

Hunting is a necessary duty

The National Belovezhskaya Pushcha Park hotel complex is seeing more guests in autumn than in summer, with its comfortable rooms mostly booked by Russian, German, French and Italian hunters. Every year, the Park's administration expands the number of licenses granted to hunters, allowing them to help it in the necessary job of regulating the animal population

By Mikhail Feontistov

Foreign revenue generated by the Park from its accommodation and hunting licenses is rising in proportion to the number of foreign hunters arriving in the Pushcha. In spring, the schedule for hunting tours was compiled until the end of the year, with over 700 hunters due to arrive from Russia and Western Europe. About 200 have already visited, taking home hunting trophies.

Holidaying in the Pushcha with their guns, foreigners help the game wardens of seventeen forestries sustain an optimal population of animals, while eradicat-

ing undesirable inhabitants such as the raccoon, which has no natural predators in the forest. Their overpopulation is a real problem, with this small animal's smell frightening large animals; it also destroys bird nests.

Another pest in the Pushcha is wild boar, which often attack nearby farms in large groups. These clever 'dziks' — as local residents call them — are a Western European hunter favourite, since urbanisation has led to their extinction in some countries. Foreigners compare the boar with a grand piano, owing to its huge size; its tusks alone reach twenty centimetres, making a prestigious trophy.

Meanwhile, aurochs are a protected species, with hunting prohibited in the Pushcha. Around 400 live in the Park and are not allowed to leave unless being sent to other reserves or zoos. This summer, three females were sent to Russia's Bryansk Zoo. Interestingly, the population of aurochs previously recommended for the Belovezhskaya Pushcha was 250 but this has risen to 400, owing to the addition of neighbouring lands (which have gained reserve status). Applications to kill these majestic animals are available in certain circumstances, where an auroch is ill or very old, but the paperwork involved is lengthy. The Park



Hunters combine relaxation and amusement with doing a useful job for the reserve

must send a photo to Belarus' Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, with an explanation of the need for the animal's death. If the National Park's arguments are convincing, a commission travels from Minsk to the site to

view the auroch and decide its fate. Sadly, last summer, a healthy auroch was killed by a foreign hunter by mistake, as the court ruled; he had thought he was hunting a wild boar. Nevertheless, the German was required to pay a \$30,000 fine for his error.

As regards illegal hunting, various mechanisms are in place to prevent poaching, implemented by the National Park's own forest guards. Recent legislative changes allow such poachers to be punished for their actions.

Destiny at our fingertips

Will we gain the job of our dreams? Will a child be successful in sports? Will an entrepreneur be able to start up in business? Do the answers lie in the patterns shown on our hands? Palm readers and fortune tellers with crystal balls might agree... but so do scientists

By Alexander Maximov

Anthropologists from the National Academy of Sciences' History Institute have developed a unique method, using dermatoglyphics (the science of studying patterns on our hands and feet). It is thought that the lines we bear in these places could indicate our character and psychological type, foretelling likely behaviour in certain situations and the nature of our interpersonal relations.

To create a 'readable' print, you grease your hand with oil and press onto paper, giving an imprint of each finger separately. "Your head and life lines coincide. This means you are purposeful and can achieve a great deal if you work hard," explains the Head of the Anthropology and Ecology Department at the National Academy of Sciences' History Institute, Lidia Tegako. She flatters my ambitious side and I can't help but feel she is embracing a certain mystical air. "Your fingers, in turn, feature lines common in phlegmatics," she adds. Most previous tests have proven me to be inclined to be choleric but I don't feel sceptical. Actually, I've become much calmer and more reasonable recently.

Scientists can't foretell the future just by looking at the patterns on our palms but they can easily define the sex, approximate age and anthropological type of a person. To say more, many hours of study and analysis of ridge patterns are needed. These curls on



Lidia Tegako applies unique methods during research

the tips of our fingers form during our fourth month in the womb — and remain unchanged all our life. An embryo's skin is closely connected with their nervous system, so the pattern on our palms is defined by the structure of our nerve-

endings. If curls are seen on almost every finger, we may be sanguine or choleric, prone to excessive nerves. Arcs are common to melancholics, while a phlegmatic tends to have loops. It's a true science, enabling us to learn about a person's character and behaviour.

Italian doctor Cesare Lombroso — a prison psychiatrist who expressed the idea of the 'inborn criminal' — noticed back in the early 20th century that fingerprints of habitual offenders are very similar. Dozens of decade later, it was noticed

that aggressive offenders tend to share genetic defects in their Y chromosome. "Our research may be useful to students wishing guidance in choosing a vocation or to companies seeking particular types of workers," notes Ms. Tegako. "For example, a small company experiencing communication problems may find they are employing too many choleric personalities. Meanwhile, a reserved person may be less able to express themselves and be wondering whether to study for an arts degree; we'd analyse their palm and might advise on studying mathematics or science."

Criminalists and psychiatrists are still working with scientists to perfect the science of dermatoglyphics but there's no doubt that there is something to this 'magic'. Whether you wish to know if your business will be a success or whether you are suited to a particular activity, you may find the method useful. Unlike palm reading, this science focuses on fingerprints and experts see nothing dangerous in making such forecasts. Our destiny may be sealed in our hands, as Hippocrates believed centuries ago. His learned works remain with us today.

Flying robots



Trial flights

By Victoria Kamendova

Belarusian pilotless aircraft soon to be exported

Pilotless planes — designed by our Belarusian scientists — are arousing much interest abroad, with talks underway regarding their export. Deliveries are to begin as soon as batch production is launched by the National Academy of Sciences' Physical-Technical Institute.

"A fully-fledged aviation complex — featuring pilotless aircraft, a ground control point and a communication channel — has been set up in Belarus for the first time. This is not a simple model with a joystick, managed from the land, but a smart device ready to fulfil the most serious tasks," explains Yuri Yatsyna, who heads the laboratory for modelling complicated systems at the National Academy of Sciences' Physical-Technical Institute.

Pilotless planes are in great demand by various branches, but especially those engaged in monitoring and controlling our borders, forests and roads. The craft's high definition camera can record the number plates of cars violating road traffic rules, while tracking unlicensed hunters in forests and reserves and recording unauthorised crossings at the border. This is also of great help to the Emergency Ministry, as the craft is able to fly over places affected by extraordinary conditions; these air 'patrols' can then inform of changes to a situation, enabling rescuers to react in good time.

No doubt, pilotless planes will contribute greatly to science, being given various tasks — including weather observation and the compiling of topographic maps. The multi-functionality of Belarusian pilotless aircraft and their high energy efficiency makes them extremely useful. Super-light, medium and large classes are planned, with the smallest weighing just over 2kg. Able to be launched by hand, this 'baby-plane' can travel at 60km/h for up to 40 minutes, landing by parachute to have its battery recharged.

Belarusian pilotless planes will change the face of our air space; no doubt, these 'flying assistants' have a bright future ahead of them, aiding so many spheres of our lives.