006**

Participants: **14 people** (Khovd State University: German language teachers 2, English language teacher 1, biologist from the Khar Us Nuur National Park Administration 1, students 4 male, 4 female, driver [from the local Kazakh minority], adviser to WWF Altai-Sayan Field Office 1)

The third field trip this year went again to the Tsagaan gol area in the southern part of Khar Us Nuur National Park. But this time the eastern side was visited. We slept in a ger (or yurt, the traditional felt tent of Mongolian nomads) and enjoyed the hospitality of the local people. The trip concentrated more on the identification of birds, rather than surveying a large area. Highlight of the trip was the observation of three Dalmatian Pelicans which were flying high above the adjacent Jargalant Khaikhan Mountain (part of the National Park) with its Snow Leopards



Struggling to identify all these distant ducks (and Coots)!
South-eastern Khar Us Nuur National Park, October 2006.



Local herders enjoy a look through the new telescopes while goats a being milked nearby. South-eastern Khar Us Nuur National Park, October 2006.

e) News Clippings

A short text on the activities undertaken in the framework of the project will appear, together with a photograph, in the Mongolian language Altai-Sayan newspaper (in print). This is produced by WWF and about a 1000 copies a circulated in the region.

f) Lectures

Weekly lectures in ornithology for students of Khovd State University were started from the last week of October.



HUN Club members during a lecture / bird identification training (we use university rooms for these activities)

g) Further use of optical equipment

Telescopes and binoculars purchased through the project are sometimes used privately by HUN Club members for bird watching in their spare time. Furthermore – when not needed by HUN Club – the optics are shared with local conservation community.



The field trip was attended by students, a biology teacher, a member of the WWF-sponsored Irves-3 Anti-poaching Unit, a staff member of the Khar Us Nuur National Park administration and the international adviser to WWF's Altai-Sayan Field Office.

Support of HUN Club's conservation and public awareness activities in W Mongolia



Members of HUN Club at the observation Tower in Khar Us Nuur National Park during an AWCF-sponsored field trip, 21 July 2006.

Photo: A. Braunlich / WWF



Little Owl in Khar Us Nuur National Park, seen during a AWCF-sponsored field trip, 21 July 2006.

Photo: A. Braunlich / WWF



Field Protocol 21 July 2006

Site: Khar Us Nuur National Park (KUNNP), south-western side (Mongolia: Khovd province)

Habitats: rocky dry gorge (Khongiliin am) on the way to the park; KUNNP: shallow lagoon with submerged vegetation; sand island (breeding colony: gulls, cormorants); island zone with extensive reedbeds (Tsaagan gol); "grazing lawn"-pasture along the shoreline; adjacent zone of high grass *Achnatherum splendens*; desert-steppe (semi desert).

Time: in the park 10:30 – 15:00 hrs

Participants: 9 people (1 biology teacher Khovd University, 5 biology students, 1 biologist Khar Us Nuur National Park Administration, 1 international adviser to WWF, 1 driver)

Weather: c25°C, ¾ clouded, wind 1-2(3) Bft; viewing conditions very good

Threats: No threats detected during the visit. The area is left by the nomadic herders in summer due to the superabundance of mosquitoes. Two dead birds found (Grey Heron, Mongolian Gull) where apparently killed by predators; no signs of any birds affected by H5N1 (poultry flu) virus were found.

Summary

The first AWCF-sponsored field trip of HUN Club to Khar Us Nuur National Park was a brief one. During the summer many students and other people from the town of Khovd vacate the city to spend the hot months with their families in gers (traditional Mongolian felt tents also known as yurts) in the country side. Public life comes almost at a standstill. However, we contacted several students and went with nine people to the south-western side of Khar Us Nuur National Park. Crossing a rocky gorge on the way to the park resulted in the observation of 2 Lesser Kestrels, a globally threatened species. On the way back we observed briefly a Saker Falcon in the semi desert, another globally threatened species.

Bird Species List total number of species observed: **59**

Species	Remarks
Note: globally threatened and near-threatened species are set in bold.	
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	Breeding visitor. Before island 65, 30
Ruddy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Breeding visitor 15
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Before islands 120
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	14 before tsagan deris
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Breeding visitor 12 before
Common Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Breeding visitor? 2
Red-crested Pochard <i>Netta rufina</i>	Breeding visitor 23 200
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	Breeding visitor 4 1 fam
White-headed Duck <i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	Endangered Breeding visitor 12,4 6,2
Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>	Breeding visitor 2
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Breeding visitor 3 2
Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Breeding visitor 54 31
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Breeding visitor 16 6
Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	Breeding visitor 9 6
Great Cormorant <i>Palacrocorax carbo</i>	Breeding visitor 30+
Lesser Kestrel <i>Falco naumanni</i>	Vulnerable Breeding visitor Khongiliin am 2 m
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Breeding visitor Kho 1
Saker Falcon <i>Falco cherrug</i>	Endangered 1
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	1
Pallas's Fish Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i>	Vulnerable 2
Cinereous Vulture <i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Near Threatened 1
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	Breeding visitor Ad 1 pulli + 2 ad
Demoiselle Crane <i>Grus virgo</i>	Breeding visitor 2 2 desertr
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	1 3ad 4 juv
Pied Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	1
Northern Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	16 20
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	2 5
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	1 juv
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	3 1
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	5
Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temmincki</i>	40
Long-toed Stint <i>Calidris subminuta</i>	3 ad
East Siberian Gull <i>Larus vegae</i>	100s
Great Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>	1 2
Gull-billed Tern <i>Sterna nilotica</i>	4 ad
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	50
Little Tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	1
White-winged Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	6
Pallas's Sandgrouse <i>Syrhaptes paradoxus</i>	Resident. Breeding in desert-steppe. 3 + 1 flying over KUNNP
Little Owl <i>Athene noctua</i>	Resident. 1

Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	100s
Eurasian Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	1
Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>	2
Common Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>	1
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	600 400
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	3
Short-toed Lark <i>Calandrella rufescens</i>	Many
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	1
Horned Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	2
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Some
Pied Wheatear <i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	Am
Desert Wheatear <i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Desert
Eurasian Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	3, 30
Rock Sparrow <i>Petronia petronia</i>	20
Citrine Wagtail <i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Many
White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	3
Richard's Pipit <i>Anthus richardi</i>	2 sing + 1
Tawny Pipit <i>Anthus campestris</i>	1 sing

A copy of this field is deposited each at Khovd University, Biological Faculty; har Us Nuur National Park Administration Khovd; and at the WWF Altai-Sayan Field Office Khovd.