

"In the seven years which I have been flying over these areas, I have observed how the environment is being disfigured," we were told by V. Slipchenko, an Mi-8 helicopter commander. "For some reason, the most beautiful spots, those with greenery and lakes nearby, are always selected for drilling purposes. Fly by a couple of months later and you see that the vegetation has been trampled down and oil slicks have formed on the water. Fish and animals are not to be seen. Cross-country vehicles are used not only to go to the drill site, but also to go berry-picking and fishing (which, we will add in parenthesis, is most often illegal). They do not use existing roads; each beats his own path."

And we consider it necessary to add that there would have been much less damage had it not been for the passivity of Yamal district authorities. In the face of authoritative organizations and important national tasks fulfilled by said organizations, the interests of the district and its native inhabitants were not upheld persistently enough by the Party district committee and the Executive Committee of the District Soviet of People's Deputies. Rather than creating a system of rigid environmental control and an atmosphere of intolerance to violators of environmental protection legislation, local authorities are principally concerned with bringing down one-time lawsuits, transferring public funds from the sectoral pocket to the district's budget.

This attitude to the peninsula's environment has borne its "fruit". According to data furnished by the provincial commercial hunting administration, during the last five-year period, polar fox, wolverine, waterfowl and wild deer populations have fallen by factors of 3, 4, and 10, respectively;