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Erforschung biologischer Ressourcen der Mongolei  
/ Exploration into the Biological Resources of  
Mongolia, ISSN 0440-1298

Institut für Biologie der Martin-Luther-Universität  
Halle-Wittenberg

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2010

## Waterbirds of Uvs-Nuur Depression


T. P. Archimaeva-Ozerskaya

*Russian Academy of Sciences*, [heavenlybird@mail.ru](mailto:heavenlybird@mail.ru)

V. I. Zabelin

*Russian Academy of Sciences*, [zabelinvi@mail.ru](mailto:zabelinvi@mail.ru)

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Archimaeva-Ozerskaya, T. P. and Zabelin, V. I., "Waterbirds of Uvs-Nuur Depression" (2010). *Erforschung biologischer Ressourcen der Mongolei / Exploration into the Biological Resources of Mongolia, ISSN 0440-1298*. 54.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/biolmongol/54>

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Erforsch. biol. Ress. Mongolei (Halle/Saale) 2010 (11): 259-266

## Waterbirds of Uvs-Nuur Depression

T.P. Archimaeva-Ozerskaya, V.I. Zabelin

### Abstract

This report provides an overview of water birds (Non-Passeriformes) inhabiting the lakes of Uvs-Nuur Depression. The article included material obtained during field work in the Uvs-Nuur Depression during 1999-2006, unpublished observations of rare vagrant species of birds, and data from the literature. Altogether we and others recorded 81 bird species from 10 families on the lakes within the basin. The list we provide does not include sparrows or birds from habitats closely associated with the basin. The following non-Passeriformes bird families were noted (with the number of species in parentheses): Gaviidae (1), Podicipedidae (2), Phalacrocoracidae (1), Ardeidae (5), Anatidae (27), Gruidae (6), Charadriidae (5), Recurvirostridae (2), Scolopacidae (21), and Laridae (11). We noted the following rare vagrant species: *Ixobrychus minutus*, *Anser albifrons*, *Grus leucogeranus*. The report also presents some quantitative data of bird observations.

**Keywords:** water birds, Uvs-nuur depression, lakes, Mongolia, Tuva

### 1. Material and Methods

Wetland complexes of the Uvs-Nuur Depression support the most abundant avifauna and the greatest density of individuals in the region, occurring as clusters of life within the more thinly populated steppes and semi-desert plains. In total, this group of waterbirds consists of 102 species of birds, including breeding, migratory, and vagrant species. Eighty-one species belong to non-Passeriformes orders. Some species of birds found in the Uvs-Nuur Depression are considered rare and endangered species and are included within the various categories of the Mongolian Red Data Book.

According to our observations, the maximal population density of waterfowl species recorded on Uvs Nuur Lake - 1929, 30 individuals on 10 km of shoreline further downward followed Lakes Shara-Nur, Tore-Khol, and a group of small freshwater lakes, located south of the Shara-Nur Lake. From the large number of birds that occur in waters of the basin, only a few species nest in the region. Other species only spend the summer here or stop briefly during seasonal migrations.

This report draws largely upon field work conducted from 1999 to 2006 in the Uvs-Nuur Depression in the territory of Russia and the northwest coast of Uvs-Nuur Lake in Mongolia. We also provide records of rare and vagrant species from earlier observations 1986-1998 and from reports published by other researchers.

Key: \* = species included in the Red Book of the Republic of Tuva,  
\*\* = species included in the Red Book of Russia.

### 2. Results

**Black-throated Diver** *Gavia arctica* breeds in the valley. Single pairs breed at Tore-Khol and Uvs-nuur Lakes. A pair with three young was observed on Tore-Khol Lake in June 2004 within a flock of 11 birds; apparently the other birds did not breed. In July 1991, on a small lake near the western coast of Uvs-Nuur Lake, Mongolia 13 pairs of Black-throated Diver were seen, including one pair with 2 young chicks and another pair with 1 grown chick.

On the lakes of the valley we recorded two species of grebes: **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* and **Black-necked Grebe** *P. nigricollis*. The Great Crested Grebe is the most widespread

species of coastal Uvs-Nuur Lake, reaching a density of 420 individuals along 10 km of coastline. The species breeds on other lakes, but with a low frequency of success because of the lack of suitable conditions. The Black-necked Grebe is not numerous and we rarely encountered the species on Uvs-Nuur Lake. In 2005, the species was observed at Shara-Nur Lake as one of the most dominant species (density = 155 individuals on 10 km of coastline), possibly due to changes in hydrological conditions that occurred this year that markedly improved the lake via water desalination leading to a thinning of the undergrowth of reeds along the coast (OZERSKAYA & ZABELIN 2008).

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* is a common breeder on Uvs-Nuur Lake. It breeds on the floodplain of the Tes-Khem River in mixed colonies with Gray Herons. A large colony of Cormorants was found in the estuary of Torgalyk River in the Mongolian part of the coast of Uvs-Nuur Lake in 1999. There we counted 111 nests situated on the dry floodplain in poplar trees at a height of 10 m. At other lakes this species does not breed, and was rarer. In 2005 a cormorant was observed on Shara-Nur Lake.

Two species of herons breed in Uvs-Nuur Depression: the **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* is common and the **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* much rarer. For several years, there was a colony of Gray Herons among the reeds in a small pond at the southern shore of Tore-Khol Lake (locality of Chinge-Suk-Pak). At this spot we observed 3 nests in 2004 and 18 pairs of herons in 2006. Gray Heron breeding colonies were found at that spot and in the floodplain of the Tes-Khem River, where they bred with Cormorants (SAVELIEV & MAKAROV 2000). Single birds were met regularly on the open shores of all lakes.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* breeds on Uvs-Nuur Lake and in the reeds of the floodplains of rivers in the Depression. In late April - early May in 1999, 2004, and 2005 we observed displaying male Bitterns in the coastal thickets of reeds on the Uvs-Nuur Lake during courtship. On 26.05.06 a Bittern on Tore-Khol Lake was heard.

**Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus*. There is only one record of a Little Bittern in Uvs-Nuur Depression: on 25.05.1992 on the west coast of Uvs-Nuur Lake in Mongolian territory we recorded a low-flying Little Bittern that then perched in the coastal reeds.

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* is a rare breeder. Regularly some single individuals were recorded as occasional small flights of Spoonbills on all lakes and in the flood-plains of Tes-Khem River. Spoonbills breed in the northwest part of the Uvs-Nuur coast. We observed 11 birds in a mixed colony with Cormorants on a small, sandy island. A single Spoonbill was observed on 06.07.2004, 13 birds were spotted in August of the same year, 3 birds were seen on 26.04.05, and 1 spoonbill was noted on 26.05.05, all on Tore-Khol Lake. In the spring and summer 2003–2005 we regularly met 1 to 4 birds on the Uvs-Nuur Lake.

**Graylag Goose** *Anser anser*. The main breeding range of the Graylag Goose in the Uvs-Nuur Depression is located in the lower reaches and delta of the Tes-Khem River and its tributaries and channels (SAVELIEV & MAKAROV 2000). In autumn, during migration of Graylag Geese through the depression, the species is more numerous, with geese found in flocks of several hundred individuals. At this time they mostly remained on low, grassy meadows and lakes with sandy beaches, staging for migration on Tore-Khol Lake. In the period 1980 to 1985 aggregations of up to 60 thousand individuals were observed here (SAVCHENKO et al. 1997), because before the end of the last century the area around the lake contained large areas of grain crops and perennial grasses. In recent years a significant reduction in the number of Graylag Geese staging in autumn takes place at the lake. We repeatedly observed Graylag Geese. For example on 02.06.04 and again on 26.04.05 a pair was probably breeding the southern part of the Tore-Khol Lake. Small groups were recorded at Uvs-Nuur Lake, including 11 birds on 12.05.99; 6 birds on 30.04.04; 5 birds on 29./30.04.05, and one pair recorded on 15.05.99, 6.05.05 and 4.06.06 at Shara-Nur Lake.

We noted a couple of rare migrant geese in Uvs-Nuur Depression. We saw some **White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* on 29.09.1989 in flight with three Graylag Geese on the coast near the mouth of Nariyn-Gol River. We observed about 50 dark **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* - on Baga-Nur Lake on 29.09.89 in a flock of 105 geese that also included grey geese. .

\*\* The **Bar-headed Goose** *Eulabeia indica* regularly breeds in the valley in small numbers. On Shara-Nur Lake Bar-headed Geese are found regularly in pairs and with broods, so they apparently breed, on the nearby ridge of Agar-dag-Taiga. We observed 22 geese on 01.06.03 and on 4.06.04 we saw a flock of 14 geese with two broods of 6 and 9 chicks. Six birds remained on the lake from 27.04.05 until 06.05.05 and 2 birds were recorded on 6.06.05. In 2003 we observed an unsuccessful attempt at breeding by the species in a nest of a Black-eared Kite in a poplar forest along the southern shore of Tore-Khol Lake.

\*\* The **Swan Goose** *Cygnopsis cygnoides* is a rare breeding species. We regularly recorded 1-2 pairs of Swan Geese on Shara-Nuur Lake. We made other observations on the southern coasts of freshwater lakes, including 6 birds on 01.06.03, 3 birds on 28.04.-6.05.05, and 14 birds on 03.06.06. In 2009 one pair bred successfully and was observed with its brood (D. Khaidarov, pers. comm.). The main breeding location for this goose species is located in middle of the Tes-Khem River, where in 1989 researchers recorded 16 broods (SAVELIEV & MAKAROV 2000).

\* The **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* is a rarely breeding species throughout the Depression. One pair of swans was observed in the spring and summer of 1999 and then again in 2004 - 2006 at Tore-Khol Lake. SAVCHENKO et al. (1997) noted that the species breeds in this location. In recent years the species was not observed due to increasing tourism on the lake. At Shara-Nur Lake 1 - 4 pairs of swans were recorded annually,. On 4.06.05 we observed one breeding pair with 7 downy chicks and 2 more non-breeding pairs at Shara\_Nur. At Uvs-Nuur Lake the Whooper Swan probably breeds regularly and occurs in a fairly high density of up to 13 individuals per 10 km of coastline. Also families and flocks of 10-15 birds were seen flying there.

\*\* The **Bewick's Swan** *Cygnus bewickii* is rare migrant within the valley. During spring migration on 11.05.99 a small flock of about two dozen was noted by us along the northwest coast of Uvs-Nuur Lake. In autumn of that year (October 1) we observed a small flock at the mouth of Nariyn-Gol River that included 5 Bewick's and s Whooper Swans, all adults. On 24.05.1992 an adult Bewick's Swan was observed on the northern shore of Uvs-Nuur Lake, apparently it stayed there over the summer.

The **Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna* is a typical species of the steppe lakes, observed regularly on all water, but generally in modest numbers. Shelducks breed in hollows, which are apparently quite rare. We recorded young shelducks in flight at Shara-Nur Lake on 14.08.04. We observed 1-2 pairs of Shelducks during the breeding period on the northern shore of Tore-Khol Lake in 2000–2005. On 14.08.04 we recorded 2 pairs with broods containing 2 chicks each.

The **Ruddy Shelduck** *T. ferruginea* is a typical, but not numerous species of the steppe depression lakes and nearby rivers. Non-breeding birds often occur in clusters on lakes and in the floodplain of the Tes-Khem River and its tributaries. According to our observations over the past 10 years, the number of breeding birds in the basin is declining. In 2000 on Tore-Khol Lake we observed 7 broods with 7 - 12 chicks and one group with 20 chickens (a total of 63 chicks), But in 2004 we found only 2 broods with 6 and 4 chicks, and in 2006 we did observe any Ruddy Shelduck broods. This is undoubtedly a consequence of increased human influence forcing the birds from their traditional habitat. On Shara-Nur Lake annually in early summer we formerly noted hundreds of Ruddy Shelduck, mostly non-breeding birds.

Within the valley of lakes we recorded **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*, **Pintail** *A. acuta*, **Gadwall** *A. strepera*, **Shoveler** *A. clypeata*, **Teal** *A. Cressa*, and **Garganey** *A. querquedula* - all common breeding species in the lake-marsh complex of the Depression. The most numerous dabbling ducks we observed on all the lakes were Mallards, Gadwalls, and Shovelers, rarely Garganeys. The **Falcated Duck** *A. falcata*, was breeding in 1958 on Tore-Khol Lake (FLINT 1962), but we haven't observed it in the region.

We repeatedly recorded the **Widgeon** *A. penelope* during seasonal migrations and in summer on the lakes of the valley. On 30/31.05.03 we observed 5 birds on the southern shore of Tore-Khol Lake, on 5./6.05.05 we saw several flocks with 127 individuals, and on 19.05.05 - 02.06.05 we spotted more widgeons. But lakes of this kind do not appear to provide suitable breeding habitat.

The most abundant species of the diving ducks is the **Pochard** *Aythya ferina*. The average density of species in the Depression was 151 and on Shara-Nur Lake was 231 individuals on 10 km of coastline. The main breeding ranges are located on the floodplain of the Tes-Khem River and its tributaries and along the coastal strip of Uvs-Nuur Lake. Only a small number of *Aythya ferina* breed at other lakes; most of these birds are present only during the summer and don't breed.

Less numerous, but also common on the lakes is the **Tufted Duck** *A. fuligula*. We saw females with 3 ducklings on the Tore-Khol (locality of Chinge-Suk-Pak) on 05.07.04. Here we observed 4 broods (with 5 -10 chicks). The **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* breeds in the lake-swamp-river delta complex of Tes-Khem River and the northeastern coast of Uvs-Nuur Lake comprising the main range of this species in Tuva. The species also ranges in the Yenisei region of Siberia (SAVCHENKO et al. 1997).

A rare visitor to the region is the **Greater Scaup** *A. marila*. Approximately 30 individuals were observed on 26.09.89 on the bay on northwestern part of Tore-Khol Lake along with about 200 Tufted Ducks. A Greater Scaup was also observed in early June on Uvs-Nuur Lake by R. PIECHOCKI (1968).

The **Ferruginous Duck** *A. nyroca* is a rare visitor. We observed 3 diving males of Ferruginous Duck on 08.07.91 on Baga-Nuur Lake and along the western coast of Uvs-Nuur Lake.

We observed the **Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* in spring flying in flocks of up to several hundred individuals, mostly on Shara-Nur Lake (27.04.-06.05.05). In summer we regularly recorded several birds at all surveyed lakes, but nests and chicks were never found. A.Y. TUGARINOV (1915) found a brood of Goldeneye in the northern part of Uvs-Nuur Lake.

The **White-winged Scoter** *Melanitta deglandi* is a flighty species, recorded by us on the Shara-Nur Lake. We observed a flock of 20 birds on 15.05.99 and 4 birds on 1.06.03.

The **Goosander** *Mergus merganser* is a common breeder on the Tes-Khem River. A flock of 58 non-breeding individuals was observed on 20.06.03 on Uvs-Nuur Lake. Migrating birds of up to 20 individuals (average 14) were noted during the end of April in several different years at Shara-Nur and at Tore-Khol Lakes.

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator*. A brood of this species was observed on Tore-Khol Lake in 1958 by FLINT (1962) and a young bird from a brood was recorded in August 1980 by SAVCHENKO et al. (1997). During our observation period we didn't see this species, nevertheless it may breed here regularly.

\*\* The **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* is a rare breeding species. Its main habitats in the valley occur in the lake-swamp-river delta complex of Tes-Khem River. We have repeatedly recorded the species during the breeding period on small freshwater lakes in southern Shara-Nur Lake. On 31.05.06 four males (in a group of 9 birds) are performing courtship rituals at one of the lakes. As a place of reproduction for this rare species, this lake is of great importance and needs to be protected.

The **Crane** *Grus grus* is a rare breeding species. On 27.04.05 on Shara-Nur Lake we observed 4 birds; and on 3.06.05 on the shore of the lake we saw a pair of Cranes with downy chicks. We regularly observed Cranes in the locality Sharlaa (southern shore of Tore-Khol Lake) within a marsh meadow, including 5 birds on 27.04.04, a pair on 3.06.04, and a single bird on 26 - 27.05.06. On the northern shore we recorded 6 Cranes on 14.08.04. In the area of Uvs-Nuur Lake we also observed pairs and small flocks in late April, probably migrating birds.

\*\* **Siberian Crane** *Grus leucogeranus*. V.S. ZALETAEV reported an observation of Siberian Cranes on Tore-Khol Lake in 1989 (BUGROVSKI et al. 1990). In summer 2009 single birds were noted repeatedly by different observers within the territory of Tuva, including Shara-Nur Lake (pers comm. B.M. KATAEV).



**Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana*. We heard the call of this species in coastal reeds on the northern shore of Uvs-Nuur Lake on 29.06.91.

The **Bailon's Crane** *Porzana pusilla* is repeatedly noted during the breeding period in areas overgrown with reeds in the vicinity of Tore-Khol Lake (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Bailon's Crane *Porzana pusilla*.

A female **Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* with two chicks was observed on 08.07.91 at Baga-Nur Lake in the western part of Uvs-Nuur Lake. Thirteen pairs were recorded on May 1991, within the Tes-Khem Valley of the Oruccu-Shynaa and Kosh-Terek Rivers (BARANOV 1996).

The **Coot** *Fulica atra* is a regular breeding species inhabiting reed beds in all surveyed lakes. In the locality of Chinge-Suk-Pak on 05.07.04 5 broods with 2 to 5 subadult chicks were observed. At Uvs-Nuur Lake the density of this species reaches 99 individuals per 10 km of shoreline.

The **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* is quite rare, occurring on the rocky and pebbly shores and banks of the Tes-Khem River and its tributaries where the most broods are found. At Uvs-Nuur Lake on 20./21.06.03 we observed 2 pairs of Little Ringed Plover demonstrating territorial behaviour in the open, muddy areas of the coast. Single birds and small flocks of plovers that fly regularly along the banks of the fresh and saline lakes in the Depression were seen as well. On the northern part of Tore-Khol Lake we noticed small flocks (mean flock size of 6.2) during the first days of July, 2000-2004.

The **Kentish Plover** *Ch. alexandrinus* is a usual breeding species of the salty lakes in the Depression. In summer 2004 we found 3 pairs on Shara-Nur Lake, and 2 pairs on Tore-Khol Lake on the periphery of a colony of Avocets. We encountered flocks of young birds with 10-20 individuals regularly on the northern shore of Tore-Khol Lake during the first half of July. On 08.07.04 we noticed 8 broods with older chicks (average brood size = 2.8) at this location. We did not observe Kentish Plovers on the shore of Uvs-Nuur Lake.

The **Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* is a common species occurring in the wet meadows on the shores of the Depression's lakes. A nest was found in early May 2005 at Shara-Nur Lake. Birds bred on the shore and had to fly far into the steppe to forage. Density varied at different lakes: we saw 11 individuals on 10 km of coastline of Uvs-Nuur Lake, 14 at Tore-Khol, and 32 at Shara-Nur Lake.

\*\* We noted 2 pairs of **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* on Shara-Nur Lake on 06.05.05 in a tussock meadow. The species may breed irregularly in the Depression together with Avocets.

\*\* We found **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* on the northern shore of Tore-Khol Lake in a small brackish pond. Here, up to 15 pairs of Avocets regularly breed. Also we recorded several pairs irregularly breeding on Shara-Nur Lake (OZERSKAYA 2005). In the colony at Tore-Khol Lake we found nests with clutches in early June and in mid-July, apparently due to some double clutching. Significant congregations of Avocets are observed on 07.07.00 - 53 individuals, 3.06.04 - 54 birds, 8.07.04 - 62 avocets, and 27.05.06 - 21 animals. Breeding success in this colony is low because of constant, uncontrolled trampling by cattle throughout the colony. Avocets also breed at other small saline lakes in the Depression.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*. The species rarely breeds, but usually migrates through the Depression. A vagrant female was observed in the floodplain of Nariyn-Gol River on 27.06.61 (BERMAN & ZABELIN 1963).

The **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* rarely breed in the Depression. On 03.06.04 we found a nest with a clutch of 4 eggs on the northern shore of Tore-Khol. On 02.06.04 we observed a bird in the southern part of Tore-Khol Lake. During migration we commonly observed vagrant birds in summer.

The **Redshank** *Tringa totanus* is a typical bird of muddy and marshy shores of steppe lakes. We observed the species on all surveyed lakes, being most numerous in Shara-Nur and Uvs-Nuur Lakes where densities in spring and summer reach 37 and 78 individuals per 10 km coastline, respectively. We noticed flocks of non-breeding birds on the lakes every summer.

In the swamps and floodplains in the delta of Tes-Khem River **Snipes** *Gallinago gallinago* and **Pintail Snipes** *Gallinago stenura* (BERMAN & ZABELIN 1963) were common, \*\* **Curlews** *Numenius arquata* were occasionally found, and \* **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* were mentioned by SAVCHENKO et al. (1997). During seasonal migrations these species were observed as passage migrants on lake shores, including 2 Curlew records on 14.08.0 and 4 Godwits on 27.05.064 on the north shore of Tore-Khol Lake.

During seasonal migrations, especially in the spring along the open shores of shallow steppe lakes, numerous migrating sandpipers were recorded: the **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*, **Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*; **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*, **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*, **Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*, **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*, rarer **Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*, **Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*, **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*, **Spotted Redshank** *T. erythropus*, **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta*, and **Temminck's Stint** *C. Temminckii*. We spotted **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocyptes minimus* once on 27.04.04 and **Pacific Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis fulva* once on 14.08.04, both on Tore-Khol Lake. Pacific Golden Plovers *Pluvialis fulva* were observed flying in flocks with **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola* (SAVCHENKO & EMEL'YANOV 1984). **Sanderlings** *Calidris alba* were collected in this area by A.P. SAVCHENKO in 1982 (SAVCHENKO et al. 2003).

\*\* We recorded **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ichthyaetus* on 15.05.99 (1 bird) and 20.06.03 (4 birds) on Uvs-Nuur Lake. Previously, a **Black-headed Gull** was collected from Tore-Khol in 1956 (SPASSKY & SONIN 1956) and MELNIK (2009) mentions it as a breeding species on the lake. We observed a single bird on 14.08.04.

The **Little Gull** *Larus minutus* is a common breeding species on Uvs-Nuur Lake and we repeatedly observed the species in the vicinity of the Torgalyk River delta where it was breeding in small groups separated from other gulls.

The **Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* was the most numerous species of gull we observed in the Depression. Its numbers have increased during the late XX - early XXI centuries on all lakes. During summer, immature gulls were found in large numbers. The population density reached 56-58 individuals per 10 km coastline of Tore-Khol and Uvs-Nuur Lakes and 103 individuals per 10 km at Shara-Nur Lake.

**Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei*. On the discovery of the **Slender-billed Gull** in the estuary Torgalyk River on Uv-Nuur Lake was reported BUGROVSKY et al. (1990). Undoubtedly, this is a rare visitor, occurring only during migration.

The **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* is the second most frequent species of gull in the region after the Black-headed Gull. It has also become more numerous in recent decades. Breeding colonies of the species exist on the islands and spits of sand in Uvs-Nuur and Tore-Khol Lakes. The highest recorded densities were 37 individuals per 10 km shoreline on Uvs-Nuur Lake, 25 birds/20 km coastline on Tore-Khol Lake, and 5 gulls/10 km of coastline on Shara-Nur Lake. These gulls can fly far into the steppe to forage and are found in landfills as well as in the vicinity of villages.

The **Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* is a rare migrant species occurring in early spring on Uvs-Nuur Lake.

The **Common Gull** *Larus canus* was previously considered to be a normal breeding species in Uvs-Nuur Depression (TUGARINOV 1916). Now its numbers have dropped around the lakes (MELNIK 2009). Several breeding pairs may occur at Uvs-Nuur Lake.

The **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* is a rare species. It was noticed on 26.05.92 on sandy spits along the western coast of Uvs-Nuur Lake. We spotted 2 Gull-billed Terns that had likely bred within a colony of Herring Gulls and Common Terns. Irregular breeding by Gull-billed Terns at Tore-Khol Lake was mentioned by MELNIK (2009).

The **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* is probably a breeding species in the region. We noted these terns repeatedly, mainly in the reeds south of Tore-Khol Lake in the locality of Chinge-Suk-Pak, where we saw 1 bird on 31.05.2003, 4 terns on 02.06.04, 10 individuals on 05.07.04, 4 terns on 13./14.08.05, and 22 birds on 26.05.06. On Shara-Nur Lake we also observed 2 terns on 01.06.03, a flock of 87 terns on 27.04.04, and 2 terns on 4.06.05.

\*\* The **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* is a rare breeding species of the Depression. It was noted on 01.07.91 on the northern shore of Lake Uvs-Nuur (Mongolia). Single individuals of Caspian Tern we seen on Tore-Khol Lake (MELNIK 2009).



The **Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* is the most abundant species of terns, nesting on sandy and muddy islands and shores of Uvs-Nuur and Tore-Khol Lakes. In May 1999 on the northwest coast of the Uvs-Nuur, we found 8 nests and 1 egg (incomplete clutch) on an island near a colony of Herring gulls. On the northern shore of Tore-Khol Lake several pairs of terns bred on the periphery of a colony of Avocets in June 2004. The highest density of common terns recorded was 71 individuals per 10 km on Uvs-Nuur, 30 terns per 10 km on Tore Khole, and 2 to 4 individuals per 10 km on the other lakes.

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**Addresses:** T. P. Archimaeva-Ozerskaya  
V. I. Zabelin  
Tuvian Institute for Exploration of Natural Resources,  
Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences,  
Internatsionalnaya Street 1170  
Kyzyl, Republic of Tuva 667007, Russia  
[heavenlybird@mail.ru](mailto:heavenlybird@mail.ru), [zabelinvi@mail.ru](mailto:zabelinvi@mail.ru)