The winter of 2013/14 in Manitoba was one of the coldest winters in 100 years with 30 plus days over minus 30 degrees. Winter came in early November & never left until April. Snowfall was slightly above average but did not leave until well into April. This winter was hard on the whitetail population and as a result conservation has decided on a “bucks only” season for 2014. The snow and cold had little effect on the bear and moose populations.

Bear Hunting & Fishing with Grey Owl –

Myself and guide Bob Hyshka headed north to Lynn Lake and were prepared to start baiting on May 7th. When we woke on that morning we were greeted by 6 inches of wet snow and it was still snowing. We loaded up with bait and the “Argo” and stopped for a coffee at the hotel on Main St. When we went to leave we had to be pulled out of our parking spot by another 4 wheel drive which was just an indication on how the rest of our day was going to go.

The wet snow stuck to the trees and rained down us when we went through the bush with the “Argo” and soon we were wet down to the shorts. Finding the trails to the bait sites and the sites themselves sometimes proved to be a problem as everything looked the same under this blanket of snow. On one occasion the truck and trailer slid off the snow laden road and with the use of the “Argo” we were able to pull it back on the road and get mobile again.

That first day was slow as there had been a considerable amount of snow in the bush prior to the recent snowfall and the additional snow made it difficult to travel and with some of the trails we could simply not get down them as there was no body to the snow. At a number of the bait sites we had seen bear tracks that indicated the bears were out and about and had been checking for an easy meal.

We persevered for the next few days and got out over just 2/3 of our baits and had to call it quits and head for home. Linda and I reloaded the trailers and along with Karl headed back to open the camp. On May 18th when our first hunters arrived the ice was still on the lake in front of camp but everything was ready to go at the camp and as well we got the remainder of the baits out with the exception of those on the lakes.

Our first day of this year’s hunt we were scheduled to have four people in camp but 2 had to cancel out for that first week and we were able to fit them in later in the season. We were able to fish in in the creeks and in the boats at the mouth of the
creeks and rivers. The fishing that first week was a little slow but we were catching pike and the occasional walleye.

Our first 2 hunters to start the season came from Illinois and had the pleasure of hunting with some snow still on the ground. The bears were active on the baits as there was no warming to facilitate any type of “green up”. On his first night on stand Luckie Atkinson had 2 bears come into the bait and then leave only to return a short time later.

Luckie was hesitant to shoot a bear on the first night but when one of the bears left the bait and returned on 3 different occasions he remembered the story about the good lord sending two boats and a helicopter to rescue a stranded flood victim who after refusing all 3 ended up drowning. In Luckie’s words he equated the bear’s 3rd trip into the bait as the lord trying to tell him something and as a result he put an arrow into the bruin.

However the story didn’t end there as the bear could not be located that night and we had to go out and look for it in the morning. After a brief search the bear was located and Luckie had a very prime black bear that measured 5’9” nose to tail. Our second hunter hit a bear later in the week but unfortunately we were unable to recover it.

As the first week progressed the weather continued to warm and on the Saturday between the first and 2nd week the temperature went up to 85 degrees Fahrenheit. In a matter of few hours most of the ice went off of our fishing lakes and we were able to get our people in the boats fishing on our lakes that second week. After our one day of extremely warm weather the rest of the 2nd week remained fairly cool.

When guide Karl Klawitter had been checking baits getting ready for the second week he had an interesting encounter. He had been travelling down a bush trail on the quad when he rounded the corner and there on the middle of the trail was an animal coming towards him. As it came closer Karl could see that it was a large beaver that apparently wasn’t going to get off the road.

It continued walking right up to the quad and when it was about 3 feet away it lunged at the machine and latched onto the winch cable hook with its teeth. Karl thinking that he might latch onto him next gunned the bike and went right over top of him. The beaver just looked back over his shoulder at Karl and continued down the road as if to say “keep off my road buddy”.

With our second week we had seven hunters in camp and even though the baits looked good with lots of activity, on the first night of the hunt only 3 out of the 7 hunters had seen bear and only one bear was taken. Skip Lee from WI opened the
week by shooting a 6′2″ black boar. Skip didn’t hesitate in shooting this bear as on a previous trip with us two years ago he had sat all week and even though he had seen several bear he never had a good shooting opportunity. This year however, right off the start he took home a fine trophy.

The second night resulted in more bear sightings but only one bear went down on this night. I was guiding Ray McDaniel from TX and I knew we had a bear hitting his bait in the early afternoon. Ray had hunted this bait the previous night so I had him walk into the bait site by himself and told him to get in to the tree stand as quickly and quietly as he could as I didn’t think the bear would be too far away.

Well I guess I was right because as Ray slowly approached the bait site he spooked a bear off of the bait and as the bear took off he could see it was a color phase. Ray felt that he had probably blown his chance for the evening on that bear but he had no other option but to get up in his tree stand. He hadn’t been settled in the stand all that long when he became aware that a bear was close to his stand. The bear moved off again, circled the bait site, and then came into feed. Ray made no mistake with the shot and put down a beautiful 6′ cinnamon boar that had been the bear he initially had seen at the start of the evening hunt.

With one bear taken per day in the first two days we needed the pace to pick up and it did on the 3rd night. Dan Stepahanson from WI was spending his 3rd night on the same stand and on his first night on this stand he had seen a sow with 2 yearlings with the sow not taking time to eat but maintaining vigilance by continuing to look back in the bush. It was obvious that a big bear was around and on the second night he had seen a huge bear about 80 yards out on the trail that we take to come into the bait. The bear was totally unaware that Dan was in the stand but just meandered off into the bush and did not show himself again even though there was still considerable shooting light left.

This bear had been huge and even though Dan wanted to take a bear with his muzzle loader he opted to borrow his friend Skip Lee’s rifle just in case the bear hung up again at a long distance. As the hours went by on Dan’s 3rd night he gave particular attention to the trail to where he had seen the bear the previous night. As he was doing so movement to his right just a few feet from the bottom of his ladder caught his attention.

The big bear from the night before had quietly crept in on him and with the bear materializing so suddenly only a few feet away Dan’s adrenaline kicked into high gear. The bear had stopped for a few seconds while it looked over the bait site and
once he was satisfied with what he saw he began to move forward towards the bait. As he did so Dan raised his rifle and fired dropping the bear in his tracks only 20 feet from the base of his ladder to the stand. It wasn’t quite the long shot that Dan had anticipated.

This big black boar was huge and even though he was a few inches under the 7’ mark he had tremendous girth and would go over the 400 lb. mark. One other thing of note was the fact that we did not have a game camera on this bait as I hadn’t had a chance to get one placed there. But I didn’t need a camera to know that there was a good bear on this bait as the oat barrel, half full of oats, had been thrown over the back stop prior to Dan sitting on the site.

On another site I did have a camera on it and it showed a large bear with a white blaze on his chest, as well as several other bears frequenting the site. Quentin Smith from CO was hunting this bait and wanted this bear but on his first night on stand he did not see a bear. With his second night on stand he saw 3 bears but the white blaze was a no show.

Our camera showed that this bear was keeping a variety of odd hours coming to the bait in some cases just after I baited or in the area of 6 to 7AM. On that 3rd day we had Quentin in the stand early in the morning but the bear was a no show. So that brought us to this third evening and after he had spent several hours in his shooting blind with no bears showing he decided to try something.

He cautiously & quietly left his blind and went to the bait barrels and banged them and then made a hasty retreat back into his shooting blind. He had no sooner got back in his blind when the bears started showing up as they no doubt felt that the coast was clear as they thought another bear had been at the bait drums.

The first 2 bears appeared nervous and didn’t feed long and that is when the 3rd bear with the blaze on his chest showed up. He too was nervous and stayed behind the back stop checking the air with his nose and would not give Quentin a clear shot. You can imagine how dejected he was when after hunting this bear for 3 days the bear simply turned and walked back into the bush behind the bait.

But there had been a reason for that because the fourth bear that came to the site was a large boar that was just under the 400 lb. mark and later measured 6’10” nose to tail. This bear went to the bait drums and gave Quentin his shot and a single shot from his muzzle loader dropped the bear a few feet from the bait drums. Of note, we did not have any pictures of this bear on the site which shows that you never know what can show up at a bait site on any given night. This point was proven again the next night.
On the fourth night Steve Oellerich from WI started the night off on a good note even though he had not seen any bears previously in the week. Steve was shooting with a crossbow and on this night he had two bears come into his site. When one of these bears gave him the shot opportunity he took it and put a bolt through the bear.

The bear took off and even though the bolt had passed through the bear there was virtually no blood trail. Guides Karl Klawitter, Bob Hyshka, with assistance from some of the hunters in camp scoured the area and recovered the bear before dark giving Steve a fine trophy to take home with him.

Steve Farrell also from WI had hunted a bait site for 3 nights in which there had been a large sow with 3 yearlings. Our camera had shown several other bears frequenting the site but they never showed when Steve was on stand. We decided to move him to another bait on this fourth night where one of our cameras showed a couple of bears on the stand one of which was a descent shooter. What the camera didn’t show was the outstanding bear that showed up on the bait this night.

Steve was hunting from a ground blind and was accompanied by his brother Mike who was not hunting but had come up with his brother to do some fishing and share in Steve’s bear hunt. They had been in the blind for a few hours when they saw movement behind the bait. At first they thought it might be a wolf as the animal was a lighter color but as it came closer they could see it was a large cinnamon bear which on one occasion stood up and marked a tree with his claws as large bears will sometime do to mark their territory.

When the bear approached the bait barrels Steve didn’t need to take a second look to know that this bear was a shooter and a shot from his rifle put this bear down right away.

This cinnamon was 6’7” nose to tail with great mass and a weight that would have pushed the 400 lb. mark. We had no pictures of this bear and no idea he was in the area and to make things more interesting this bear had been in a tremendous battle with another bear.

The front teeth on his bottom jaw were almost all pulled out. The joint on his back leg was nearly bitten clean through and he had a bad front shoulder injury. He had bite marks and puncture wounds all over his body with some on his back large enough to put your finger in. As it’s not known whether he was the winner or loser it was certainly another big bear that had inflicted these injuries on a bear this size.

While Mike had the opportunity to share in his brother’s experience of taking a great trophy bear he himself had a great experience the next day in taking a trophy
of a different kind. The next day he was fishing with guide Bob Hyshka when he latched onto a huge northern pike. They had battled it for some time but were able to eventually land this great fish. This pike measure in at 45 inches in length and would have been well in the 22lb. plus range.

With day four gone by we had just one hunter left to make it seven for seven this week. Clint Soleta from SD was our last hunter and was accompanied by his wife Angela. They were having some good fishing together and on the second day of fishing Clint had caught a 41 ½ northern.

The bear bunting on the other hand had been going slowly. Angela sat with Clint in his ground blind but in four nights they had not seen a bear. On the 5th night that all changed as they saw 5 different bear but unfortunately the bear came out on top on that evening leaving the 6th and final night to get things done.

On his last night he did get it done as 2 bear came into the bait site and with the shot from his rifle the bear went about 40 yards behind the bait barrels and expired. The bear was a 6’7” black boar between 350 and 375 lbs. A great bear to end the week that saw us go seven for seven.

Our 3rd week started off with the weather cooling down considerably and as in the previous week we started slowly. If you have read previous newsletters you have undoubtedly heard me mention Wayne Hart from WI who has hunted with us for more than 10 years. Wayne has always used a compound bow on his hunts with us but on this trip he was going to attempt to take a bear with a recurve bow that he himself had made.

Dan Rezan had accompanied Wayne on this trip and was just fishing. Dan was quick to find his own trophy as he was able to haul in a 41” northern and as well both he and Wayne had been able to catch some nice lake trout.

With the fishing starting off good Wayne was hoping the bear hunting would be just as good. On his first night on stand he had a sow come in with a spring cub at her side. As a result we moved him to another stand on his 2nd night and after several hours on stand a nice 6’ black dry sow came into the bait. After watching it feed for some time it was evident there were no cubs and Wayne launched an arrow into the bear from his recurve. The hit had been a little high and a 2nd arrow was needed to finish the job but the bear expired only a few feet from the bait drums.

The next hunter to score was Tom Swegle from IA. He had sat the first night and had not seen a bear. He claimed that in order to change his luck he had bought a Grey Owl jacket from Linda. (I think the cool weather had more to do with the purchase of the jacket) At any rate, on that 2nd night he had not been on stand all that long
when a nice black bear made its way into feed.

Tom said the bear had looked back in the bush several times which probably meant there was another bear in the area but Tom had this hunt booked for a long time and he had anticipated this moment for a long time and had a prime spring bear in front of him. A well placed shot from the rifle dropped a fine trophy for Tom to take back to Iowa.

Pat Linman from IA had two uneventful nights on stand but his 3rd night was going to be quite different. He hadn’t been on stand all that long when he had seen a black form making its way to the bait site. Pat waited patiently as the bear cautiously made its way into feed. Pat’s first shot knocked the bear down and two more quick follow up shots from the rifle kept him down with the bear measuring 6’3” nose to tail.

Pat Mescher from IA was having lots of entertainment on his bait site. Our cameras had shown several different bears on this site which included a shooter or two. However besides these bears a sow with 3 yearlings had taken up residency on this site. While Pat waited patiently for the bear he wanted to show up these 4 bear were the regulars and as the evening hunts went by they became very familiar with Pat…….. Maybe a little too familiar.

After another no show for the shooter that Pat wanted it came time for him to get down out of his stand. Normally the bears had left by this time or at least when he started to get ready to leave the bears would take off. Not tonight. The 3 yearlings continued to feed paying little attention to Pat but mom wasn’t too happy with the movement up in the tree. To make things worse this sow was huge and very intimidating and had not the yearlings been with her this big bear would have been shot by any hunter.

Pat got on his portable radio to his guide Karl Klawitter telling him of his predicament. They decided to wait the bears out but after a ½ hour so, and as it got quite dark, Karl decided to take the quad in and get the hunter. Karl had the lights on when he went in to get him and backed right up to Pat’s ladder so he could climb on the bike. The yearlings never left the bait drums and both Pat & Karl knew the big sow wasn’t far away in the darkness which added a little more excitement to the situation.

Just after mid-week the weather turned nasty with it starting to rain soaking everybody and everything down. It digressed from there with the rain turning to snow with a lot of it melting as it hit the ground but we were still left with a couple
inches of accumulation. Further down the highway towards Leaf Rapids they saw accumulations of several inches on the highway and had to get the snow plows out which was a little depressing considering it was the first week of June.

Both the bear hunting and the fishing dropped off with the rain and snow but the fishing wasn’t all that bad as Craig Purse from IL. caught a 40 inch northern during the snowstorm. The bears were a lot less predictable on the baits and the weather no doubt had an effect on the hunt because when the weather cleared for our 4th week the hunting was great.

With our 4th week we had 6 hunters in camp with one individual a bow hunter and the remaining five rifle hunters coming together as a group from TN. & Ohio. With the weather clearing the 5 rifle hunters were tagged out in just 2 days.

The first night of the hunt was a colorful one with 2 color phased bears going down. Orlando Perna from OH never made it into his tree stand as his guide Bob Hyshka walked him into the bait site they spotted a bear on the bait.

The bear was totally unaware of their presence and they had time to study it. The bear was beautiful and even though Orlando hadn’t even got started with his hunt he decided to take this bear and a well-placed shot gave him a great chocolate/cinnamon color phased bear.

Jim Rollins who was also from OH didn’t take long to put down a great trophy. Our cameras had shown that several black bears were on this bait and that at least two of them were “shooter” bears. Jim had been hunting from a ground blind and had only been sitting for a short time when he could see a bear making its way to the bait. The bear was huge and to make it better it was a beautiful cinnamon color phased bear.

The bear was cautious as it approached the bait site stopping occasionally to check the wind. As it got to the bait barrels it had stopped and checked things over and either didn’t like what it saw or smelled or just wasn’t hungry. At any rate it didn’t spend much time at the barrels and when it started to leave Jim squeezed off a shot hitting the bear which took off and went only 12 yards before it piled up.

This bear was 6’9” nose to tail and was near and around the 400 lb. mark. On an interesting note it was the next bait down the road from the large cinnamon bear that was shot during the second week and by the size of these two bears it looks like they could have been brothers. As with the bear shot in the second week we had no idea that this bear was in the area as we had no pictures of the bear on the game camera but had expectations of a large “black” coming in which Jim certainly didn’t
show any disappointment in not seeing.

So the first night of this week got off to a good start with 2 bear going down and a number of other bears being sighted. The second night however even proved to be better……

On his first day in camp Paul Kenny from TN started off with a bang. He had been fishing with guide Bob Hyshka on this day and had hooked a huge northern. When Bob had tried to net the fish and get it into the boat the handle on the net broke and as well this huge fish went through the rubber bottom of the net.

Now with the fish back in the water and Paul’s line strung through a broken net they were fortunate that another one of our boats was close by and they were able to summon them for help. With the use of the broken net and the use of a good net from the other boat they were able to land this fish. This fish measured 46 1/2 inches with a tremendous girth of 22 inches and was estimated to go near the 30 lb. mark.

With Paul’s first night on stand the bears were a “no show” but his second night was quite different. He had been on the stand for a number of hours and had a small bear come into the bait site. The bear fed and spent some time at the site but he was definitely not a shooter.

As Paul was just about ready to call it a night a beautiful 6’ dry black sow came in and after studying the bear for a while he put the bear down making it 2 great trophies in two days.

Both Paul and James Maline from OH had been hunting with guide Karl Klawitter and James like Paul on his first night on stand had not seen a bear but on this night his luck also changed. He hadn’t been on stand all that long when a black bear had made its way to the bait drums. James had a great deal of time to study this bear and thought to himself if this was towards the end of the week I’d shoot this bear. The longer he watched the bear he made the wise decision to shoot this bear taking a 5’10” dry sow. As I have seen many times those bears don’t always show up on the last days of the hunt.

Also on this night I had been guiding Walter Hines from TN and on his first night he had seen a total of 7 bears but did not get the chance at the bear he wanted. A good sized black “sow” that he estimated would have been well over 250 lbs. was at the bait site with 3 color phased yearlings and as well there was 2 medium sized colored bear. The old sow was running the site keeping the older bear away from the bait while the yearlings ate.
The five color phased bears ranged in color from blond to cinnamon but it was the large black bear that arrived that got Walter’s adrenaline kicked into high gear.

Walter had first seen the big bear making its way slowly through the trees from the right side of the bait and he could clearly see the bear was enormous. The bear wasn’t being all that cautious as the yearlings and sow were at the bait drums and he had been focused on them. Walter as pumped as he was positioned himself for a shot with his rifle because with a few more steps this bear would come into the little clearing and be clear of the trees and would be a mere twenty yards away. However things changed fairly quickly.

As this giant of a bear approached the sow became aware of his presence and Walter couldn’t believe what happened next. The old sow upon seeing the big boar wheeled and ran to meet him showing her teeth, growling and making a number of other sounds that sounded quite threatening. She was clearly all business and according to Walter the whole scene was quite comical as the sow was dwarfed by the bigger bear which made the sow look like a cub.

The funny aspect of the scene changed quite quickly for Walter when the sow stopped the big bear about 4 feet from where Walter could get a shot at it. The two had faced each other for a short time and I guess the big guy thought it wasn’t worth the bother to get into it with this angry female and to Walter’s horror he just turned and walked back the way he came. I think some of us can relate with that old bear as to what was going through his mind when it came to a confrontation with an angry mom. Shooting light faded shortly after that and I showed up at the bait site with the quad and ran the bears off.

Needless to say Walter didn’t need any encouragement to sit on that bait for the second night. He had been on the bait for several hours when I got the call on the radio around 10 PM that he had a bear down. When I arrived at the site he was still in the stand and said to me that he hadn’t got the big bear but he had shot another good bear.

With a short search we found the bear piled up about 40 yards from the bait and this “good” bear as Walter described turned out to be a 6’9” black boar that would be well over 400 lbs. and as I have now learned from Walter had a green skull size of 20 8/16. Walter has shot big bear before and he remains absolutely adamant that this was not the big bear that he had seen the night before at this bait site which means there is still a real “lunker” out there somewhere.

At the end of the second night the five rifle hunters that had traveled to the camp together all had their bear which left the one bow hunter for that week to score. On
his first night on stand he had a good bear visit the site but he could not get the shot he wanted with the bow but said it would have been an easy shot for a rifle.

He saw one other small bear during the rest of the week and even though our cameras showed some good bears on the baits he hunted it just never came together for him. So it goes with hunting when a hunter does everything right and hunts the best he can you still need lady luck to shine in your favor.

Also during this week we had a group of 8 fishermen join us at the lodge as they have done in the past. They are: the Solheims from Minnesota, Bob, Jerry, Jeff as well as Jeff’s boys, Logan & Zach, Bill & John Brandt also from Minnesota, as well as Don Houger from Colorado. The older members of this party have been coming up to the Lynn Lake area for many years and their main focus on these trips are northern pike. They have been fishing many lakes in the area for years and bring their own boats with us supplying the lodging and meals.

With these guys in camp it is a good measuring stick as to how good the fishing is in general in the Lynn Lake area. They did report a couple of slower days but generally the fishing was good as on at least one day they had to take a break from fishing northerns as they had caught so many that they just tired out and needed a break. They do fish for walleyes on occasion and were quite successful with Don Houger from CO catching a master angler walleye that I believe was 28 ½ inches in length.

They also took a day to go after lake trout and came back with their limits and it was reported that Bill Brandt had been the fisher that was showing the boys how to catch them. On this same day Zach Solheim took a few quick casts while the rest were getting the boats ready at the boat launch and landed himself a 43 inch northern. When you fish these northern lakes these big fish can turn up at any time and this group certainly enjoys going after them and reported that the year’s week of fishing was great.

The fifth and final week of our hunt saw good weather for the entire week and started off with a bang for a young hunter from MO. Logan Moritz who was 15 years old was sitting in a blind with his grandfather, Robert Harrison, and had been there for several hours and as the shooting light started to fade they figured they would be calling it a night with no bears showing. That changed quickly.

Thinking they were done for the night both were surprised when without warning a huge bear sauntered noiselessly into the bait site, looked things over & quietly left before Logan could ready his rifle. Needless to say he was disappointed after sitting on the bait for over 5 hours and then had been caught off guard when a big bear strolled by the blind just a few yards away.
With the bear gone and shooting time just about over they were thinking about getting ready soon to start packing up their gear when they heard some movement and in walked the same bear that had just gone through the bait site a few minutes ago. Logan still had his rifle ready from the first pass the bear had made and quickly settled the cross hairs on the bear and squeezed the trigger.

The big bear bolted and was out of sight quickly and Logan turned to his grandpa with a big grin on his face and said “I got him”. I don’t think grandpa was quite as confident as Logan but as it turned out he was right as the big bear had headed downhill and had piled up between 40 & 45 yards just off the quad trail. It was a good thing that it was close to the trail because it took 4 of us to load him and even though he went just 6’7” nose to tail he had tremendous girth and was probably our heaviest bear of the year being well over the 400 lb. mark.

Early in this week we had a bear cone up the tree wanting to join the hunter in his stand. Gerry Tellman from MO who is a seasoned bow hunter took this all in stride and waited until the bear was just a few inches from the bottom of his feet and merely “stomped” his foot down on his stand. This startled & stopped the bear from ascending any further and sent him back down the way he had come. The bear went back to feeding & Gerry’s cool headed action’s is a good example on how to handle these situations.

What should you do if he sticks his nose over the edge of the stand???? The nose is a tender spot on a bear and a rap on it with an arrow or a heal thrust to the nose will send them back down in a hurry. I have only had to do this once when I was hunting bear and only know of about 4 other occasions over the years where one of my hunters have had to do this. Normally it never comes to this but you should prepare yourself mentally for it. Yes there have been a number of times when bears have been shot when coming up a hunter’s tree but I don’t believe it is necessary to do this because they are checking the hunter out of curiosity and are not planning on making a meal out of them.

There is however an exception to what I have said and that is when you have cubs climb up the tree you are in or adjoining trees within mere feet or inches of your stand, and they have climbed above you. (and yes we have had situations where we have had hunters in that situation) Don’t move or be aggressive towards the cubs or the mother. Just stay put and let mom “grunt” them back down. It may take some time but she will get them back on the ground. If she doesn’t just stay put until your guide comes and gets you.

After the first night with Logan’s bear things stayed fairly quiet with bears being spotted on the baits but no kills until the 4th night when 2 bears went down. Andrew
Jacobs from IL. had been hunting with his dad Rod who had come along as a fisherman and who had accompanied him on his evening sits. They had been out for 3 nights and had not even got a glimpse of a bear but this changed on this night.

They had started out hunting the first night from the tree stand and now had opted to hunt out of a ground blind. On this night I was able to get them well back from the bait drums placing the blind at least 70 yards away. Several hours had gone by and it appeared that it was going to be another quiet night when 2 bears showed up at the bait. The larger of the 2 bear did not give them a shot and after making sure there were no cubs around Andrew made a clean shot taking his first bear which was an absolutely beautiful 5’10” black boar which had been the smaller of the 2 bears.

Kelly Vanderlicht from MO had hunted for 3 nights and had only seen one bear. On the 3rd night we had put him on a bait where our camera showed several bears hitting the site with an extremely handsome brown bear in the group. Kelly’s first sit on that bait proved unproductive as no bears showed, however on his second night on stand he had 4 bears at the site.

The chocolate brown was one of the four that showed but it obviously wasn’t the dominant bear on the site. When the other bears approached this big black would put the run on the other bears. Kelly was using archery equipment and even though he would have liked to have taken the chocolate it appeared that he wasn’t going to get an opportunity at him. So as time wore on and the dominant black bear gave him ample shot opportunity he took his shot and harvested a nice 6’2” dry sow. A bear in hand is better than one left in the bush as they say and I don’t believe Kelly had any regrets in shooting this bear.

Our last week did see a hunter that did not see a bear all though our cameras showed several bear on the sites he had hunted. This hunter did have to cut his hunt a little short because of travel arrangements but during his stay in camp he did hunt hard and definitely deserved an opportunity. Hunting over baits is exactly “hunting” ……..there is no guarantees even with all of today’s technology and the best efforts of hunters.

Overall this had been a real good year for us with 22 out of 26 hunters shooting bear with 2 of these bears not being recovered. Two hunters had shooting opportunity but did not shoot a bear. One hunter as I had mentioned did not see a bear and a second hunter had seen a bear while on stand but did not have any good shooting opportunity. Twenty percent of the bear taken were color phase bear.

As well the quality of the bear taken was excellent with good fur quality right
through the entire season and the overall size of the bears was exceptional. Refer to our pictorial page on our website to see what I mean. Also encouraging was the fact at the end of the season we know we still had some good bear out there as well as a good number of bear that survived the season.

Now I know in this issue of the newsletter I went on considerably about the big bears that were taken and we did have a great year on big bears. I don’t want to mislead anyone by giving the impression that we have big bears behind every tree because we don’t. We have good bears with our average spring bears ranging from 5’9” to 6’ which puts them in the neighborhood of 220 lbs. to 245 lbs. and the bigger bears ranging from 6’ to 7’ and larger.

So yes one of those “big” bear is a great trophy but just as much so if not more so is a hunter’s first bear regardless of size or a bear taken in company of a close friend or family member, or a bear taken with a bow you have made yourself. Numbers in my opinion do not mean all that much and it is the quality of the trip, the effort made, the friends made and the lasting memories of the hunt that makes a trophy out of the animal that you do or do not harvest. All we can promise at Grey Owl is to do our best to ensure that you do have those great memories after your visit with us.

**Moose Hunting With Lea Meadow Outfitters**

The guides and I flew into the Churchill River on September 16th and found that we had average water levels on the river. The camps and equipment were all in good shape and the weather was descent when we arrived. When we off loaded at Broken Horn there was a fresh set of bull and cow tracks on the shore when we pulled up with the plane. At main camp on Billard when we landed we even had someone waiting there to greet us.

As we taxied up to the beach at main camp a huge bull with a rack pushing the 50 inch mark stood up from his bed a mere 40 yards from where the meat pole is situated. Even though it would have been a short distance where we would have hoped to have his carcass hanging I don’t believe this bull was taken during this season judging by the size of the bull and his distinct looking horns.

The bull wandered off when we beached the plane and began the “offloading”. I was thinking to myself that it was really a good sign with a bull of that quality hanging around main camp but I was wondering how long it would take before somebody started playing with him especially with four moose guides in camp.

The plane hadn’t been gone for more than 10 minutes when I heard a cow call
coming off the point just past the meat pole. I wandered over to the point and there was Jimmy with a big grin on his face as he said “I think I got him coming back”...... Sure enough, there was the big bull making his way back to camp through the willows.

Well the game was on with various calls, raking, and even a display of a moose rack to try to coax the old boy in as close as we could. But even though we had his interest he would only come back to within two to three hundred yards of camp which allowed us to get some good video. Finally he had enough of our shenanigans and wandered off behind main camp.

Two days later prior to the hunters coming into camp we were entertained one morning with two young bulls harassing a cow and calf just west of main camp on the main land. These two young bulls were strutting their stuff and approaching the cow which would cause her to bolt with the two young studs in pursuit as she ran into the bush. Things were looking good for the start of the week for our first hunters.

With our first hunt this year we had a first for our moose operation in that we had two ladies in camp. Both were accompanying their husbands but each of them was hunting with one only having a bear tag while her husband had a moose tag. With the second couple both had moose and bear tags with the husband using the rifle and the wife using archery equipment.

Fred and Melanie Johnson from SD were hunting with guide Jim Dickieson with Fred having the moose license and Melanie the bear license. On their first day out the only sighting they had was that of a cow but on their second day out they saw a little more action.

I had to go down river that morning and at that time I had gone by a white wolf that was meandering down the shoreline. On my return trip back towards main camp the wolf was still travelling the shoreline and with both passes by him he had just stood there and watched me drive by with the boat. It was getting close to noon and Jim, Melanie, & Fred had returned to their camp for lunch. I told them about the wolf and even though a considerable amount of time had gone by we thought it might be worth the time to go looking for him.

Surprisingly the wolf was still walking the shoreline and Melanie and I tried to work our way in close enough for a shot at him. Unfortunately, we weren’t able to get close enough for the ideal opportunity and let’s say the wolf was fortunate to get away. Later that afternoon Melanie & I had been using the varmint call & had a red fox come in hard stopping a few yards from us.
It certainly got the adrenaline going as we thought we had a wolf coming in. It is illegal to shoot a red fox in our area as it is a fur bearing animal and we are in a registered trap line area.

While we were trying to call in wolves Fred & Jim were having their own excitement. Jim had been calling for a time when he called a small bull that came in like he was on a string. This bull was obviously love struck as he did not want to leave. He hung around for the longest time and offered several easy bow shots but eventually tired of the game and left.

They saw a few more animals in the following days but it was not until the 5th day of their hunt that their luck changed. They had just left the “up river” camp when they spotted a bull along the shore. Jim was able to maneuver the boat close enough to get a shot and after he cut the motor Fred took his shot and the bull went out of sight and was thought to be down.

The bull had been hit but was not finished by any means. He hit the water and was attempting to swim to the far shore and eventually ended up on a shallow rock reef in the river. Fred never let him get off that reef and dropped him in the shallow water taking a 40 inch plus bull. We were able to get the boat right up to him and although the water made for some interesting butchering the pack job was just a matter of a few feet.

Meanwhile Shauna & Richard Woodward also from SD were hunting out of the “Broken Horn” camp with guide Scott Smith. With every day of their hunt they had seen moose and during the early days of their hunt they had tried to get Shauna into bow range of a bull. On one occasion they were able to get within 25 yards of a bull but all they were able to see of the bull was the head and horns and he never presented any type of bow shot.

It was not until the sixth day of their hunt that a bull went down. It had turned out to be a foggy morning and Scott decided to float the river and let the current take them down river while he occasionally called. They hadn’t gone all that far when they received a bull response from the shore about 300 yards ahead of them.

Scott was able to paddle and maneuver the boat in close to shore and at 70 yards the bull presented a shot. Richard made no mistake and dropped the 42 inch bull where he stood making for an easy pack job. With 2 more days left they still had time to fill Shauna’s tag.

During both days they had seen both moose and a bear, none of which were in range. Their last day was capped off with the sighting of a large bull that was just under 50 inches but Shauna stayed with her conviction of harvesting a bull with her
bow. All though she never had the opportunity for a bow shot she certainly exemplified a true sportsperson for staying with her conviction and the great attitude that she had shown. At the end of the hunt she had told me it was one of the best hunts that she had ever been on which truly shows that you don’t have to kill an animal in order to have a great hunt.

At the down river camp the first week Bryan & Bob were guiding a father and son, Joe and Andrew Exstein from NE. Bryan was guiding Joe who was the father while Bob Guided Andrew.

With the first few days of the hunt Joe & Bryan saw several small bulls that they passed on. On about day 3 or 4 they were just pulling into a calling spot with the boat when a good bull broke out of the water beside them and ran right past where Bryan had his sticks set up for his decoy. Once just inside the tree line they could see the outline of the bull as he watched them get out of the boat and set up.

Bryan & Joe gave the bull a considerable amount of time before they started calling to see if they could bring him back. Once they did call they got an immediate response from the bull and for the next hour and a half the bull continued to grunt and rake trees. All the coaxing Bryan could come up with would not get this trophy bull to leave the cover of the tree line and no doubt because he had spotted them pulling on shore that this had a lot to do with it.

With Joe it came down to the second last day of his hunt as to when he scored on a bull. They had been calling for about an hour and a half when a young bull, which had made his way quietly into the call, suddenly appeared at 40 yards. Joe didn’t hesitate and took the shot and the bull went a mere 4 or 5 yards before he fell over dead.

While they were watching this bull to make sure it was down another young bull showed up and despite the dead moose lying on the ground he went directly to Bryan’s decoy and checked it out and then walked within 5 yards of where Joe & Bryan had their blind set up. Bryan was able to get some good video of their interaction with these two moose.

With Andrew & Bob they started their week off with seeing some cows and calves but on their 3rd day they spotted a big bull in the 50’s walking through the burnt timber just off the river shoreline. They spent the next 2 ½ hours trying to intercept or call this bull in but he would not have anything to do with them and he seemed to be always able to keep just one step ahead of them when they stalked in to try and intercept him. After their last attempt they could hear the bull making his way from the river as he continued grunting as he made his way through the timber.
On Andrew’s fifth day his luck changed as he and Bob were on one of the islands just south of their camp. They had spotted a bull with a cow and calf on the shoreline on the main land and had decided to put a stalk on them as they could make their way down the island they were on to get closer to them.

As they narrowed the gap down to where they thought they could get a shot at the bull they began discussing whether this bull was big enough to take. Bob was thinking they could do better but Andrew wanted to take him as this would be his first moose.

The discussion ended abruptly when they looked back down the shoreline on the main land and there walked a large bull making his way toward the other 3 moose.

Bob and Andrew quickly got into position to take a shot at this bull but the distance they would be shooting at was considerable. Andrew dropped down and used his pack for a rest and he was clearly confident that he could make the shot. He waited until Bob got his video camera zoomed in on the bull and once he got the high sign from Bob he fired and clearly connected with the bull.

With the hit the bull started to run from shore out into the water but a second shot dropped him in the water just a few feet from shore. With the help of Joe and Bryan they were able to drag the bull back up to dry ground where they could butcher it. The bull was a beautiful specimen with wide palms and a spread that went over 48 inches.

For the remainder of the trip Bob and Andrew tried to kill a white wolf that was frequenting the kill site. They had 3 encounters with this wolf that had luck on his side as he either spotted them coming to check on the site or was behind cover and would not present them with a good shot.

At the end of our first session of hunting 4 out of the 5 moose hunters had killed bulls with no bears or wolves taken. Half way through the first week I had a hunter come into main camp who I was going to be guiding.

Chuck Flaming from NE had hunted with me several years prior and at that time he had a successful hunt. I had been guiding him at that time and fairly early in his hunt we took a great bull that was right at the 50 inch mark. I had been calling and this bull had come in on a gallop and came in so hard that he ran right by us. Chuck had to be quick and made a terrific shot on the running bull and dropped him mere feet from our boat. It had been a great hunt but this one was going to be a little different.

As I had previously mentioned prior to the hunters arriving we had seen 3 bulls
around main. When Chuck and I began our hunt there was definite sign of moose in the area. We hunted hard putting in long calling sessions at various locations but at the end of the trip we had seen only the one cow. The obvious question is how this could happen if there were so many bulls around.

There can be a variety of reasons for this and one is windy conditions in which the call simply does not carry far enough to the bulls. (we did have several windy days during Chuck’s hunt) Even in ideal calling conditions you don’t call moose in. A bull or bulls could be a mile or so away with a hot cow(s) and will not leave that area with the potential for breeding activity.

Some bulls take their sweet time in coming to a call and may not show up for hours. Many times we have called in the evening and returned to the calling spot in the morning to find signs of a bull being at the calling site. Another important point is that the majority of the bulls come to a call quietly and either suddenly appear, or in many cases you may not even be aware that they were in the area especially if they wind you or something raises their suspicion. (Chuck and I had a bull come in downwind of us and all we had heard were a couple of subtle grunts and that was it)

Through all of Chuck’s hunt and the “no shows” by the bulls he maintained a positive attitude and was a real pleasure to hunt with. He maintains that he is coming back on a 3rd trip as the game is now tied at one and one for Chuck and the bulls. Chuck is an experienced hunter that knows the area we hunt is a good one and was supported by the fact that 2 days after he had left I went to the west channel of the island at main camp where we had spent so many hours calling and there were 2 bulls and two cows feeding. Also later in our second hunt session 2 bulls were killed in the vary area that Chuck had been hunting and I will get into those stories now.

Our hunters for the second session were delayed by one day due to inclement weather and did not get into camp until the second day in less than ideal weather conditions. With this week two of the hunters were immediately into bull action while the other 2 hunters were off to a slower start. John Katrana was hunting with guide Jim Dickieson out of the down river camp and their start was slow as for the first couple of days they did not have a moose sighting.

On the 3rd day they had just left camp on a foggy morning and were not that far above the rapids when Jim edged the boat towards the north shore to keep his bearings in the fog. As they came into sight of shore they saw a bull, cow, and a calf. Jim says this was a tremendous bull that was well up in the mid 50’s with wide palms, great fronts, & points everywhere. Jim estimates that this is the biggest bull
that he has ever seen while he has been guiding for me on the Churchill river.

Because of the fog they had been unaware of the moose on the shoreline and now with the boat in close proximity the moose made a hasty retreat up into the burnt timber. Jim and John tried to lure this bull back in but to no avail and this was the last they had seen of him. This bull was not harvested this year.

A couple of days later Jim and John had decided to make a hunt below the rapids from there camp. This was in the area where Chuck and I had been previously hunting but Chuck had left two days earlier and this area was now open to Jim and John as no one would be hunting it for the rest of the season.

They were heading to a calling spot when they spotted a bull, cow and calf standing on the shore. It was evident that the moose had seen them as well as they were already making their way up into the burn. Jim put the boat hard into shore but there was no opportunity for a shot. The moose had gone up a steep slope to a flat ridge of an old burn that was a tangled mess of fallen trees with a soft boggy base that made for some real crappy walking conditions.

Jim & John discussed the situation and they decided to walk up into the ridge to see if they could spot the moose or call the bull to them. Fortunately the conditions were windy which covered the noise of their advance up onto the ridge. Once on top they scanned the ridge and spotted the bull but it was obvious that he was aware of their presence. There was no time to set up the shooting sticks and John who is a seasoned hunter took an off handed shot at the bull. It appeared that John’s first shot had hit the bull by its reactions but two quick follow up shots failed to put the bull down as he quickly was out of sight in the tangled mess of trees.

Jim was familiar with the area the bull was in and mentally noted where they had last seen the bull. He and John went back to the boat and put in at a different location in an attempt to intercept the bull if he was still on his feet.

They made it back into very close proximity where they had last seen the bull but they could not find any sign of him. They decided to abandon the search for the bull as it was getting late in the day. Jim was confident the bull was hit and John had also been confident on a hit but with not finding the bull he had to contend with the possibility of a miss or marginal hit and that can make for a long night.

Jim had gotten in touch with us by radio that night and it was decided that Bryan and I would go down to give him a hand. Bryan’s hunter had already tagged out and I will get into that story shortly. With Jim and John we headed back into the area where the bull was last seen. With the extra help the bull was located within 15
minutes in amongst the deadfall and John had a fine trophy measuring 47 inches.

From where the moose had fallen we were just 300 yards from a little bay we call “Wizard Bay” which was a spot where just a few days earlier Chuck Flaming and I had spent many hours calling. This bull had to be packed out to the mouth of the bay and the going wasn’t easy. Bryan and I gave John and Jim a hard time telling them there appeared to be man tracks up to the carcass from the night before. They both just grinned but I think there had been a genuine look of relief on John’s face when we found the bull.

Bryan had been guiding Jim Washebek from WI out of the down river camp while Bob guided his partner Greg Rakowski also from WI. Jim got off to a great start with his first full day of hunting in that he saw a cow and a calf and 5 bulls that day with 4 of which Jim did not want to shoot. Three of the bulls had been seen along the river and a 4th was called in but was passed on because he was too small.

During that morning’s calling session Bryan had heard a bull answer at least a mile and a half away and being familiar with the area the bull was calling from he knew that he wasn’t that far from a blind he had used the previous week before and where he had poles set up for his decoy. They decided to go down to this blind and set up for another calling session. As they approached the calling spot they saw a large grey wolf on shore that slipped into the willows before they could get a shot.

Bryan pulled the boat up on shore and he and Jim walked into where his blind should have been. The blind had some poles stuck in the ground with some material attached to it in a circle and had been positioned next to a small clump of willows to add to the cover. Apparently some agitated bull had taken exception with this blind.

There were moose tracks everywhere and the blind had literally been “stomped” into the dirt as nothing was left standing except a broken pole that was sticking part way out of the mud. Everything was flat and even the little willow bush that the blind had been beside had been destroyed as all that was left of it were a couple of bark stripped branches as the bull had destroyed the bush by raking it with his horns. I don’t know what prompted the bull to do this but perhaps Bryan and his hunter had shot his younger brother the previous week.

Bryan had Jim look for some poles that they could use to build a new blind and he headed back to the boat to get some more equipment. He took a look down the shoreline and there was a big bull at the water’s edged. Bryan hunkered down and
whistled to get Jim’s attention to let him know that they had a bull close by.

Once he had Jim’s attention Bryan gave the bull a few calls and he immediately started down the shoreline towards them. At one point the bull wandered into the water seemingly undecided as to what he was going to do. With a few more calls Bryan coaxed him back on shore and the bull continued to close the gap between him and the hunter.

Jim’s first shot connected with the bull and after being hit he started to make his way into the water. Two more follow up shots put the bull down in about a foot of water. This was about 4PM so they sought out the help of Bob and Jim’s partner, Greg Rakowski, to butcher the bull. They were back to camp at dark and Jim had in his possession a great trophy with horns that went just over 54 inches.

Bryan & Jim went back to the kill sight the next morning and found it to be pretty well cleaned up by wolves. They checked this area periodically over the next few days for the wolves but never connected with them. Bryan & Jim continued to scout the river for Greg & Bob in the remaining days and saw another 5 bulls as well as cows and calves. Two of the bulls were real good shooters and they passed the sighting information onto Greg and Bob but they were having difficulty in connecting with these bulls. I will leave the story of Greg’s hunt to the end as it has such a classic ending to it.

Wayne Hart from WI whose name you probably recognize from the spring bear hunt was hunting with archery equipment out of the Broken Horn camp with Scott Smith.

The Broken Horn camp had more moose sightings this year in comparison to the rest of my camps; however, this does change from year to year in the area we hunt. According to my notes they had seen at least one bull everyday of their hunt with the most sightings coming on the 2nd day of Wayne’s hunt when they had seen a total of 4 bulls on that day. The trick was to get in close enough to one to get an arrow into it.

Several stalking attempts were unsuccessful but one of the best opportunities to score on a bull came when Scott had called one in. Wayne was set up well in front of Scott in the direction that they had anticipated the bull to come from. Scott had been calling for a while when he got a response from the bull.

Wayne was using a clump of willows as cover and could easily shoot if the bull stayed close to the water but would have to wait for the bull to walk past the willows should he stay up higher on shore. As the bull broke cover they could see that this was a good bull in the mid 40’s with wide palms. As the bull made his way into the call it became obvious that the bull was going to take the high road. When
the bull had gotten to Wayne’s willow clump he stopped on the other side of it just a mere 5 to 6 yards away from Wayne.

As we all know moose are huge and to have one that close with just a bow in your hands can really get the adrenaline kicked into high gear. As for Wayne all the bull had to do was to take one more step and he would have cleared the bush and given him a chance for a shot. The bull surveyed the situation for several seconds but there was something that he didn’t like as he slowly turned and walked away giving Wayne nothing more than the ass end to shoot at. That was the last that they saw of this bull and so it goes at times when using a bow.

It took until the last ½ day of Wayne’s hunt for his luck to change even with the large number of bulls they were seeing. On this morning they had decided to drift down river in the boat letting the current carry them. Scott had been calling periodically but was not getting any responses when at about 300 yards ahead of them they saw a cow standing on a point of land that jutted out into the river. They didn’t know for sure if a bull was close by but had decided to put the boat into shore and make a stalk further inland until they were opposite of the cow.

They had stalked down to a position that brought them to the point the cow was on and if there was a bull with the cow they would have to walk within close proximity of their position if the moose headed back onto the mainland. They could not see the cow now but they stopped and waited and in a short period of time they could hear a bull raking some willows. They had decided to move in closer and got to within 40 yards of the cow and the bull that now had joined her. A thin strip of willows separated them from the moose and they had to wait until the moose made their way back onto the mainland, and cleared the willows before Wayne could get a shot.

Fortunately they didn’t have to wait all that long until they did the very thing they had been hoping for. As the moose made their way back to the heavier cover the bull was taking a path that would bring him within 20 yards of Wayne’s position. All of a sudden the bull stopped in his tracks and needed to take 2 more steps before Wayne could get his shot away.

To Wayne this was “de-ja vu” to the circumstances of what had happened a few days earlier and all he could do was wait for the bull to make his move. Scott who had stayed back a few yards behind Wayne was videotaping and couldn’t understand why Wayne wasn’t shooting because at the angle he was viewing the
whole scene at it looked like Wayne had a clear shot.

Finally the bull did move but now he took a quartering away path from Wayne’s location. As the bull walked away Wayne had to take several steps to his side before he could clear the bushes and get a shot. With the bull now at about 35 yards Wayne released the arrow making a perfect quartering away shot just behind the shoulder. When he was hit the bull turned and ran towards the river and expired just a few feet from the water’s edge.

With only a couple of hours left in the hunt and harvesting a 41 inch bull with a bow, this makes for a great story. But the best last minute story of this year’s hunt involves Greg Rakowski from WI. Wayne had not been the only hunter that was out hunting that last ½ day. Greg and his guide Bob were out as well as it had been a fairly slow week with them seeing cows and calves early in the week and a real good shooter bull in the last half of the week that they couldn’t get close enough to.

They had the entire river to hunt as everyone else was done down at our end and Greg’s partner, Jim, along with Bryan, were scouting for them, & had seen a good number of bulls. Bob & Greg would move into the areas where the others had sighted bulls but could never connect with them.

So it goes with hunting with some of the best efforts made failing to produce the desired result. As noon rolled around on that Saturday it was the end of Greg’s hunt and they had to tear down camp at the “down river” location and move to main camp as they were scheduled to fly out the next morning.

I knew of course that Greg was disappointed but you would never have known it from the positive attitude he displayed when he arrived at main camp later that day and despite not being successful he said that he had enjoyed himself.

The next day when we were supposed to fly out we were greeted with overcast skies and periods of snow. Flying out that day was not looking good and at 11:20 AM my air service confirmed that there would not be any flights coming in that day. So we had time to kill in camp as the snow came down and I thought to myself why shouldn’t I let Greg go for a hunt by walking around the island that main camp was on. I had seen bulls in the channel a few days earlier and there was a good chance he might run into one.

Normally we don’t do this and have strict deadlines for the hunts to end as with any late bulls they would have to be butchered, packed out, meat hung, camps torn down, boats and motors serviced and put away before planes arrived. But with the
majority of this looked after I thought Greg could squeeze one short hunt in.

I got the answer you would expect when I asked Greg if he would like to go for a walk around the island to see if he could find a moose. Even though we had everyone back at main camp I had to limit him to ending the hunt no later than 3 PM to make sure we could get a bull back to the meat pole to be ready for a flight out the next day. With just a short time frame for their hunt off the boys went.

Visibility wasn’t good with the snow but they slowly made their way around the island and got to the point where they could see the channel opening up onto the main part of the river just west of main camp. With heavy snow coming down they spotted 3 snow covered “bumps” on the west side of the channel on the main land. After glassing things for a period of time they discovered the “bumps” were a bull, cow, & a calf which were bedded on the open rocky point and who had decided this was a good spot to enjoy the snow and watch the river.

The boys quickly made their way up into the timber on the island and proceeded forward as they wanted to get to a spot directly across the channel from the moose. Once they did however they found the distance between them and the moose was considerable. Greg was comfortable making long shots but for this distance he needed help from his partner Jim, who with the binoculars acted as his spotter.

When the shooting started I was in main camp and I looked at my watch and it was 2:40 PM. Greg had taken it to the limit with just 20 minutes left and after hearing several shots I was hopeful that things had turned out for him. Several of us got our gear on and made our way to where we had heard the last shot.

In a short distance Greg’s party emerged out of the snow storm and by the high fives and cheering it was obvious that he had gotten the job done. It had taken several shots but once he found the distance he had dropped the bull just a short distance from where he was bedded.

We got 2 boats down to the bull and with all the help we had the butchered bull loaded in the boat in less than an hour. Greg’s “snowstorm bull” that measured 43” was a great way to conclude our 2014 hunt.

In the end 8 out of 10 moose hunters took bulls home with them with the largest having a 54” spread. Some moose were sighted more than once but in the first season our hunters had 55 sightings of moose, 23 of which were bulls. In the 2nd week we had 66 sightings of moose with 26 of those sightings being bulls. We had numerous wolf sightings and one or 2 bear sightings but no wolves or bears were
taken this year.

The bull to cow/calf ration remains quite high and it is estimated that 85% of the bulls that were sighted were actually different bulls. This was determined by the size of the animal and the size and configuration of the horns. There was also a good mix of young and older bulls that were not harvested. Our area looks in great shape for the future for game population numbers.

**Waterfowl & Deer Hunting**

For the past couple of years we have not taken out waterfowl hunters or deer hunters with the deer situation in Manitoba. But for those of you that have been up with us here before this a brief update on how the hunting was here this year.

There were lots of Canada geese right through the entire season and the hunting for these birds was quite good with little hunting pressure from locals and what appears to be a slight decrease in nonresident hunters. Snow geese were not plentiful with only a few flocks going through our immediate area.

Duck hunting was concentrated to certain fields but once you found out where the birds were going into the hunting was absolutely terrific. I was able to verify that myself as my brother had a hot cornfield that had a lot of mallards and some pintails coming into it. The birds were in there by the hundreds and it took little time to limit out.

The harsh winters of the last few years have taken its toll on whitetails as it has across all the western prairie provinces of Canada. The area we hunt had faired pretty well in prior winters but last year’s winter was tough and it showed in our area as well.

I spent quite a number of days in the bush hunting for whitetails and had several chances to take some good young bucks but let them walk. In talking with other hunters in our area they report the same observations. On the positive side the buck to doe ratio was quite high and if we can get some less harsh winters we should be in good shape in the next year or two.

Well I guess that about wraps it up. If I have made some mistakes in the re telling of some of the stories in this newsletter it was not intentional as my memory at this stage of the game doesn’t seem to be what it used to be. I do rely on notes I make over the course of the season and try to make the stories as accurate as I possibly can.

We will be attending only one sports show this year and that will be the Deer &
Turkey Classic in Madison WI in April 2015. The only availability that we have for 2015 is for early summer fishing as all of our hunts are booked up for 2015. If you are thinking on joining us for a hunt in 2016 you should get in touch with us as soon as you can as we have a number of bookings in already for 2016.

A “big thanks” goes to my guides for their effort and dedication they made over the past season and a big thank you to all of guests that joined us for their hunting and/or fishing trips this past year. On behalf of Linda and myself we wish everyone all the best and hopefully we will get to see you in the near future for your next hunting or fishing adventure.

Lyle MacMillan