

# REPORT

of Bystrinsky Nature Park volunteer  
Aiva Lāce

## Bystrinsky reindeer herders, summer 2014



*Reindeer herders brigade Number 2  
near river Opalka, 2014.08.*

## INTRODUCTION

### *In general about started activities, project motivation and reindeer herders situation in Bystrinsky Nature Park*

In the period from 18.06.2014 to 13.09.2014 (three months) volunteer Aiva Lace, by the support of Manfred Hermsen Stiftung Foundation, was working in Bystrinsky Nature Park, Kamchatka. Before from 05.2013 to 05.2014 she was being an EVS (European Voluntary Service) volunteer (applicant organization – Zemgales NGO, project author – A.Lace). Her main tasks in summer 2014, were connected with Bystrinsky Nature Park reindeer herder traditional lifestyle and knowledge documentation and fixation.

Reindeer people in this region are unique as they are the southernmost working herders in Kamchatka peninsula. They are significantly separated from the main reindeer husbandry regions of North Russia and the only ones in the world who works in a volcanic region. The people who are working with reindeers in Nature Park territory are Evens (Even, Lamut) and small number of Koryaks (Koryak, Koriak). This region – Central Kamchatka mountain ridge, is the only place in Kamchatka where lives and works Evens, which is one of the major reasons why here was established protected nature area – nature park. Evens are nomad people who mostly live in Yakutia (Sakha) and Magadan districts (population about 20 000), but small group of people, still for unknown reasons, came to Kamchatka in 1840's, since then they live and work in this relatively segregate Central part region. For now there are about 2000 Evens in Kamchatka, of whom only about 60 are working in reindeer herding field, most of them seasonally.

Reindeer herders, they traditional lifestyle and knowledge about nature are invaluable additional value to this territory, but due to lack of employees in park (and sometimes unfortunately interest and/or motivation) it is left far behind other questions related to park administration and planned activities. This creates an even greater gap between people who try to protect this territory (park staff) and people who in many generations are living and working on this territory (reindeer herders). Cooperation between these two „institutions” are almost non-existing, and creates more and more misunderstandings.

Within this summer Aiva Lace has visited four of six herder brigades and as a result has been done and started several activities:

- Reindeer herders annual route and campsite mapping. *Mentioned first as a most important for park management at this point;*
- Fixation of before officially unnamed geographical object names (toponyms) in local Even and Russian languages;
- Current reindeer herding state photo fixation;
  
- Gathering information about geographical places in park territory (mountain/forest/river passages, herder and hunter trail directions, location of huts, etc.);
- Gathering information about location of rare plants (which, where, at what time they have been seen).

Besides of this, during all herder camp visits, volunteer gathered plants for park botanical research, collected and disposed waste which have been left in nature, sometimes together with herders and their kids.

*More about each of these activities and their current results in following pages.*

## **RESULTS OF ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT**

*following the list from Introduction*

- **Reindeer herder annual route and campsite mapping** (*establishing the need, current stage, options for further mapping method improvement, ways of using mapping results*).

Reindeer herders with their herd annually follow the same grazing route or keep it very similar with few exceptions, placing their camp in locations which for them are very well known and often used by generations.

In spite of this, their routes and exact campsite places still haven't been fixated and most often the only people who know this information are on site working herders. This cause situation in which Nature Park are obligated to protect reindeer herder's grazing lands (*Nature Park tasks from Bystrinsky Park Development Plan*), without knowing where exactly they are situated. Or from another point – obligated to protect territory without knowing for what kind of activity and in what extent it is used for.

This summer started mapping already shows that most of all Bystrinsky District herder routes are situated into Park territory (District is bigger than park), which confirms the need to identify these sites. *Enumeration of other reasons and potential uses of reindeer herder's route and campsite mapping follow at the end of this chapter.*

At this point from four visited brigades have been gained various outcomes:

- In brigade Number 2 (naming system in Esso) was possible to follow entire route and camping places from the moment when this herd was formed (11.2013 – this is new brigade), as well as their potential future route and wintering site.
- Anavgay brigade, who now covers all north side of the Park, located all their camping sites that they have used during last year (in NW region). This brigade plans to divide their reindeers in two herds, so they could simultaneously use both NW and NE sides of the Park.
- After very long getting to brigade N<sup>o</sup>6 volunteer faced situation in which herders were not able to show their herding routes on the map (does not read maps), although they could name all locations where they have been and plan to move.
- Brigade N<sup>o</sup>4 with most stabile annual herding route couldn't manage to return map with their marks until volunteer's departure, map haven't been analyzed yet.

This summer's experience showed that there is a need of different technique for implementing started mapping in more productive way. In discussions with the Park staff, for the most precise on site method could be usage of GPS trackers. This device some of the trusted person in herder brigade could switch on every time, when they are moving and placing a new camp site (this could be used as a pilot project in one or two herds). With this method data with location of herders would directly come to Park and saved for further data analyze.

Still there would be a need for visiting herds (meet herders). To gain better result it should be done not only by using printed map materials, but also taking portable device (ex. tablet) with different high quality maps in it, which this summer was not possible due to lack of charging possibility. Maximum amount of digital maps allows to follow whether herders haven't used place names (toponyms), which does not exist on all maps – this summer, author was able to notice it only after arriving in village, as a result it was not possible to fully clarify their meaning and writing laws.

**List of reasons and possible use of reindeer herding route and camp place mapping :**

- Herders camp sites, routes, old trails and their names are part of this nomad people (Even) cultural heritage which yet, while old people are still working in tundra, can be identified and maintained;
- Necessity for much more precise Nature Park territorial planning;
- This could be used as a base for new investigations – climate change influence on grazing lands, grazing land botanical analyze, etc.
- Information resource for Park inspectors. At this moment inspectors, finding a trespass (ex. waste) on some of the camp sites, cannot identify whose brigade it has been and in what time;
- Information resource for tourists, visitors, local community:
  - Well preserved old herder trails could be included in Nature Park hiking routes as they greatly facilitate hiking and leads to important places. Now very few of them are known;
  - Herder's camp site locations can be accepted as officially allowed campfire places and camping sites for backpacker tourists, instead of making new sites who are much to less and organically does not fit to environment. Herder's camp sites usually are placed in a good location (near water, out of the winds, etc.);
  - Maps of herder routes could allow approximately identify their location in all seasons – hikers would know if they have a potential possibility to see reindeers;
  - Identification of their routes and camp site net could serve as a good visual material for people (guests, kids) to explain the life of nomad people.

Paper maps with herders drafts and copies of electronic version of them with campsite namings are stored in Bystrinsky Nature Park and volunteer computer.

▪ **Fixation of before officially unnamed geographical object names (toponyms) in local Even and Russian languages**

During camp mapping process also have been collected local toponyms (names of hills, lakes, etc.), most from Even language which hitherto have not been wider known and placed on existing maps (see example below). This fact has been found out after returning from herders camp, by comparing all existing maps of given territory.

There is a reason to believe that a number of place names, which are still unknown could several times exceed the number of those who have been accidentally found out this season.



Оз. Дракон (lake Дракон) и оз. Чайное (lake Чайное) - both names does not exist on maps.

▲ One of summer camp site of Anavgay herd

- **Current reindeer herding state photo fixation**

It is important that Park has its own good quality visual material, which can serve as a presentational, educational and historical value. Still there is very little photo material (or none) from herds which works further away from villages. Gathered material potentially can be used in informative photo book/catalogue about reindeer herders in Nature Park – still there are no visual material about reindeer herders in Kamchatka.

Gathered photo materials are and will be stored in Bystrinsky Nature Park (including adding them to [www.bystrinsky-park.com](http://www.bystrinsky-park.com) site article galleries about Native people in Park), village Esso reindeer herders' enterprise "Olenevod" (ООО Оленевод), village Anavgay reindeer enterprise "Akenman" (ООО Акенман) and in museum at Petropavlovsk "Kamchatka Regional Museum" (Камчатский Областной Краеведческий Музей).

- **Gathering information about geographical places in park territory (mountain/forest/river passages, herder and hunter trail directions, location of huts, etc.)** and
- **Gathering information about rare plants (which and where they have seen).**

Obtain information about various geographic objects and/or their condition - such as – Tigil hot springs (existing on map in real live are under water), approximate place of fumaroles on Ichinsky volcano, course of some existing herder and hunting trails, etc. ;

In meetings with herders has been gathered information about different rare plant species (ex. *Calla* and *Cypripedium guttatum*), they approximate location, prevalence. Herders also have been acquainted with other rare plants and motivated to pay attention in future.

In all reindeer camp visits have been collected plant species for Park scientific studies. At this point is known that from collected plants are found new orchid for park territory (*Corallorhiza trifida*) and with a new (second) finding have been approved previous year discovery – *Carex capitata* – completely new species for Kamchatka.

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