

# NOMAD Fieldnews

Edition 5

April 28, 2007

As reported in the previous issue, the herd in the vicinity of Belaia Golovka, has been showing clear signs of desire to move toward the open tundra since mid- April. Reindeer herders, living at Belaia Corral Camp, have managed, so far, to keep the herd there. While following this operation we have become aware that a much greater number of deer are moving unchecked towards the open tundra. As herders have reported, only two round-ups have been realized at Belaia this season, thus leaving a considerable number of uncounted deer roaming freely. In fragments of varying size this part is currently moving from the forest zone along the Keivi Ridge towards the Iokanga, or following a general NW to SE direction. This movement is becoming more and more noticeable with each passing day. We have thus faced a choice whether to stay on with the controlled fragments at Belaia, or move to connect with the greater mass migrating towards the Iokanga. We decided to follow the latter course of action. We thus left the skeleton crew of herders at Belaia who continued their controlling efforts.



Picture 1



**Picture 2.** Herders are helping the NOMAD team to pack its “office” before leaving Belaia Golovka

Following our decision we trekked in the direction of Isakievskii Sobor, one of the more prominent elevations on the Keivi Ridge. We had to move fast as the snow cover has been disappearing rapidly. The trek along Efimozero proved to be especially problematic: in its upper part melted surface water had accumulated under the snow and scooters and sleds sunk into sludge several times. The team could continue its trip after several such accidents only thanks to the expert help of the technical assistant of the NOMAD project, Evgenii (Zhenia) Nikonchik.

Contact with the first fragment of the migrating herd was made on April, 23. About 150 in size, it had come from the forest zone down to where Iokanga flows out of Ketkozzero and after a little distance joins the big Kalmozzero Lake. The difficult terrain made our movement difficult, posing risks for machines as large snowless parts of swamps had to



**Picture 3.** Evgenii Nikonchik (Zhenia), the technical assistant of the NOMAD project, is happy after managing to get the snow scooters and sleds going after crashing into surface sludge at Efimozero.

be crossed. Trying to use snow cover where we could find it, we located the tracks of the bigger herd. The deer had crossed the huge swamps between Maria Gora and Isakievskii Sobor and were grazing along the lower part of River Rova, where it flows into Kalmozero. By all visible signs, like traces and animals we could see, the herd seems to be around 1 000 head strong, but this figure is only very approximate. Other parts coming behind it could swell numbers considerably.

All the evidence we collected during our journeys in the spring territories of the right wing points in one direction. There is no stable reindeer herd in the right wing territories of SKhPK “Tundra”. Instead, many groups of deer roam the winter pastures or move toward the open tundra. Occasionally, such groups integrate into a bigger formation (“herd”), but such formations are rarely stable for a longer period of time. Such events,



as we have witnessed during previous fieldwork, happen once in several years, the last time we have seen a big and stable formation (approx. 2000 head) being in the spring of 2003.

This segmented state of the composite inter-brigade herd<sup>1</sup> has been reported to have lasted during the whole last winter, posing great difficulties for herders to contact and round up deer. For this reason, for a second year running there have been no harvesting/counting round ups at Porosozero Corral. As said above, Belaia also saw as little as only two corrallings this season both of them as late as March.

**Text and photographs:**

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<sup>1</sup> This composite herd consists of previous brigade herds No 1,2,8 and 9 („Tundra“), and herds 1 and 3 of „Olenevod“ of Krasnoshchel’e..