



forestry, because the main species in red deer diet are not economically significant. However, it can become a problem in the future if the number of red deer increases significantly.



RESEARCH ON BROWN BEAR *URSUS ARCTOS* L. ALONG THE GREEN BELT OF FENNOSCANDIA

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Brown bear is a widespread species in forests of European Russia. Latest investigations using non-invasive techniques for sampling of biological material for genetic analysis showed the populations of this large predator are not isolated. Bears from Russia were found to wander to the neighbouring Norway and Finland. Although such crossings are not so massive, they do testify to contacts between micropopulations over extensive spaces. Gene drift is continuous, perhaps involving also groups further away. It promotes heterosis and stability of populations. At the same time, expansion of brown bear northwards, to the tundra zone, was detected through visual observations. Presumably, change climate is shifting the northern limit of forest, and the bear's pre-historic range is therefore being reinstalled. More intensive studies of the species on the South-North gradient along the Green Belt of Fennoscandia are needed. It would be expedient to organize a special laboratory to gather and process materials from different populations of bear and other large predators of Northwest Russia and to create the database of genotypes. Petrozavodsk (Karelian Research Centre) appears most suitable for this purpose, because specialists and other prerequisites for this important work are available there.

