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Main Habitats and Floristic Diversity in the Tarvagatai Nuruu National Park – General View

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Abstract

This research was conducted as part of an overall assessment of biological diversity of the Tarvagatai Nuruu National Park in summer 2007. One objective of our research was to assess main habitats, floristic diversity and specific floristic conservation value of the area within the Mongolian network of protected areas. A total of 335 vascular plant species were recorded in the study area, also the main habitats and their species richness were characterized. The observed floristic characteristics, reasons for the observed relatively high species richness in the area as well as the combination of the flora from Tarvagatai mountain range on basis of eco-geographical elements and the conservation value of this area are discussed in this paper.

Key words: Tarvagatai Nuruu National Park, flora, vascular plant species, conservation value

Introduction

Mongolia is considered as a nation with a long history and tradition to conserve nature and a nation that established the first protected area in the world some 230 years ago. As of 2007, Mongolia has 60 protected areas under different conservation regimes (Myagmarsuren & Batsukh, 2007).

Tarvagatai Nuruu National Park is one of the latest established protected areas in Mongolia and the unique pattern of nature and landscape of the mountain range allowed its conservation status to become a national park, one of four classes of state protected areas in the country. In 2000, 525,440 hectare area of Tarvagatai mountain range was taken under state protection by the Resolution No. 29 of the Ikh Khural (Parliament of Mongolia). As a whole, this national park is located in Tsakhir soum of Arkhangai Aimag and Aldarkhaan, Ider, Tosontsengel and Ikh-Uul sums (districts) of Zavkhan Aimag (province), in the west-central Mongolia (Fig. 1).

Tarvagatai mountain range branches off perpendicularly from central part of Khangai mountain range and it is a home to many rare and very rare species of plants and wildlife. There are many sources of mineral waters and springs, which are mainly hot and flow almost parallel to one another along tectonic faults of northern slope of the range. The area is part of the watershed region of the Selenge, the biggest river in Mongolia and the largest inlet into the Lake Baikal, the deepest ancient tectonic lake in the world. It is also a composition of historical, cultural and natural heritages, and is increasingly becoming a tourist destination. Since ancient time, there has been a historical tradition to worship parts of this area (Oyungerel, 2004). However, adverse human activities such as logging and fire unintentionally set by people, and their worst impacts have been increasing in the area.

Goals to establish a protected area or nature reserve are usually threefold: a protection of particular species of interest such as endangered or endemic species, preservation of entire functioning community (this has become an increasingly attractive goal as science of ecology matures) and finally, preservation of biological diversity or the maximum number of species (Soule & Simberloff, 1986). Although the establishment of the Tarvagatai Nuruu National Park arguably appears to conform to these goals, there has not been any detailed inventory of biodiversity for the national park area before and after it was established. Therefore, the Khangai Component of the GTZ "Conservation and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources" Program