

Russia's Natural Resources Ministry Calls for Urgent Action to Save Wild Reindeer

October 17, 2019



Taymyr wild reindeer are under threat. **Jaanus Silla / Flickr (CC BY 2.0)**

Russia's Natural Resources and Ecology Ministry has called for action to protect wild reindeer on the Taymyr Peninsula in the country's Far North because the population has halved over the past two decades.

There are now 400,000-450,000 of the animals in the region, down from 1 million in 2000, the ministry said in a statement on its website.

"The situation requires the urgent adoption of comprehensive measures to preserve these animals," the statement said. "I ask you to consider the possibility of introducing a ban on the hunting of wild reindeer in the areas the species migrates to," Natural Resources and Ecology Minister Dmitry Kobylkin said in the statement.

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Mikhail Stishov, the head of the Arctic branch of The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Russia told The Moscow Times that declining numbers of wild reindeer are a problem across Russia.

“Some populations in different regions in the country are on the edge of extinction,” he said.

The ministry warned that a similar ecological disaster occurred in Yakutia in Russia’s Far East, where numbers of Yano-Indigyr deer have plummeted from 140,000 in the 1980s to less than 2,000 today.

The statement said that while legal hunting plays a major role in the decline in the reindeer population, overuse of natural resources, poaching and wolves also feature.

In recent years, the statement added, Taymyr hunters have begun cutting antlers from live reindeer, causing death from shock or infection.

Reindeer breeding and hunting is part of the traditional lifestyle of Russia’s native northern peoples. According to the most recent census, there are 40 different indigenous groups in the Far North, Siberia and the Far East.

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