



Call to book your next Alberta hunting adventure
Pat: 780-621-7989 Brian: 780-542-1018 Lorne:780-696-3461



Larry Richards
River Boat Camp
email larryrd@grm.net
Ph. 641-446-4863

Anxiety still clutched me as I approached the desk at the Nomad Inn in Fort McMurray Alberta. I was going on my second Alberta black bear hunt. Midway in the arrangements, the original outfitter had sold the business. He assured me that the Garrett Brothers would be no decrease in the first rate experience I had had with them. In speaking with and emailing Pat Garrett, it seemed that was true. But... my last email had been returned as "service interrupted". I was here on the faith that it was due to his being in bear camp away from the computer.

The hour delay in Denver that made the hookup in Edmonton closer than anticipated was not his fault. The Nomad's shuttle leaving as my flight arrived was not his fault. Still it was a rocky start. My feelings were buoyed by finding my room arranged just as Garrett's had said. They were further raised as I went for some in-stand snack stuff, and went by pickups with Garrett Bros. outfitting logos on them, one attached to the jet boat the McKenzies had used. I went over the top as I returned to meet two fellows wearing Garrett Bros. caps and shirts. As I introduced myself and we exchanged greetings, Pat and Brian put me at ease. I now knew I was going hunting, but could these young guys deliver? Somehow I knew "these dogs could hunt".

We didn't leave the dock until mid morning. During that time I met Chris and Harry, my eventual camp mates at the coffee shop.

In spite of the Hawkeye T shirt, these were Florida boys. We exchanged views of the relative size of Iowa deer and turkeys, and our expectations of the hunt. Having been there before, I could begin their orientation. The boat ride to camp was exhilarating as we went from city background to endless pine and birch forests.. The last few miles of the 40 were plagued with the adult version of "are we there yet, daddy?" At Clearwater lodge we met old friends Cliff the guide, and Lianne the Aussie cook. We also met the Garrett's families who would adopt us as uncles and grandpa. We settled in, assembled and shot our gear. I was impressed by my mates' gear and abilities with them.

Time in bear camp is not a clock thing. Only 3 times matter. Too late for breakfast (9 AM), Time to go hunting (usually around 5), and time to quit hunting (around dark thirty). All else revolved around that. First night we were 0-fer. I didn't mind, as it takes me a day to get over being a little "hinky" about bears, bows, and being alone in the woods with them. Supper at 11 something was followed by a few minutes around the campfire discussing the days events and plans for tomorrow. I found out that Edmonton was in the playoffs, and even the kids were pumped about that.



Day two found Brian taking me on a 10 mile boat ride, and a 3 mile ATV (hereafter known as quads) ride to Rupert's stand. The path had been widened last winter for logging, but the muskeg was no less bottomless, and we winched through several spots.. Brian's new stands were tremendous. Double wide, ladder access, and seats from an old hockey arena. Very cushy, and added to that was his Thermocell insect repellent system, which proved to be an invaluable asset in comfort. They really work folks.

Bear hunting is not for those with sensitive noses or stomachs. Hungry spring bears are drawn in by smelly stuff like last fall's beaver carcasses, and old pork parts, now in metal drums outside for over a month. Oats were included, and the bear's favorite, cookies. Rupert's hadn't been hunted in a few days, so Brian refreshed the bait while I settled in. Brian had been predicting to the camp that we would be in stand by 6, have our first bear by 6:30 and be tagged out by 7:45. He saw the first bear a little ahead of schedule. It walked by the barrel, and passed by being over the second rung. It had a very nice coat, and no rubbed off spots, so I elected to make it my #2 daughter's bear rug. As it approached the cookies, 10 yards out, I settled the pin 2/3 way up the chest, tight to the shoulder, reminded myself to follow through and touched the release. Brian's video showed a hit as I had planned. The bear merely walked 5 yards, laid down, and expired. We waited a few moments, got down, retrieved the arrow, shot some photos, and climbed back in.

I really only intended to shoot one bear. I told Brian it would take a special bear to warrant shooting and paying the \$750 trophy fee. That meant a color phase bear or a really large one. Bear number 2 was not that bear. It came in, wasn't



troubled by the nearby dead bear, and we watched him eat, leave, come back, then get nervous. Something was up. That something was bear number 3. He had a white blaze on his chest, and was considerably larger. He approached, left, circled, left, came again and left. It did not appear he would be a third ring bear. Brian and I debated his merits. I asked if he could show me a bigger one in 4 more days. Not definitely was the answer, and certainly not another with the distinctive blaze. This would be a \$750 bear if I got a chance. As he approached the next time, I readied for a shot. Just as the pins settled, he grabbed a hunk of pork and boogied out. Let down bow, let down emotions. 5 min later he approached again. Brian's video shows him to be slightly quartering to me as I took the shot. It looked like a good hit, and he took off, crashing brush as he went. We followed him by sound, and when the crashing stopped we could hear the distinctive moaning of an expiring bear. A 15 minute wait was compressed into 5, and we took up the trail. We found him under a tree, near where we thought we had heard him last. Day 2 8:20 and I was done bear hunting. We got the quad and trailer to both bears. It was all two men could do to load the larger bear for the ride home.

Since we had to wait until dark to pick up Harry and Cliff, we took down part of the spike camp in the area. Dark found Harry disappointed. What had looked like a good hit had turned into a long unsuccessful tracking job. The whole crew assisted in the morning, but ultimately the bear was lost. Back at camp, we found Chris with a bear which was similar in size to mine. Adult beverages and high times around the campfire night two.

Day three found us skinning bears, and tracking Harry's bear. Brian took me to dispose of the carcasses to learn where a wolf might be fond feeding on them. I made arrangements to borrow Pat's 06, as wolves don't usually get close enough for bows. Otherwise I was stuck in camp until fishing season. Day 3 also found Chris finding out the veracity of bears hit with anything but good hits. It dragged 6 men through areas I bet no man had ever set foot on before, with moss 2 feet deep in areas. Both my bunkies were bummed.

Tues. AM alarm was set for 4 AM to get me out for wolf. At 3:45 "Not right now, I don't" came from Harry's bunk as he slept. It was already quite light, so as long as I was up, I left to hike out early. At 4:15 I was easing across the last 100 yards to the blind, when a motion up hill caught my attention. WOLF!. I sat right down in the swamp, steadied myself as best as I could, winded and anxious, put the crosshairs on his chest and squeezed (OK, maybe I yanked it) the trigger. After the recoil recovered, I could see no wolf. It was only 5 yards to bush, so a miss was possible.

I walked up to the site, and saw nothing. Rats. Then I noted a few feet away in the grass, a gray patch which was my wolf, quite dead from a head shot. I rested a little, then hiked back to camp, arriving about 4:45. Only the presence of the families kept me from cranking off 3 rounds and rousing everyone to celebrate. As it was, I stoked the fire and sat by it until I could no longer contain myself and woke Brian. We retrieved the 80 pound medium sized wolf and brought her to camp to our excited campmates. Cliff suggested I try Sasquatch hunting next, since I'd now done it all. I knew eventually, I could go fishing.

The next few days I helped tear down baits, and the others hunted bears. Chris tagged his second bear. Fishing opened, and I did get some nice walleye and northern, the largest going nearly 10#. Fish for lunch was a big hit, and my good luck seemed to be holding up. Cliff had been guiding for several years, and had never really hunted for himself. With only one hunter, the brothers Garrett decided they could handle that, and let him go for himself with a pretty lever action .450. On his third night, I offered to go with him, only if I could take my lucky stocking cap. Our first bear was a little Boo-Boo. Then it got boring. We were later rewarded with a beautifully coated mature bear. It slipped in on my side, and was 10 yards away, when I noticed it, and elbowed Cliff. Between that action and Cliff's reaction, the bear scurried off. I apologized to Cliff for my abrupt action. The bear bailed us out however, and returned from the backside, and Cliff made fairly difficult shot to collect his first bear.

Some sightseeing, and more fishing rounded out the trip, and I ended out not catching a grayling as the only legal species I did not collect. I wonder if I can convince Mrs. Doc that a blonde bear rug would look nice, and I should go back again?

doc

