



From left to right: Joe, Larry, Nathan, Greg, Earl, Tim, and Shawn

Canada Black Bear Hunt

Written from

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August 21, 2004

I got up with the excitement of going to Canada on a black bear hunting trip. After loading the truck with those last minute things, I drove to meet the other guys at 6:00AM for breakfast at the Waffle house in Richwood Kentucky. Our hunting group included Ed Alari, Joe Crowdu Nathan King, Larry Burkhart , Greg Bickle, Tim Farmer and our cameraman Shawn Hencye. Tim farmer he is the host of the Kentucky Afield outdoor show. It is the oldest running outdoor show on the air, for over fifty years now. We ate breakfast and got started on our drive north on I-75. We stopped in Gaylord Michigan around 3:30PM to eat an early dinner at the Gobblers Restaurant, a great place to have a turkey dinner. Then we traveled north to Sault Ste Marie stopping to buy our food for camp. Then we crossed over the Mackinaw Bridge then on up to the border. Larry had bought potatoes so at the border they made us relinquish those; apparently you are unable to bring produce into Canada from the United States. I guess Larry will have to pick up potatoes at the next store! Over the border a few miles north on 17, we stop at the trading post to get our bear tags. (Larry bought his potatoes here) We paid for our tags with Canadian currency. I always exchange around \$500.00 dollars at home before I travel for Canadian money because the exchange rate seems to be better. With that finished, we headed north on 17 to White Lake Lodge which will be our base camp for the week. The cabins are fully furnished and equipped with all that we will need for cooking, pots, pans, dishes, silverware, stove, refrigerator, and a TV to watch reruns of Kentucky Afield, if Tim brought some of them with him! We will be hunting in the White River area in Ontario. It's 790 miles north of Richwood Kentucky and we arrived there around 10:30PM. We all unloaded our trucks and went to bed dreaming of tomorrow's hunt. Will I get a shot at a bear or will he run me up a tree?

August 22, 2004

I got up at 8:00AM and I fixed breakfast for all the guys. As I was making breakfast, I was thinking I had better not baby the guys too much on this hunt so I fixed the coffee and got out the bowls, cornflakes and milk. I called everyone to breakfast thinking how the morning was going to go smoothly, but Ed had to have milk in his coffee and Tim had to have milk and sugar so I had to dig that out and find it for him. Talk about high maintenance! After breakfast we got our bows unpacked, tuned and we were ready to go hunting! Now we had to wait for Mr. Mike Boudreau, our master bear guide for the week. If you ever have the opportunity to meet Mike you will know why I call him Mr. Mike! He arrived at our cabin around 1:00PM and we filled out our paper work. We got dressed to go hunting and bait our sets with Mike. He was to show us where are set's are, bait them and then we can begin our hunt! Ed's was the first bait site we came to. After we baited the site Ed went up the tree to check out his tree stand, you always need to check out your tree stand before your guide leaves to be sure it is safe and set up for how you shoot. Next we dropped off Joe, and then Tim and Shawn drove to their big stand and we followed. On this hunt, Tim and I are making a film for Mike on black bear hunting with Superior Bear Outfitters in Ontario Canada. I've got to wait for Tim to get his bear, and then it will be my turn. I hope we can get everyone on film taking a black bear, hopefully one a night. But that's easier said then done. Mike and myself went on to bait five more sets. Larry, Greg, and Nathan were following us on an old logging road through rivers with water up to the bottoms of our doors! We all have full size trucks with four-wheel drive, believe me, you do not want to take a min van to the Canada Bush! Now that that side is bated, Mike and me took Larry, Greg, and Nathan to their sets and went on to bait 4 more as backups. That left everyone 2 sets each to hunt. As I left I said good luck to the guys and shoot straight. I drove to a nice little lake to shoot my Kodak bow and warm up my shooting eye for tomorrows hunt. I had my two-way radio on in case one of the guys calls for any help or assistance. I wrote in my field journal and listened to a pair of loons in the lake as the sun was setting.



Here's the lake where Earl waited to hear from the other bear hunters and Ed caught his first Northern Pike.

I shot my bow, ate some snacks, and took a little nap but no calls from the guys on the two-way radio. The sun is starting to go down now so I drove closer to where Ed and Joe were hunting to wait for their call. No call. So I went by and picked them up and neither of them had seen anything. We went up to the fork in the road to wait for Tim. About twenty minutes later Tim drove up and told us took a shot at a big bear. Tim said that no sooner than I drove away, a two hundred and fifty pound bear come in to the bait site. Shawn didn't even have the camera out of the case yet! You cannot take the shot if the camera man is not ready! We have to get it on film for Mike. This is my first time doing a outdoor film. You can't shoot if its too dark for the camera, you can't hunt if it's raining because the rain will mess up a camera big time. A \$2000.00 camera and it won't work in the rain! At all! Let me tell you, filming a hunt is not that easy! As Shawn slowly got the camera set up and Tim was getting ready to take a shot, the bear took off fast. Tim looked at Shawn as if he did something wrong. (You know, the cameraman always messes up the professional hunter!) Tim and Shawn heard something behind them. Shawn looked down under his feet and saw a very large bear, around three hundred fifty pounds, walking under them! The first time you see a big bear at ten yards it can really shake a hunter up because this bear is not in a cage! By now Shawn has the camera out and rolling. Tim takes aim placing his pin on the bear and releases. Snap! Pop! He had hit something! He looked at Shawn and wondered what had gone wrong. As he looked up, he saw a limb that had hit his upper bow cam. In all the excitement, and everything happening so fast, he never had time to check out his shooting lanes. The bear bulldozed down trees and got the heck out of there! All I can say is that this can happen to the best of hunters. Sorry Tim, better luck tomorrow! We all got back to our cabins and Tim cooked up some clam chowder. As he was cooking, I know that hunting scenario was going over and over in his mind. I know that's what I would be doing. When Tim was done cooking, we ate some of the best clam chowder that I had ever had. We finished eating dinner and it was it was getting late, around midnight. We had not heard anything from Greg, Nathan, and Larry yet so Joe and I walked to their cabin. But they were not there. I told Joe that something might be wrong, so we should drive back out and check on them. We got in the truck and started to drive to. Mike's trailer first to see if he had seen them and I saw truck lights coming down the road. It was them and Greg had shot a bear! In the excitement of it all, he went passed the turn off and went the wrong way! Back in the bush it's dark plus the roads are logging roads with no road signs or streetlights! He had shot his first black bear ever and it was a nice one, around 250 pounds. Greg was very happy with his bear and all of us were happy for him. Greg and the guys were also happy we were coming out to look for them because they had almost run out of gas! As I was driving back to the cabins I was thinking that I'm the only guy on this hunt that has been black bear hunting before. I have taken three black bear with my old bear Kodak takedown and I could not wait for all of them to experience the thrill of it all!

August 23, 2004

We all got up at 8:00AM and Joe made breakfast! A very nice Mexican burrito with eggs and sausage, it wasn't half bad. Then we went outside to warm up on an old delta bear target that I had brought along. Tim and Shawn filmed a little of us shooting for Mike's video, then we drove to Mike's trailer to get our bait and start baiting our sets. From our cabin to our last bait set is forty-six miles. We discovered that only six sets out of eight were hit. Mike and his guides do an excellent job of preparing the bait sites for their hunters. They start baiting the sets two months prior to the hunter's arrival to assure hits on a regular basis by numerous bear. One hunter only hunts these sets one time per year. When you arrive in camp, Mike has a status sheet telling you the days your sets were hit and the size of the bear hitting it if he sees it. Every year I have been here, and this is my fourth year, all members of my group have had a shot opportunity.

Mike helped Greg take care of his bear. They took it to the butcher in White River to get it cut up, packaged and in the freezer so we can pick it up later for our return trip home. All the other hunters are at their sets now waiting for bears. I went back to the lake with my two-way radio and waited for a call. It's a very nice, sunny day. The winds are calm so it should be a good night to be in a bear stand! I was listening to the loons on the lake and thanking God for this day as the sun was setting over the lake with that orange-red color when my two-way came on it was Ed. He told me he had took a shot at a bear, but missed and asked me if I thought that the bear would come back. I told Ed that that bear was not the only bear hitting his set and to stay in his stand until dark. But if that was a trophy bear he would not likely be back to that set for a week or better or never again. When I was picking up Ed at dark, Tim and Shawn drove up and told me they didn't see a bear all day. They had been out all day and had lots of great footage of squirrels, chipmunks, whiskey jacks and blue jays. Tim said that he would go back to camp and start cooking some catfish and making some coleslaw. Ed and I went on to get Joe. He didn't see a bear either but he heard one popping its teeth and circling right before dark. It must have either smelled him or saw him. Joe asked me why the bear was popping its teeth like that because it made him a little nervous. I asked Joe if he had ever had a doe blow at him when it smelled or saw him? Well this is the bear's way of blowing at you. It is not a threat to you; it is just nervous or scared. I told Joe and Ed that on his tape with Curt Gowdy, Fred Bear said that a bear has great dignity. If you give a bear room for a dignified retreat he will take it most of the time, but if you push him and there's no room for that dignified retreat then he may charge you. You should always take it slow with all bears and leave them enough room to have that dignified retreat. We head back to our cabin to eat some catfish! Tim was just starting to put the fish in the skillet when we got to camp. We had another great dinner! I was thinking that Tim and I need to go hunting more together. I know a week with the guys will take me months in the gym trying to lose the weight from this weeks hunt but it's worth it because these boys can cook! Tim and Joe started a campfire after dinner out in back of our cabin by the lake. Hearing the fire crackle, smelling the wood burning, looking at the stars far off in the distance and hearing the wolf's howling made it one of those nights you never want to end. Joe and I sat there filling up are souls with it all and talking about the day's events. I looked at the time and realized it was 1:00AM. Nathan, Greg, and Larry were not back yet. Joe and I got in the truck and went to Mike's trailer and just as we arrived the guys pulled in. Larry had shot his very first black bear and he was so happy with his bear! That look of excitement in Larry's eyes is what makes a hunt truly great! That memory will be in our hearts the rest of their lives. Larry was so excited about his bear that it did not matter to him if it made Pope and Young or not. Before we left on our hunt he had been bear hunting two other times and had not even seen a bear. He said he would be happy just to see a bear in the wild!

August 24, 2004

We all got up around 8:30AM and it was my turn to make breakfast again. Well I was thinking of what to make so I started the coffee and got the cereal bowls out! I was thinking the guys deserved a treat this morning so I gave each one of them a banana! After we ate breakfast, we went outside and warmed up with our bows and went to bait our sets. By now I'm starting to get antsy to go hunting and I am hoping Tim gets a bear soon so I can start hunting. But we agreed to make this video so we have to wait to get the footage. I took Joe to his set. He got into his stand and Ed and I baited it and then left. Ed decided to take the night off from hunting and he went with me to the lake and wet his line while I shot my bow. All of a sudden Ed yells for me to come there, quick! He had caught his first Northern Pike and he was very excited! It will be good eating later but not enough for everyone. Then I remembered the guys next door had been fishing all that week back at Whitelake Lodge and they said they would give use some Pike and Walleye before they went back home to

Indiana. Shawn was calling on the two-way but I couldn't hear him because was ten miles away, past the range of my radio. But Joe heard him and answered him. It was close to dark and Ed and I went down the road and we could hear Joe and Shawn talking on the two-way. Shawn told me that Tim had shot a pretty good size bear and needed help with it. Shawn was at Joe's set and I told them I would meet them at Tim's set. When I arrived, they showed me the footage and the shot looked a little low but it still could have been a heart shot. We blood trailed that bear for approximately a hundred yards. Tim looked at me and said, "Earl, what do you think?" I told him it if it was my bear, I would wait until morning and he agreed. The area was like a swamp and sometimes the water was knee deep in some places. The evergreens were so thick that you could hang a Mag light in the tree and walk away 10 yards, turn around and not see your light. I know it was hard to wait but Tim made the right call by waiting until morning to find his bear.



Here is Ed Alari with his first Northern Pike

On our way back to the cabins, Joe said that he had a bear come in to his set right before Shawn went to asking for help. He said it had a **P & Y** head but its body was the same size as its head. The whole bear body fit in the fifty-five gallon drum! It had come over to Joe's tree when he was climbing down and he had to yell at it so it would run back into the forest. He walked out to the logging road so Shawn could pick him up and Joe said that the big head little bear stood up on its hind legs and watched him walk all the way out to the road. I told Joe that that bear may have never seen a human before and he was curious like a yearling deer of what he was. We went back to the cabins and I made dinner. And it was not cereal! It was a fine dish of cold cuts and potato chips! It was late, around midnight, and Greg, Larry, and Nathan were at the cabins when we arrived. Nathan said he didn't see any bear at his set but when Greg and Larry picked him up they saw one on way back and Greg said it was a big bear, maybe five hundred pounds! It wasn't far, just a quarter of a mile from Ed's set. I know Tim had a rough night of sleep. That bear was a nice one and Mike is going to help Tim in the morning. I knew Mike would be Tim's best bet for finding that bear than any of us with or without blood, Mike is a Canadian Bush Man and he has hunted moose and trapped this region for over thirty years.

August 25, 2004

Joe, Ed, and myself slept in and got up around 9:30AM. We ate breakfast and shot our bows. Tim and Shawn met Mike early and went to track his bear. At noon we got ready to go out to bait our sets and we stopped at Mike's to get our bait. They were all there and Mike had already skinned out Tim's bear! We now had one bear on film and Tim was one very happy hunter! Tim said He had never seen an outdoorsman like Mike before in my life! Tim said that the blood had been washed into the ground from light rain last night so there wasn't much of a blood trail. Mike was putting his hands in the moss in the swamp and pushing down on it occasionally he would find a spot where blood had soaked into the moss. He told me that moss will soak up blood like a sponge and will settle down under the moss. You really have got to meet this man to believe him!

It was getting to be time to go out to our stands but we had to go back to the cabins so Tim could clean up to go with me to film my hunt. We hoped to get another bear hunt on film for Mike. Tim and I sat in the tree stand until dark seeing nothing but Whiskey Jacks, Blue jays, squirrels, and chipmunks. Too bad we aren't doing a story on those animals! We went back to the truck and I called on the two-way to Joe and Ed. This was the first time I was that late calling them. I remembered my first trip up here bear hunting with a friend from the gym, Mike Johnson. Those guys left me back in the bush till 10:00PM before I got picked up. Let me tell you, every sound you hear is a big bear coming down the trail! On that hunt, the closest hunter to me was around thirty-eight miles on a logging road. That's why it took them three hours to pick me up. Joe answered very quickly and was happy to report he had shot a bear! Now Ed will have to wait a little longer for us to pick him up at the other end of the logging road, around fifteen miles away. Joe was only around five miles away from our set and when we got there, we helped him track his bear. It only went maybe forty yards before it went down; we had to drag him to the truck that was maybe one hundred and fifty yards away. As Joe field dressed his bear he told us the whole story. He said that a big sow had come in from the road smelling everything and popping its teeth. It pushed over the bait drum, grabbed some food and ran back into the bush with it. But it never came back out. He said that sow was around three hundred pounds. As he was waiting for that bear to come back in he was looking back at the set and saw a tree moving. It was not a tree but a big boar! He came in and was standing up on its hind legs, getting grease out of the grease tub that was hooked on the tree. It was starting to get dark and he told himself that if the bigger bear doesn't come back in, I'll take this one. The bear dropped down and went to the bait drum, giving Joe a great broad side shot. It's hard to pass up a broadside shot when it presents itself when bow hunting! He took the shot and the arrow went through him and hit a log and glanced straight up as the bear was rolling and growling and biting at its side. Then he tore off into the bush. Joe said that maybe a second went by and his arrow come back down almost exactly where he had shot the bear. Joe said was he was glad he wasn't near that bear when he hit it because fur and brush would have been flying with me trying to get the heck out of there!



Here is Tim Farmer with his first black bear. Now next time that's going to be hard to beat! Tim

As we were going to pick up Ed, the Tim and Joe said there was something weird walking down the road. I said to them that that's not nice to say, it was our fellow hunter Ed. We picked him up and asked him if he saw anything. He said he hadn't seen even one bear. We took Joe's bear to Mike's camp and hung it up on the meat poles. Greg, Nathan, and Larry drove in. Nathan had a shot at a big bear but shot too high. He said that the bear was as big as the one Gary Henderson shot last year that made it into the **P&Y** book. Nathan was really upset about missing that bear! Hopefully, Nathan will have better luck tomorrow. Larry and Greg are having too much fun on this trip and I told them to calm down or I would have to separate them! I'm just kidding, that's what a hunt is all about, having a good time whether you take an animal or not. There are too many variables like the weather or equipment problems that can make a hunt go bad in a hurry. But I was having a great time with the guys and I hadn't even had a shot yet! I'm very happy that everyone has had a great time so far. I get a little nervous when I take a group of guys on a hunt. I always like to see them having a great time and see lots of game. You don't want anyone regretting they went! We went back to our cabins to eat dinner and have a nice campfire. We sat around and told stories of all of the great adventures we've had. All of you reading this can image how those campfire stories can be. We always tell each other most of the time what really happens on our adventures. That's one thing I can say about bow hunters, we don't stretch the truth like those fisherman do!



Here is Joe Crowdus with his first Canadian black bear arrowed at fourteen yards

August 26, 2004

We all got up ate breakfast, shot are bows and went to bait are sets. This time though Shawn went with me to film and Tim went in with the other camera to do some filming in the town of White River. Joe and Ed took my truck, baited our set and the dropped Ed off at his set. As they drove away we were hoping that the bears would think we had left in the truck and would come in to the set a little earlier in the day. I found that yesterday after I had baited my set, dropped the guys off at their sets and returned to mine to hunt, my set had already been hit. It was around 10:30AM when they left and we stayed in our stand all day. We saw blue jays, pine squirrels and whiskey jacks but no bears. The wind was swirling in every direction and that will most definitely kill a day of bear hunting. Joe went fishing at the lake and had the two-way radio on waiting for one of us to call. Joe will be closest to Ed if he needs help earlier than we would. I have the deepest respect for Ed. He is one of the youngest “senior” hunters I know. Well, Ed had a bear come in from the swamp and it was almost dark. Ed told me later that he thought he hit the bear but he it might have been high. He said he was not as shook up this time until after the shot! Then the adrenaline started to flow, the kind that flows when you are close to dangerous game. He had to sit down for a minute before calling Joe. It was dark by the time Joe and Ed picked Shawn and me up and told us what had happened. I told Ed that if he thought his hit was high, it would be best to wait until the morning to track it. I know that a bear’s pain tolerance is not like a deer’s. The same hit on both animals will see the deer travel 100 yards but a bear may only travel 30-40 yards before he lays up and goes to a final sleep. Ed agreed to wait until tomorrow to track the bear so we went back to our cabins and Tim cooked a fine dinner.

Nathan had seen a bear but it was to nervous and it never came in close for a good shot. We all sat around the camp fire, talking about the Inuit Indians that were the owners of White Lake Lodge, He had been coming over and shooting his bow with us the entire week and we were all helping him a little each day. He lives by himself and there is no other bow hunter in the area to help him get set up right and to shoot with. He was shooting better and better each day with our help and encouragement.



Here are some fearsome looking bear hunters!

August 27, 2004

We got up early, as this was our last day to get a bear. Tim and Shawn had to depart for home because Tim had a seminar to do at a deer expo back home in Kentucky. We hated the fact that they had to leave early and will miss them at the campfire tonight! So we ate breakfast and said goodbye to them and told them to have a safe trip back home! We went back out to hopefully find Ed's bear. We tracked that bear maybe a little over a hundred yards back into the swamp and we found where the bear had laid up for the night. There was no more blood to track, but we had found little up to that point anyway, even though we had looked down many trails the bear may have taken. We believed that the bear was not seriously hurt. That relieved all of us, especially Ed. He must have hit him very high, maybe in the upper left shoulder, because when we found the arrow last night, it looked like it had gone in only about an inch or so. When I got back to the truck I found that my favorite hunting knife was gone. I must have lost it back in the swamp somewhere. It was very thick and about ankle deep in this area with water. I knew it would be a waste of time looking for it.

We all went back to the cabins to eat, clean up, and get a couple practice shots in before we left to go hunting. We left and picked up our bait at Mike's trailer. I had my video camera with me so Joe offered to be my cameraman for this last day of Ed's and my hunt. Greg, Nathan, and Larry stayed behind to pack their bags and do a little fishing! Joe and I dropped off Ed. We baited his set and told him to shoot straight tonight! Then we baited my set, drove the truck about a half-mile down the road, parked it and walked back to the set. As we approached the path that led to my set Joe said he thought he heard the bait drum fall over. I got an arrow out, knocked it and Joe got the camera rolling. We slowly stalked in and Joe was about twenty yards behind me filming. I peeked around the evergreen trees up at the bait set and saw where the drum was turned over. That bear either must have heard or smelled us coming in because the wind was swirling, and he was outta there! I went over and set my bait drum back up and we got in the tree stand to wait the day out hoping he would come back before shooting hours were over. As I was waiting, I was hoping that Ed had a bear come in and he would have a good shot. It was getting darker and darker and I was thinking that I may not get a bear this time, but I had taken three very nice bear already, one for each of the years I have hunted with Mike and Superior Bear Outfitters. I looked over at my barrel and a saw in the

forest that a nice size bear was slowly working it's way toward the bait set. He stuck his head out of the thick cover and was looking around. By this time I am kicking Joe because he was almost asleep. We both then watched as the bear melted back into the forest. When I told Mike about this bear, he told me he had seen that bear one day the week before we arrived and said it was around four hundred pounds. The bait drum is a fifty-five gallon drum and the bear looked very small next to it. But I will be back next year and I'll hunt that stand again. Next year he will be bigger. After that, we went to get Ed but he didn't have any luck either. He had a despondent look in his face and sadness in his voice when he told me he hadn't seen any bear that day but he also had a smile on his face from having the opportunity this past week that a lot of people will never have in their lifetime. The chance to be ten yards from a black bear in the wild rather than seeing it in a cage at the zoo is an experience a lot of people will never have. We had a great hunt with Mike and most of the guys were talking about next year before we left. We all had a hunt that we will never forget. Hopefully, Tim and myself will have the video edited and finished where you can view it on Superior Bear Outfitters website at Superiorbearoutfitters.com.

Happy trails & Good Bowhunting!

I'm not claiming to be an expert on black bear hunting at all. To me there was only one man that was an expert and that was legendary Fred Bear. But I have hunted black bear four times now and have taken three very nice black bear with my bow. I have carried a bow for over 30 + years in the field with me and this is the hunting list that I use and I give to my groups. Hopefully it will help someone who has not ever been to Ontario, Canada on a black bear hunt.



Here is Earl & his favorite cameraman on one of his past bear hunts