



THE LAKE

LAKE HOVSGOL NATIONAL PARK

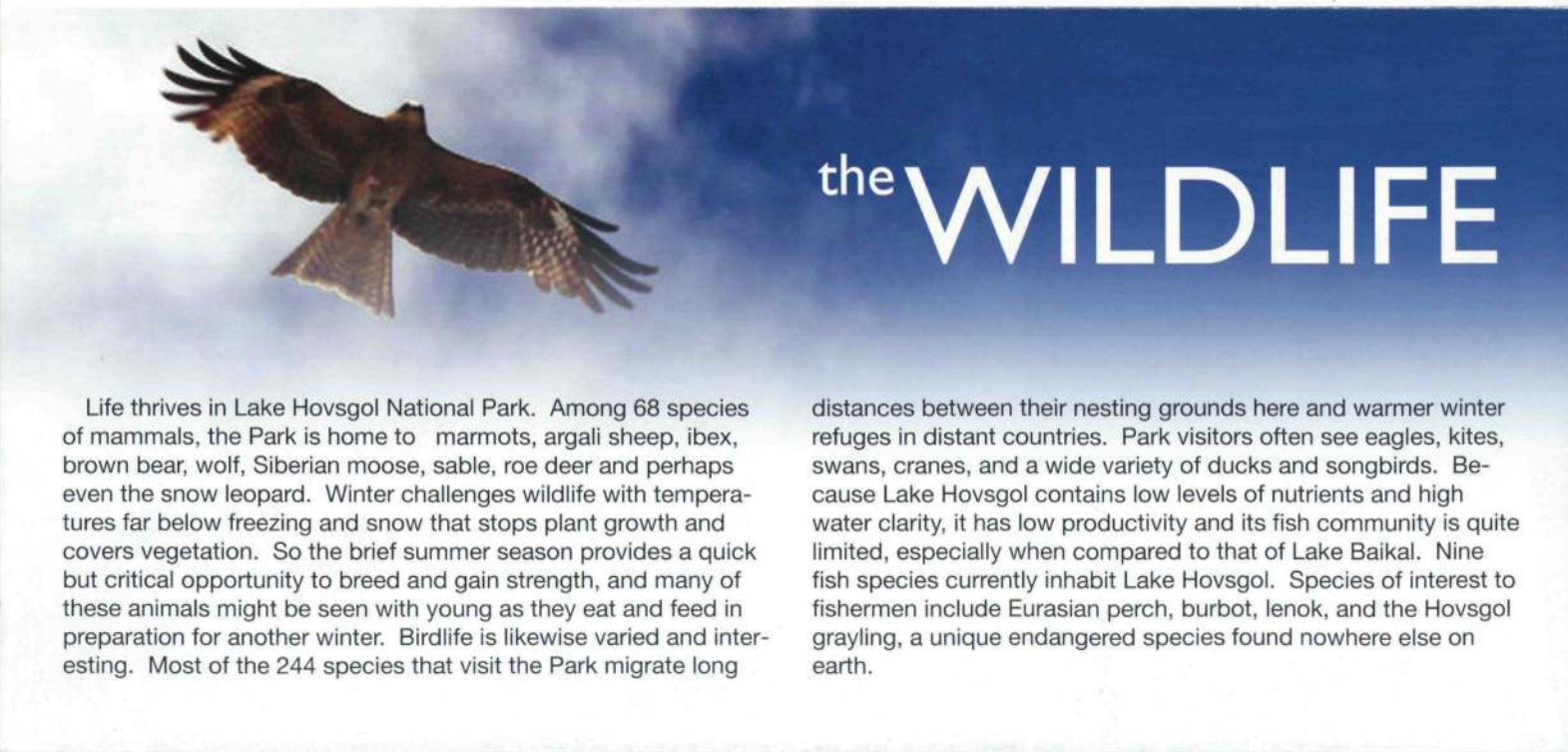
In northern Mongolia, where the Central Asian Steppe meets the Siberian Taiga, Lake Hovsgol National Park preserves a place of outstanding and pristine beauty. For centuries, nomadic families and their herds, who relied, and continue to rely, on the clean waters and surrounding grasslands to sustain their traditional way of life, have visited the shoreline of the Lake.

In 1992, 838,000 hectares of this stunning landscape were set aside as Lake Hovsgol National Park. In 2011, the Park was expanded to 1,180,270 hectares when the upper headwaters of the

Uur River were made part of the Park. In recent years, this spectacular landscape of water and mountains that is sacred to so many has become the destination of more and more travelers, from Mongolia and beyond. We come to Lake Hovsgol to sample a small part of this enormous and diverse landscape, an opportunity that is increasingly rare and endangered in a rapidly changing world. Today, and into the future, the park staff, many partners, and the native peoples work together to help preserve the Park for you and for future generations to enjoy.

Lake Hovsgol is one of the oldest and most beautiful lakes in the world. Also referred to as Hovsgol Nuur or Lake Hovsgol, it has long been regarded as "the Blue Pearl of Mongolia." This exceptionally pristine lake is 136 km long, 20 – 40 km wide, and up to 260 m deep; it contains nearly 70% of all freshwater in Mongolia. Lake Hovsgol is one of 17 ancient lakes worldwide and is variously estimated at between 2 and 5 million years old. The outlet, Egiin Gol (River), flows south then east to join the Selenge River, Mongolia's most extensive river system. The Selenge, in turn, flows northward into Lake Baikal in Russia, the deepest lake in the world.

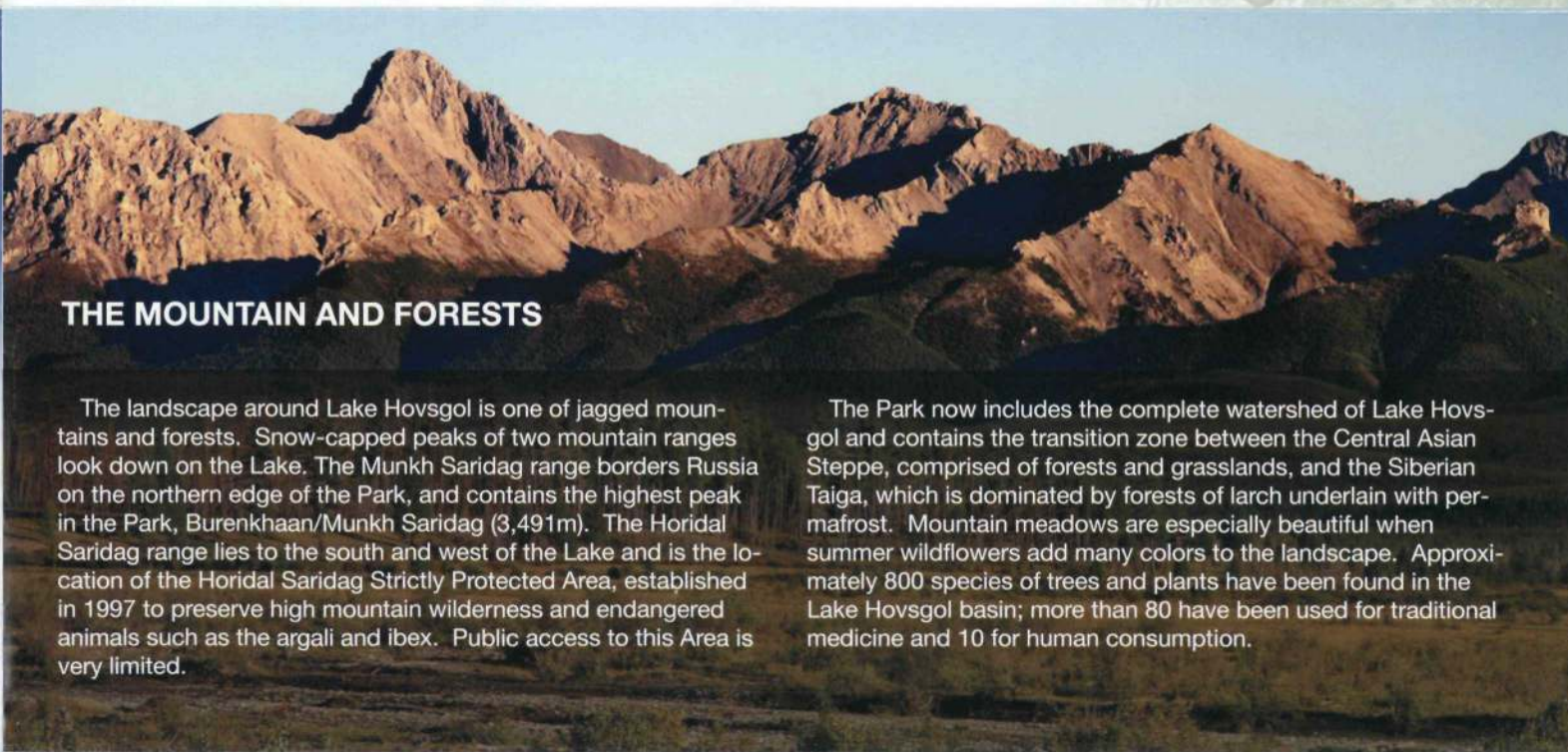
Lake Hovsgol freezes over for many months during winter and, because of its proximity to the border, once served as a transport route for trucks and cars that carried people and goods over the ice between Hatgal and Russia, a practice now forbidden to prevent pollution.



the WILDLIFE

Life thrives in Lake Hovsgol National Park. Among 68 species of mammals, the Park is home to marmots, argali sheep, ibex, brown bear, wolf, Siberian moose, sable, roe deer and perhaps even the snow leopard. Winter challenges wildlife with temperatures far below freezing and snow that stops plant growth and covers vegetation. So the brief summer season provides a quick but critical opportunity to breed and gain strength, and many of these animals might be seen with young as they eat and feed in preparation for another winter. Birdlife is likewise varied and interesting. Most of the 244 species that visit the Park migrate long

distances between their nesting grounds here and warmer winter refuges in distant countries. Park visitors often see eagles, kites, swans, cranes, and a wide variety of ducks and songbirds. Because Lake Hovsgol contains low levels of nutrients and high water clarity, it has low productivity and its fish community is quite limited, especially when compared to that of Lake Baikal. Nine fish species currently inhabit Lake Hovsgol. Species of interest to fishermen include Eurasian perch, burbot, lenok, and the Hovsgol grayling, a unique endangered species found nowhere else on earth.



THE MOUNTAIN AND FORESTS

The landscape around Lake Hovsgol is one of jagged mountains and forests. Snow-capped peaks of two mountain ranges look down on the Lake. The Munkh Saridag range borders Russia on the northern edge of the Park, and contains the highest peak in the Park, Burenkhaan/Munkh Saridag (3,491m). The Horidal Saridag range lies to the south and west of the Lake and is the location of the Horidal Saridag Strictly Protected Area, established in 1997 to preserve high mountain wilderness and endangered animals such as the argali and ibex. Public access to this Area is very limited.

The Park now includes the complete watershed of Lake Hovsgol and contains the transition zone between the Central Asian Steppe, comprised of forests and grasslands, and the Siberian Taiga, which is dominated by forests of larch underlain with permafrost. Mountain meadows are especially beautiful when summer wildflowers add many colors to the landscape. Approximately 800 species of trees and plants have been found in the Lake Hovsgol basin; more than 80 have been used for traditional medicine and 10 for human consumption.



THE PEOPLE

Lake Hovsgol has been the home of nomadic pastoralists for thousands of years. Their lifestyles represent some of the most enduring traditions of Mongolia. Because the harsh climate, which is dominated by long and very cold winters, severely limits

By Plane

Commercial flights between Ulaanbaatar and the Aimag Capital of Murun provide for quick and easy access to Lake Hovsgol. Murun is a 110-kilometer drive on a recently-paved road from the village of Hatgal at the park's southern entrance.

How to get here?

