

Siberia's Taymyr Reindeer Population Risks Extinction From Overhunting, Study Warns

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Reindeer in the Taimyr Peninsula of Russia's Arctic. **Denis Kozhevnikov / TASS**

The world's largest wild reindeer population could disappear in the next few years if the Russian government does not crack down on overhunting, according to a new [study](#) published by a group of researchers at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Over the past 20 years, the size of Siberia's Taymyr reindeer population has seen a fourfold decrease, researchers found, with the latest estimate placing the number of animals at around 240,000.

According to the new study, if the population of Tymyr reindeer falls to around 88,000, then it would no longer be able to sustain its numbers and the herd could eventually disappear altogether.

By 2025, the population is expected to drop to around 70,000.

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“Even if the population doesn't completely disappear, it will lose its commercial status as it won't be able to replenish the losses,” said Anatoly Shapkin, one of the study's authors.

Illegal hunting is the [main factor](#) pushing the wild reindeer to the brink of extinction, according to the researchers, with the total number of animals killed more than double the amount officially allowed.

Disease, blood-sucking insects and natural predators like wolves have also contributed to the dwindling number of reindeer. But another culprit is climate change.

“Rivers are thawing early, and when reindeer migrate north in spring, newly born calves crossing water obstacles suffer from hypothermia and perish in large numbers,” biologist Leonid Kolpaschikov was [quoted](#) as saying by the newspaper Izvestia.

For the reindeer population to remain stable, calves should make up about a quarter of a herd, Kolpaschikov noted, but today they account for just 14% of the Tymyr reindeer population.

A three-year ban on hunting might be the most effective measure to prevent the wild animals from disappearing, he said.

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