

# Northeast China



Quick Facts	Heilongjiang Province	Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	Jilin Province
<b>Land area</b> (square miles)	174,767	442,134	73,793
<b>Population:</b>	38,200,000	23,860,000	27,160,000
<b>Population</b> <b>density</b> (people/square mile):	219	54	368
<b>Capital:</b>	Harbin	Hohhot	Changchun
<b>Leading</b> <b>agriculture:</b>	beans, fiber crops, beets	beans, beets, corn	corn, beans, sesame
<b>Leading industry:</b>	crude oil, beer	coal, salt	motor vehicles, ethylene (a gas derived from natural gas and petroleum)

Data from *National Geographic Atlas of China* (2008)

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The wetlands of Northeast China are important breeding and migratory stop-over sites for many thousands of waterbirds along the East Asia Flyway. Siberian Cranes stop to rest and feed in this region on their annual migrations between Siberia and southern China, and five other crane species, including the endangered Red-crowned Crane, either breed in or migrate through this region.

A number of national-level nature reserves -- including Naoli River, Zhalong, Momoge, Keerqin and Xianghai -- help protect the remaining wetlands in this region. The reserves are located in the Mongolian-Manchurian and Nenjiang River grassland ecoregions. A decade long drought has stressed the wetlands and grasslands in the western part of this region, limiting the amount of water for both wildlife and people.

Northeast China is the meeting place of diverse landscapes and important cultures. Rural areas of Inner Mongolia are home to many people of Mongolian background, with a tradition of livestock grazing and close reliance on grasslands. To the east, the Han Chinese have long relied upon farming and lands with more rainfall or water available for irrigation. Near Zhalong, the Man or Manchu live, who have long relied upon forest and wetland resources. The Man once conquered China and ruled as the Qing Dynasty until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

For more information on the Mongolian-Manchurian and Nenjiang River grassland ecoregions, visit the Wild World website at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/pa/pa0813.html> and [/pa0903.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/pa/pa0903.html).

## Conservation Threats

- Ongoing drought has lowered water levels in wetlands and reservoirs in Inner Mongolia and western Jilin Province, reducing the available water for both wildlife and local people.
- Over grazing by goats and other livestock threatens the remaining natural grasslands in many areas.
- To the east in Heilongjiang Province, wetlands are threatened primarily by water diversions for industry, urban use and agriculture, and by wetland reclamation (draining or filling wetlands so that the land can be used for agriculture or other development). Human disturbance also makes it difficult for cranes and other waterbirds to breed, as people cut reeds (for use as livestock feed and material for roofs and other construction, and for paper) and intensively fish. Dry conditions and human activity further means that there is great risk of fires in this region.

## Linkages

The landscape of Northeast China is somewhat similar to the grasslands and farmlands of the American Midwest. Farmers raise corn, soybeans, and other crops in the north and east, while herders raise goats, sheep and cattle on the western grasslands. As in the Midwest, farmers rely upon the water from rivers and wetlands to keep their crops and herds healthy, but increasing development and changes in weather patterns (linked

to possible long-term changes in climate), often bring into conflict the needs of wildlife and people.

### **Fun Fact**

Students in China today listen to pop music that is influenced by traditional Mongolian music.