The Reindeer Support Scheme

Student Information Pack

Section 6
REINDEER
AND MAN
REINDEER AND EARLY MAN

The last ice age in Europe lasted from about 400,000 to 10,000 years ago. There is plenty of evidence that the association of reindeer with man goes back to the latter period of the ice age. Food litter, discovered in caves used by man, was found to consist mainly of reindeer.

These human cultures gave us further information in the form of rock paintings depicting reindeer, the animal upon which their way of life depended.

This copy of a stone/bronze age rock carving dates from 2,000 - 500 BC and was found in Sagelva, Norway.

Tools made from antlers have also been found; similar tools are in everyday use, even today.
REINDEER NOMADS OF THE PRESENT DAY

Throughout Arctic Scandinavia and Russia, man has associated himself with reindeer to enable him to live and survive in this very difficult environment.

The reindeer provide man with a source of food; skins are used for clothing and tents, and female reindeer can be milked.

As beasts of burden, reindeer can be used as pack animals or to pull sledges. Some tribes in Siberia even ride their reindeer.

In this environment, traditional domesticated animals like horses, cows and sheep would not survive.
REINDEER NOMADS (continued)

The best known reindeer nomads are the Lapps, or Saami (as they are more correctly known) of North Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Western edge of Russia.

As one travels further east into North Siberia, Tungus, Samodi and Sayan live the complete life of the reindeer nomad.

Man is considered to have domesticated the reindeer, but it must be acknowledged that it is a mutual understanding, because, as the animals must wander freely over large areas, man must follow the reindeer’s natural instincts.