

## My Fall Hunts 2005

By Duane Johnson

My fall hunting began with the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Antelope hunt in Gillette, Wyoming. I left Prairie Farm, WI for Gillette Wyoming. I like to get into camp early to relax for a few days before the hunt and see the scenery.

I was scheduled to leave from Gillette and go directly to Manitoba, Canada for a black bear hunt on September 25<sup>th</sup>. After a very successful hunt in Wyoming and the greatest camaraderie with fellow disabled hunters I was on my way to Aggassiz Outfitters in Manitoba.

I arrived at the lodge the day before my hunt was to begin. I met Rick and Colleen, two of the nicest people I've ever met.

After a good nights sleep, I had breakfast at the main lodge, prepared by Colleen and headed out to sight in my crossbow, before I left for my blind at 1 PM for the evenings hunt. My guide, Greg, took me to the baited blind on 4-wheeler. The area showed signs of a plenty of bear activity. We sat waiting for what I had hoped would be a big bruin.

I didn't see the big bruin I was hoping for but was greeted by a small cub. It was the cutest thing. The little guy was digging at barrel, as I filmed him as Greg and I watched ad laughed.

All of a sudden the little guy decided to check us out came within 4 yards of us, before scampering off. I mentioned to Greg I wondered where his Mama was and Greg said she might have been shot by a landowner. He went on to explain that in Canada it's legal for residents to kill bear that are causing damage to property.

As darkness fell nothing more came into the bait barrel. We called it a night with the rewarding experience of watching the little guy entertaining us and the joy of being out

Experiencing life's pleasures.

By the third day of my hunt, another guide, Rob, took me to a different location. This too, seemed like a bear's paradise, a tamarack swamp with lots of pines.

By 3 PM we were all set and ready for the bear to begin arriving. At 5:30 PM we had a bear coming in. A BIG BEAR!!! As his head and body appeared from the brush I got excited to say the least. In front of me was a bear, 400 to 500 pounds. He was skittish and I was worried he was going to spook at anytime. When the bear came in, he was facing me head on, giving me no shot with the crossbow that I had ready. To make matters more exciting he stopped 15 yards and began to stare at our blind set up, just as Rob had taken a small branch to pull the burlap down to see the bear. The bear decided that he didn't like this setup and was turning to make a hasty retreat the way he came. I hurried and took aim as he was passing broadside. As I squeezed the trigger of the crossbow, I saw the crossbolt take a hard right, hitting a small branch or the burlap

of the blind. I missed this opportunity of a lifetime. For just a split moment I wished I had my 7MM and I would have owned a record class bear. But I am dedicated to bowhunting. Rob even offered me his 308, our back up gun. I declined and reloaded my crossbow.

About a half hour later we had 3 more bears approaching bait. These bears are so suspicious to their surroundings. One of these bears would come into view and then scamper off into the brush. They were all very skittish. After messing around for at least a half hour one bear decided come into clearing, presenting me with a shot opportunity. I settled the crosshairs on her and released the bolt. I heard the THUD and turned to Rob saying I thought I'd made a good shot. We patiently waited a little while and started to search for sign. Rob had decided that we needed to wait to retrieve my bear until the next morning.

The next morning Rob and Rick went to find my bear. A few hours later they returned with my first black bear in back of the truck. She had only traveled 50 yards Rick told me leaving a lot of blood to trail.

This ended my fall hunting with many good memories that will last me a lifetime. Aggassiz Outfitters did a great job with my physical limitations. They have a 100 % success rate for black bears with 40% color phased!

My bear is at the local taxidermist being done in a half body mount with the fighting look.

