

Altyn-Emel National Park

The Altyn-Emel National Park is very big: it covers 4,600 km² in south-east Kazakhstan. It lies between the River Ili and the Aktau Mountains. This is a very dry part of the country where life is hard. But in this difficult environment there are around 1,800 species of plants, including **willows** and **honeysuckles**; 32 types of **fish**, and around 260 species of **vertebrates** (animals with backbones), with 11 on Kazakhstan's red list of endangered species. The rich wildlife makes the park a paradise for bird watchers: along with other rare birds, you can see four types of eagle including **imperial** and **golden eagles**, as well as **eagle owls**.

Other attractions of the park are the singing sand dunes and the Aktau Mountains. They are both amazingly beautiful and interesting landscapes. The dunes are over 3 km long and 500 m high. As the wind moves the sand it makes a sound like an organ. The sound is really loud in dry weather and can be heard several kilometres away.

There are signs that people lived in this area many, many years ago. The paintings on some of the rocks of animals and every day life are thousands of years old. There are archaeological sites from around 3,000 years ago.

Imperial eagle

These are very large birds. Their wingspan (the length of both wings together) is around two metres. They live in forests and in small groups of trees on the steppes. You can often see them when they are flying high above the park. They live to around 26 years in the wild but up to 45 years in zoos.



Przewalski's horse

This is one of the rarest species of wild horse. In fact, scientists don't know if it is related to domestic horses. In 1945, there were only 13 **Przewalski's horses** in the world, and they were in zoos. Now there are over a thousand in the wild, but they are still endangered.



Turanga forests

Turanga trees grow along the River Ili and next to springs in the park and are unique to Kazakhstan. The trees are home to reptiles, amphibians, mammals and insects, so are an important part of the park's environment.



- 1 What is the name of the national park?
- 2 Where is it?
- 3 What is the landscape like?
- 4 What animals and plants do you find there?
- 5 What unusual sights can you see in the park?
- 6 What are some of the unusual animals and plants in the park?