

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS)

*Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7, as amended by Resolution VIII.13 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.*

Note for compilers:

1. The RIS should be completed in accordance with the attached *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for completing the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands*. Compilers are strongly advised to read this guidance before filling in the RIS.
2. Once completed, the RIS (and accompanying map(s)) should be submitted to the Ramsar Bureau. Compilers are strongly urged to provide an electronic (MS Word) copy of the RIS and, where possible, digital copies of maps.

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Designation date

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Site Reference Number

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## 2. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

1 February, 2003 (Updated: 19 March 2004)

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3. Country: Mongolia

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## 4. Name of the Ramsar site:

Lake Buir and its surrounding wetlands. ("Nuur" stands for lake in Mongolian)

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## 5. Map of site included:

Refer to Annex III of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines*, for detailed guidance on provision of suitable maps.

a) **hard copy** (required for inclusion of site in the Ramsar List): *yes*  -or- *no*

b) **digital (electronic) format** (optional): *yes*  -or- *no*

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**6. Geographical coordinates** (latitude/longitude): N47°48, E117°40

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**7. General location:**

Include in which part of the country and which large administrative region(s), and the location of the nearest large town.

Lake Buir is located in the eastern part of Mongolia at the boundary with China P.R., 969 km east from Ulaanbaatar, 314 km east from Choibalsan town of Dornod aimag, and about 20 km southwest from Khalk gol *soum*. Entire lake basin in Mongolian part belongs to the Khalkh-gol *soum* (county) of Dornod *aimag* (province). Its north-eastern part lies in the territory of China.

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**8. Elevation:** (average and/or max. & min.) **581 m a.s.l.**

**9. Area:** (in hectares) **104,000 ha**

Total wetland area is 1040 sq.km of which the lake covers 615 sq.km or 61,500 ha.

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**10. Overview:**

Provide a short paragraph giving a summary description of the principal ecological characteristics and importance of the wetland.

This is largest freshwater lake in the eastern Mongolia at border with China includes a large portion of wetlands. Many small lakes located in the west of the lake. The Lake and its surrounding wetlands are an important breeding and resting ground in Mongolia for a great variety of water birds. The lake basin belongs to the Mongol-Daguur eco-region, which is one of the 200 global eco-regions, identified by the WWF for its conservation importance.

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**11. Ramsar Criteria:**

Circle or underline each Criterion applied to the designation of the Ramsar site. See Annex II of the *Explanatory Notes and Guidelines* for the Criteria and guidelines for their application (adopted by Resolution VII.11).

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

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**12. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 11. above:**

Provide justification for each Criterion in turn, clearly identifying to which Criterion the justification applies (see Annex II for guidance on acceptable forms of justification).

**Criteria 1.** The *Buir* lake and its surrounding wetlands feature a combination of flora and fauna that characterise unique arid steppe. It is a transitional vegetation habitat of *Daguur and Stipa* steppe. The area performs many functions in regulation of Khalk gol River and Buir lake water regime, protection of the origins of multiple small rivers, lakes, streams and springs. The Lake basin serves as a main grazing land for the Mongolian gazelle, a temporary ground for water and riverbank bird species.

**Criterion 2:** The *Buir* lake attracts 17 species of birds listed under Mongolian Red Book (1997), 5 species as very rare, and 12 species of rare according to Mongolian Animals law (1999), 13 species listed under Asian Red book (2001), 6 species listed under the CITES Appendix I, 27 species of

birds included in the CITES Appendix II (CITES Handbook,2001); 6 and 26 species in the Appendix I and II of the Convention on Protection of Migratory Fauna, respectively and in over 43 species of birds are found in the lake region. (See *Table1-2 Birds of Buir Lake.xls*)

**Criteria 3.** In terms of wildlife, the area supports a large number of species of Central Asian steppe and Eastern Asia. The bird species of this region (Daguur) are originated from steppe, taiga, *Manjuur* and China. Variety of species listed in the Mongolian Red Book and International Endangered Species List can be found in the *Buir nuur* and its surrounding wetlands. Also, there are some species population common in Yakutya, Siberia, Russian Far East, China and Korea.

**Criteria 4.** North eastern section and the delta of *Khalk* river and interception of *Orshuum* river are extremely wet or marshy. River flow forms multiple mianders or zigzag river bed that serves as favorable breeding ground for birds. A drainage of *Khalk* river, and origin of the *Bayan nuur* and the *Orshun* river from the *Buir* lake attracts a large congregation of water birds for breeding and moulting.

**Criteria 5.** The *Buir* lake is a permanent breeding ground at least 20000 number of birds. However, there were no special bird surveys in whole area of the lake. Instead, in each summer from 1996 to 2002 conducted 9 times bird observations by Tseveenmyadag from Institute of Biology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences in southern and eastern parts of the lake (Tseveenmyadag, 2002). These observations determined that, only in Bayan lake and delta areas of Khalkh River counted Great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) >5000, Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*) >5000, Gray Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) >1000, Swan Goose (*Anser cygnoides*) 1803, Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) >1500 etc. (Table 2. *Excell file: Table1-2 Birds of Buir Lake.xls*). Russian ornithologist O.Goroshko counted 26,056 Swan Goose (*Anser cygnoides*), 80,000-160,000 Great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) during his observation in July 2003.

**Criteria 6.** The site supports the following species whose populations exceed 1% of the relevant biogeographic population (see Table 2): Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) – 380 (1.5%), Great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – 5000 (5%), Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) – 5 (5%), Swan Goose (*Anser cygnoides*)– 1803 (3%), Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) 500 (1%), Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) – 1260 (1.3%).

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**13. Biogeography** (required when Criteria 1 and/or 3 and /or certain applications of Criterion 2 are applied to the designation):

Name the relevant biogeographic region that includes the Ramsar site, and identify the biogeographic regionalisation system that has been applied.

**a) biogeographic region:**

By general bio-geographical classification, Mongolia belongs to the Holarctical region (Voronov, A.G. 1963, 1985, Lame, 1966) and the lake basin is a region with flora and fauna influenced by European, Siberian and Central Asian type.

Accodring to A. Bold (1990), Buir lake region belongs to Euro-Asian steppe's bird region, Mongol Daruur's provinces since White-naped Crane-*Grus vipio*, Black-winged Stilt-*Himantopus himantopus*, Asian Dowitcher-*Limnodromus semipalmatus*, Relict Gull-*Larus*

*relicrus*, Winter Wren-*Troglodytes troglodytes*, Guyanan Solitaire-*Petrophila gularis*, Siberian Blue Robin-*Luscinia cyana* area met here, China-Manjurian bird regions, Western Khyangan's provinces as Purple Heron-*Ardea purpurea*, Oriental Stork-*Ciconia boyciana*, Common Pheasant-*Phasianus colchicus*, Grya Nightjar-*Caprimulgus indicus*, Purplebacked Starling-*Sturnia sturnina*, Reed Parrotbill-*Paradoxornis heudei* etc occur here.

b) biogeographic regionalisation scheme (include reference citation):

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#### 14. Physical features of the site:

Describe, as appropriate, the geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth, water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; downstream area; general climate, etc.

The *Buir* lake and its surrounding region is considered as a representation of Central Asian *stipa*-steppe zone and as a region of eastern edge of Mongolian steppe. Lake Buir is 40.0 km long, 21.0 km wide, and has 118 km long shoreline. Its max depth is 10.4 m and water volume is 3.73 cub.km. Main tributary is Khalkh River and excess water goes to the Orshuun River, which is flowing to the Lake Dalai-Nuur in China (Tsegmid Sh. 1969).

There is a number of small lakes in east to south of Buir lake, such as Bayan, Khar, Nariin, Zuun Zahiin, Zahiin, Baruun Zahiin, Takhi, Khukh Us and Shart lake. The *Bayan* lake (6.3 sq.km) located in the south of the *Buir* lake. Its altitude is 587.6 m *a.s.l.* It directly connects to the *Buir* lake and contains many lakes. In addition, Small *Bayannuur* lake (1.1 sq.km) serves as a bridge between the *Buir* and the *Bayannuur* on 583 m. *a.s.l.* (J.Tserensodnom, 1971, 2000). Water temperature of the lake is 25-28 °C in summer. Freezes from November to April, and ice thickness varies 1.1-1.5 m. Mineralization of the lake varies 298.7-365.9 mg/l in the western part of the lake and 200.5-294.1 mg/l in the east. pH = 8.5.

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#### 15. Physical features of the catchment area:

Describe the surface area, general geology and geomorphological features, general soil types, general land use, and climate (including climate type).

Total lake watershed area is 20,200 sq.km. In generally, the basin is around 600-800 m *a.s.l.*, mostly dominated by smooth steppe terrain and mountains of 800-1300 m altitude in the upper catchment.

The *Khalkh* river is a main tributary of the lake and is fed by 20% from underground water, 25% from snow melting, and 55% from rainfall. Mean winter precipitation is 172 mm and 250-300 mm for summer. Mean warm season temperature is 15.4 °C, maximum is 25.3 °C, while mean cool season temperature is -8.63 °C, with max -23.8 °C. Dark brown, meadow, marsh soils are mainly dominated in the surroundings of the lake. The *Khalkh* and *Orshuun* river meadows contain meadow, meadow-dark, and chestnut soils. This unrepeatable ecosystem in the eastern *Mongolia* is a habitat of many threatened and endangered species in worldwide.

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#### 16. Hydrological values:

Describe the functions and values of the wetland in groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilization, etc.

The lake belongs to the Amur River Basin, which is covering eastern part of Mongolia, Far East of Russia and north-eastern part of China. The wetland is therefore of fundamental importance for the ground water recharge of the area.

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## 17. Wetland Types

### a) presence:

Circle or underline the applicable codes for the wetland types of the Ramsar "Classification System for Wetland Type" present in the Ramsar site. Descriptions of each wetland type code are provided in Annex I of the *Explanatory Notes & Guidelines*.

Marine/coastal: A • B • C • D • E • F • G • H • I • J • K • Zk(a)

Inland: L • M • N • O • P • Q • R • Sp • Ss • Tp • Ts • U • Va •  
Vt • W • Xf • Xp • Y • Zg • Zk(b)

Human-made: 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Zk(c)

### b) dominance:

List the wetland types identified in a) above in order of their dominance (by area) in the Ramsar site, starting with the wetland type with the largest area.

O, L, M, Tp

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## 18. General ecological features:

Provide further description, as appropriate, of the main habitats, vegetation types, plant and animal communities present in the Ramsar site.

Steppe plant communities surround the wetland. Bushy plants (*Papurus etc.*) are found abundantly in the Khalkh River delta, and natural scene at the north-east of the lake is extremely beautiful. The surrounding of the *Buir* lake, as a migration route for endangered species in the worldwide contains many species of plants and animals. Salty small lakes and muds occur in the low depression and salty valleys in the south of the lake.

Comment: Is it right?

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## 19. Noteworthy flora:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

The *Buir* Lake is surrounded by the steppe vegetation system, which are formed from *Daguur* type from the north, Mongolian type from the south and Manjurian (China) vegetation type from the east. The wetlands contain 100 species of humid-arid plants, 102 species of humid favoured plants, 19 water plants, 28 species of wetland plants, and 64 species of salt favoured plants.

White Peony-*Paeonia lactiflora*, False spirea-*Sorbaria sorbifolia*, Gas plant-*Dictamnus dasycarpus*, Common valerian-*Valeriana officinalis*, Bunge-*Anemarrhena asphodeloides*, *Lilium dahuricum* that are listed in the Mongolian Red Book (1997) are found in the area.

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## 20. Noteworthy fauna:

Provide additional information on particular species and why they are noteworthy (expanding as necessary on information provided in 12. Justification for the application of the Criteria) indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare,

endangered or biogeographically important, etc., including count data. *Do not include here taxonomic lists of species present – these may be supplied as supplementary information to the RIS.*

At present 25 species of mammals live in the surrounding areas of the lake, among which 15 are abundant, and 10 are rare. From big mammals Siberian Roe Deer-*Capreolus pygargus*, Gray Wolf-*Canis lupus*, Red Fox-*Vulpes vulpes*, Corsac Fox-*Vulpes corsac*, Eurasian Badger-*Meles meles*, Raccoon Dog-*Nyctereutes procyonoides* are considered as abundant, small mammals such as Daurian Pika-*Ochotona daurica*, and Tolai Hare-*Lepus tolai* are commonly distributed. Thousands and thousands of Mongolian gazelle-*Procapra gutturosa* herds migrate into the area during fall and spring.

The *Buir* lake and its surrounding area support totally 236 birds species. 37 species of them are settled and 199 species are migratory. As for the styles of inhabiting of migratory birds, 115 species lay eggs, 59 species pass through, 7 species spend wintering, 9 species of them are seen occasionally, and 9 species living forms have not been totally identified (Tugarinov, A.Ya. 1932, Piechoki R. 1968, Piechoki R., Bolod A.1972, Bold,A., Eregdendagva, D. 1970, Fomin B. E., Bold A. 1991, Tseveenmyadag N. 1998, Tseveenmyadag N., Bold A. et 2000. ). Table 1 (*Excell file: Table1-2 Birds of Buir Lake.xls*) illustrates a bird classification by L.S. Stepanyan (1990), that includes scientific and English names, bird's life form, and protection status by national or international documents.

The *Buir* lake, the most nourishing lake in Mongolia supports 29 species of fish, such as, Taimen-*Hucho taimen*, Lenok-*Brachymystax lenok*, Amur grayling-*Thymallus grubei*, Amur pike-*Esox reicherti*, Amur ide-*Leuciscus waleckii*, Flathead asp-*Pseudaspius leptcephalus*, Mongolian redfin-*Erythroculter mongoliacus*, Look up-*Culter alburnus*, Gold fish-*Carassius auratus*, European carp-*Cyprinus carpio haematopterus*, Amur catfish-*Parasilurus asotus* (Baasanjav, 2001, Baasanjav, Tsend-Ayush, 2001).

63 species of algae and plankton species inhabit in the *Buir* lake from which 25 species of diatom, 18 green, 14 blue green, 3 golden and 2 pirofite algae (Dulmaa A., B.Nansalmaa, 1977). Little research is done on algae. Only one research in 1999 determined that 263 diatom taxa were identified, including 63 taxa newly reported in Mongolia, 120 taxa newly reported for the *Buir* lake region (Soninkhishig N., Mark B.Edlund, 2001).

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## 21. Social and cultural values:

e.g., fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological sites, social relations with the wetland, etc.  
Distinguish between historical/archaeological/religious significance and current socio-economic values.

The wetland has a high potential for eco-tourism, recreation, environmental education and scientific research and fishing. However, eco-tourism is not yet developed, due to pure condition of infrastructure. Fishing industry is more developed and has relatively long experiences. In 1954 established state owned fishing enterprise (industry) at the Mongolian part of the lake. Cashed 380 tons fish for 1956-1965, 150 tons for 1966-1975, 130 tons for 1976-990, and 250-300 tons for 1992. In early 1990s, privatized fishing facilities at the lake and established several small fishing companies (Baasanjav, 2001). Cashed fish exported to China, mainly.

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## 22. Land tenure/ownership:

- (a) within the Ramsar site:
- (b) in the surrounding area:

The wetland and the surrounding areas are state owned.

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**23. Current land (including water) use:**

**(a) within the Ramsar site:**

The general form of land use is nomadic and animal husbandry. The herdsman breed sheep, goat, horse, cattle and camel. There is no crop production or industry near by the lake, except commercial fishing. There are no settlements within the wetlands, except small fishing village in the eastern bank.

**(b) in the surroundings/catchment:**

The Khalk-gol soum located outside of the wetland, in about 20 km from the lake. This *soum*'s population is 30,641. Local herders graze their domestic animals at one fixed areas which has resulted in pasture land degradation. It is very rare that local herders engage in agricultural activities, hay making and establishment of winter shelters. Large percentage of families has low incomes, and poor infrastructure development on health, information, education, and cultural services. There are 1,921 people of total labor aged, from which 500 or 27% have permanent job positions with salaries, 49% people work for local administrations, 14% people for schools, 8% people for hospitals, and 29% people for agricultural sectors.

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**24. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects:**

(a) within the Ramsar site:

(b) in the surrounding area:

At present water pollution is relatively low thanks to the fact that no pollutant sources are existed in this area. Directions of the *Khalk* river flows change constantly and one side of the bank are eroded by water while others are regenerating. Global warming, the most important environmental and ecological problem has caused decreasing water supply and shrinking lake area.

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**25. Conservation measures taken:**

List national category and legal status of protected areas, including boundary relationships with the Ramsar site; management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it is being implemented.

Local administration has not taken any tangible measures on wetland conservation of the *Buir* lake and its surrounding area. Fish resources are extensively used. Need to conduct in future complete assessments on fish resources and conservation measures.

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**26. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:**

e.g. management plan in preparation; official proposal as a legally protected area, etc.

It is important to protect the wetlands of the Buir Lake, provide favourable condition for bird breeding, and biotechnical activities need to be developed.

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**27. Current scientific research and facilities:**

e.g., details of current research projects, including biodiversity monitoring; existence of a field research station, etc.

There are no current research projects and field research facilities. However, some fish resource study is carried out from time to time on the *Buir* lake and its surrounding area, by Institute of Biology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences. Results of fish study conducted in 2000, show that there is no indication in reducing fish size, but reduced number of catching cases comparable to 1992. There is 11.3 kg fish caught from 1 ha area, by estimation based on size of fishing nets and number of fishes cached by fisherman for day. (Baasanjav G. 2001). In the future a detailed study on biodiversity is necessary.

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**28. Current conservation education:**

e.g. visitors' centre, observation hides and nature trails, information booklets, facilities for school visits, etc.

There are no educational facilities, e.g. visiting centers, observation hides etc.

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**29. Current recreation and tourism:**

State if the wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type(s) and their frequency/intensity.

No tourism and recreation sites at this moment. A few tourists and hikers come to the site to go fishing, observe the birds, and relax in summer.

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**30. Jurisdiction:**

Include territorial, e.g. state/region, and functional/sectoral, e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment, etc.

**Territorial:** Khalk-gol soum of Dornod aimag

**Functional:** The *Soum's* Governor Office in Khalkh-gol Soum, Dornod Aimag.

Also: Government of Dornod aimag, Choibalsan town.

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**31. Management authority:**

Provide the name and address of the local office(s) of the agency(ies) or organisation(s) directly responsible for managing the wetland. Wherever possible provide also the title and/or name of the person or persons in this office with responsibility for the wetland.

Local management of the wetland and its surrounding areas are belonging to the Ministry for Nature and Environment, Protected Areas Administration of Eastern Mongolia

Director: Zulzagyn Tserenbaltav

Phone: 976 01582 23373 (o)

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E-mail: [esbp@mongol.net](mailto:esbp@mongol.net)

Soum's Governor Office in Khalkh-gol soum of Dornod aimag. U.Buyandelger

Phone: 976 01582 26509

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### 32. Bibliographical references:

scientific/technical references only. If biogeographic regionalisation scheme applied (see 13 above), list full reference citation for the scheme.

1. **Baasanjav G., and Tsend-Ayush Ya., 2001**, Fish of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (in Mongolian). P.69-74
2. **Baasanjav G. 2001**. Fish species diversity and ecology of Eastern Mongolia. Ecosystem of Eastern Mongolia. UB, 64-69.
3. **Barter M. 2002**. Criteria for identifying the presence of Internationally Important numbers of a species. Shorebirds of the Yellow Sea: Importance, threats and conservation status. Wetlands International Global Series 9, International Wader Studies 12, Canberra, Australia.p.8-10.
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19. **Tseveenmaydag N., 2002**. A comprehensive report of 13 field works for 1976-2002 in the Buir lake and its surrounding areas.
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  28. **Wetlands International 2002** . Waterfowl Population Estimates-Third Edition. Wetlands International Global SeriesNo12 Wageningen, The Netherlands
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