

**Once in a Life Time Minnesota
BWCA Moose Hunt October 2008
Greg LaVallee, Lloyd Keleny**

Da Plan; Leave two days early, bolt two canoes together, drop in at the end of the Gunflint Trail, motor with a 2 hp motor to American Point, stow the motor in the woods and lock it to a tree, paddle to the end of Saganaga Lake and portage into Zephyr Lake. Plan A didn't work on the bolting part so we trailered one canoe behind the other. Plan A also almost didn't work cuz there was a guy (guitar man) in our site, the only site on Zephyr. Guitar man had an electric guitar, a one-man canoe, an extremely black coffee and cooking pot and was 3 wks into his 5 wk solo tour of the BWCA. Once we explained our plan he was happy to relegate his campsite to the cause.



Da Program: Set the alarm for 4:00 am, climb out of the sac or hit the snooze alarm a few times, breakfast of a cup of coffee and oatmeal, pack lunch for the day and paddle out in the dark to the am hunting spot. The paddle out and paddle back were most peaceful as we needed to be running absolutely silent to avoid spooking any moose. Most mornings and evenings hunts were spent calling at various spots on Zephyr but some were spent quietly paddling bays 3, 2 and 1 of Sag Lake, etc. Early AM temps started in high 30s or low 40s and daytime temps we in the 50's.

Mid day hikes through the woods produced lots of sign and great potential call sites. On Monday we saw a large cow and calf in Bay 2 of Sag Lake. Tuesday brought rain. Wednesday am calling produced nothing by 9:45 so I headed for the canoe. At 10:00 Greg headed to my calling spot. A double take from Greg and he saw two big antler palms from the moose staring at him from across the swamp. The bull headed off but when Greg thrashed the bush like a bull the real bull thrashed a tree, big time, and then headed off again. Wednesday PM calling produced a bull again in the same spot but only after shooting time and on his way in, a beaver slapped the water and scared the bull off again.

Da Volunteer: Thursday was a day with extremely high winds, almost a rest, non-hunting day due to the low chance for decent hunting conditions. It was too windy to paddle so we headed out from camp to walk along the lake. After a while we split up and to keep together we cow called to keep track of each others location. I was calling and spraying moose scent down wind.

After about an hour of wading we came to a nice White Cedar opening and a good place for brunch. Sitting on a log facing back the direction of the way we came I heard a Wuha and Greg heard a snap. Greg grabbed his gun and we were both staring at a large young bull moose.

“Lloyd, he’s got antlers, should I take him?” “Do you have a clear shot?” “Yep.” Well let me plug my ear” (cuz my ear was 2 ft from the end of Greg’s barrel). Bam! The bull dropped in his tracks. Greg had a 21 yd shot and the bull never took another step, which meant no tracking and no worrying about the possibility of a lost moose.



Da “Real Work”: Everybody says that once you shoot a moose the real work begins. Due to the ideal situation we were in, we skipped that part. As my bro-in-law, Jim says: “it’s better to be luck than good”. We quartered the bull and bagged the meat in game bags. We walked back to camp got the canoe to get the moose out. Greg carried the meat the 30 yds to the lake and the waiting canoe and I took the biology samples of hair, tooth, blood, lung and liver that the DNR requested. We hung the meat at camp and celebration obviously followed. In the morning the meat was fine but we were missing one antler. Scouting the woods didn’t retrieve the missing and (my guess) the bear hauled it off and was chewing on it somewhere in the Forrest.

The following day it took two trips off of the lake and through the portage to get both canoes loaded with all of our gear and Bullwinkle. We had a fabulous and untypically calm day for traveling the big lake of Saganaga and only got a little wind and rain right near the exit. The two canoe program work well except again near the take-out spot when one canoe almost tipped.

Most of the moose is at the butchers but the tenderloins are tasting very good. Early in the hunt Greg and I both stated that even if we didn’t get moose the hunting experience was so enjoyable that it was all that we needed. We had 8 days on not seeing another human being and obviously none of the daily barrage of the outside world. But, in the end, bringing home the memories and the treasure of a Minnesota bull moose made it a fabulous trip.



Note that I would have Greg’s picture included but he is already off to the Dakota’s for Pheasant Hunting with two of his boys. I’ll update when he returns.