

LeaMeadow & Grey Owl 2011 Newsletter

Hello everybody..... this newsletter is a synopsis on how our season went for our 2 outfitting services in 2011. I hope you enjoy the information and the stories that go along with it.

Hunting and fishing with Grey Owl

Hunting-

This past spring was a fairly normal one with the ice going off the lake in front of camp around May 18th and I was able to get all of the baiting done by May 6th. Our first hunters started hunting on May 21st and by the time they had arrived we had 27 of our some 3 dozen baits being hit.

This was a high number of active baits to start off our first week with only 5 hunters in camp so things were looking real good for our start up. Still, getting the bears and the hunters at the bait sites at the same time in some cases was difficult and some hunters had long sits.

We were using our "Cuddeback" trail cameras but had some technical difficulties with them, some of which was operator error, cards that were not compatible to the cameras & 2 new cameras out of the packages that never worked from the "get go." I love technology when it works.

From past experience and from our cameras when the weather is cool the bears can be on the baits at anytime during the day with evening be the more predominant time. When the weather gets warmer the bears are less apt to make visits to the bait sites during the heat of the day.

All though some hunters had long sits that first week before they saw their first bear that was not the case with Ken Crary from WI. On his first day in camp Ken catches a 42" northern and passes on different bear on his first and second night on stand and kills a nice 6' black boar on his 3rd night.

Besides the bear I will share with you an interesting experience that Ken (& I) had on his 2nd night on stand. I had been guiding Ken and had taken my 4 wheeler in to get him at the stand. I had climbed up his ladder to help carry his equipment down and when I had asked him if he had seen anything he said he had seen one bear and a wolf that had been at the bait drums about an hour ago.

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I came off of the ladder with my arms full of Ken's equipment and when I rounded a tree there was a good size gray wolf looking at me from about 10 to 12 feet away. I dropped what I was holding and started waving my arms and hollering at this wolf. (I won't put in print what I said to him)

Wolves are very shy animals and usually avoid any or all contact with humans and like to maintain a good distance. "Sightings" of wolves on bait sites isn't all that common and when they realize that there is a human in close proximity they are usually gone.

Over the years I have had lots of encounters with bears while taking hunters into the bait sites or while baiting. Bears have circled me at close distances while I have been baiting & I have been bluff charged by them a number of times. I have ran most of them off by making lots of noise, chasing after them with large sticks or my axe and generally making myself look more aggressive than they were. This however wasn't going to be the case with this wolf.

My hollering had little to no effect on him so I started to look for some stout sticks that I could use as a club or throw at him. I would have liked to have gotten to my axe that was on my bike but the wolf was directly between myself and my bike. Now you would think that with all of that bush you could easily find a good solid piece of wood, but I think every piece of wood that I had quick access to was rotten or going rotten.

Nevertheless, I began chucking what I had at him and only when I got real close to him did he begin to back off. It quickly became very obvious that he wasn't scared of me and even though I was able to back him off a few yards he kept advancing towards me. I wanted to get to my bike to get my axe but I didn't want to give up the few yards I had gained.

I took a run at him waving my arms but he held his ground and in fact began to close in on me again. He dodged the sticks I threw at him and even smelled some of them that had missed him. He never growled or showed his teeth but he just kept coming closer until he had closed the distance between us to about 10 to 12 feet.

That is when I finally got lucky and hit him hard in the head with a well placed stick. With this he turned and ran and I chased after him until he stopped. I then made my way back quickly to my bike and picked up my axe which made me feel a whole lot better as I knew I could do him in with this if I had to.

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While all of this is going on Ken is up in the tree with his bow but I had his release on the ground with the rest of his equipment. He wanted me to throw up his release so he could shoot this wolf if he had to but we had this wolf backed off a bit now and I told him to make his way to the bike while I dealt with the wolf.

Now with the axe I became more aggressive by rushing towards the wolf. He would back off a few yards then advance but each time I rushed him we were backing him off a few more yards. When I had him about 40 to 50 yards from the bike I hollered back to Ken to get on the bike as we were leaving.

From the first time I encountered this wolf to now, about 4 or 5 minutes had past and at this point I quickly made my way back to Ken and the bike, loaded up the gear and started to head out. But just after we started to get mobile on the bike and on our way out guess who we met head to head with on the trail?

The wolf was on the trail only a few yards away and coming towards us and the trail was only wide enough for the bike. I flipped the bike lights on and the wolf bolted back up the trail. Ken and I proceeded with the bike up the trail and in a short distance passed the wolf standing in the bush at about 10 yards. Once we were by him we looked back and he was trotting behind us. It was a fair distance back to the truck and in the darkness we did not see him again.

In Manitoba you are not allowed to kill a wolf in the spring time but in the fall you can kill a wolf as long as the hunter is in possession of an unused big game license such as your bear license. Due to this wolfs unusual behavior I contacted our local conservation officers.

After hearing of his behavior they felt that the wolf may have been in the early stages of rabies. One of the officers sat at the bait site the next night with the intention of killing him but did not have him come into the bait. He did report seeing a good size blonde bear that of course he did not shoot.

Under the circumstances we were given authorization by the conservation officers that if one of our hunters encountered this wolf at the site we were to kill it and turn the carcass into conservation. We did hunt that bait several more times with no sighting of that wolf. However a truck driver who had been close to that area hauling water about a week later had encountered a wolf that was acting strangely but at the time of writing this letter I'm not sure what was the fate of that wolf.

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With the start of the second week the bears seem to settle on the baits a bit better and some real good bear had been spotted. The highlight of that week came when Buster Adkisson of MO shot a beautiful 6'3" blonde sow on just his second night on stand after passing on a bear the first night.

The good luck story of that week was with hunter Mike Dee from MO. Mike had been up with us 2 years earlier and during the first 4 days of that hunt Mike had seen more than a dozen bears while on stand. He had seen some good bears but felt that there would be no problem in closing the deal with the last few days of his hunt. Well as you might have guessed Mike did not see another bear for the rest of the trip and went home with out a bear.

Mike was back with us to finish the deal but was not going to rush in taking his bear and again looked over several bear during the first few days of the hunt. On the last day of our hunt Mike found himself being the only hunter that had not shot a bear that week. I took him out with me to check some baits for his last night on stand and all though you could feel the tension we never talked about a repeat of his previous trip.

Fortunately the right choice was made in regards to the bait site selection for that night as Mike arrowed a nice black 6'1" boar on his last night. We talked about it after and agreed that maybe on his next trip, if he had the choice, he shouldn't wait until the 11th hour of the hunt to get the job done.

The 3rd week of the hunt started off with lots of activity on the baits but even with lots of activity it took one or two nights before some of the hunters started seeing bear. Bob Harrison from MO started his week off right on the first night by arrowing a beautiful 6'1" blonde/cinnamon colored bear.

During this week we retrieved some photos from one of our trail cameras of one of the biggest bear that we have seen up here in some time. In estimating this bears weight I would estimate that he would be at or near the 600 lb. mark which is huge for a spring bear as he would be close to the 800 lb. mark come fall.

We had a hunter hunt that bait for 3 consecutive days hunting in the evenings and mid day as well but the bear was never seen again. This bear had not gotten that big by being stupid and in hunting bear of this caliber which would have scored well up into the B & C record books, you will find that they are harder to harvest more so than a large whitetail buck that would make the B & C record book.

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The 3rd week was a tough week for our hunters with the hunter who had hunted that big bear going home without a bear all though he had seen a couple of smaller bears that he had let go. As well there were a couple of wounded bear that we were not able to recover which is unfortunate, but does happen. However, our 4th week finished up strong with all of our hunters successful by the fourth night.

RJ Vogelsberg started his trip off with a bang by catching a 41” northern on his first day of fishing and then when he went on stand that night he killed a large 400 lb. plus black boar that went 6’9” nose to tail.

RJ was hunting out of a ground blind and we had barely gotten it set up when I had returned to the bait barrel & could see a bear standing in the bush about 25 yards behind the barrel. He was obviously waiting patiently for me to clear out and there was no doubt that he was coming into the bait.

I let RJ know that the bear was there, quickly finished trimming branches, topped up the bait and left. According to RJ that bear was at the bait drum within 2 to 3 minutes of my departure and even though it was a good bear he had decided not to take him. After all he had only been hunting for less than 5 minutes.

The bear stayed at the bait site for some time and then wandered off and as the time went by RJ began to second guess himself as to whether he had made the right decision. Without warning two bear suddenly appeared behind the bait drum. One was a good bear and the second one was huge.

From what RJ describes it appears that the first bear was a sow as it came into the bait site while the big bear stayed behind the bait drums and never gave RJ the shot he wanted. This big boar probably wasn’t all that interested in the bait but had other things on his mind for his new found girlfriend as this was mid June and the bear rut was on.

Both bears left the bait site and RJ figured that his 2nd opportunity of the night had just slipped by. However, a short time later both bear appeared again with the first bear going to the bait drum and with the old boar now moving up a little closer just behind the back stop.

This time he presented RJ with a good rifle shot and he took it with the big boar only traveling about 40 yards before he piled up. RJ got on the radio and called me letting me know what had happened. He settled in to wait for me and even with all the commotion that had taken place a 4th bear came into the bait and did not leave until I ran him off when I came in.

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With this year's spring hunt I had only 2 hunters that did not shoot bear. Both of these hunters were hunting large bears and all though they had seen smaller bears neither of these two bow hunters pulled their bow back on bears.

My spring hunters averaged 3.3 days on stand (in most cases evening hunting only) & had averaged seeing 2.4 bears per hunter. About 15% of the bear killed were color phase bear and the 6'9" 400 lb. plus bear killed by RJ was the biggest bear taken.

If you go onto our website at www.manitobabearhunts.ca you will see some game camera pictures of big bear that were not taken this past spring. Looking at these pictures it is understandable why our 2 bow hunters that did not shoot bear had their goals set on killing one of these big brutes.

Fishing With Grey Owl-

Fishing this year stayed strong right from the "get go" with lots of pike and walleyes being caught with the walleye fishing becoming stronger as the season wore on. With our small number of anglers, many of who only fish a few hours a day, we caught some 15 "master angler" fish, (41" and larger for pike and 28" and larger for walleye) with only one "master" walleye & the remainder being pike.

Andy Rostberg from MN accompanied his dad who was bear hunting and had just come up for the fishing and to sit with his dad on stand. He did quite well on the fishing end of things catching 3 master angler pike ranging from 41 to 45" in length and one master angler walleye measuring 28".

This year we also had a group of 4 fishermen from MN that stayed with us and had brought their own boats. They fished various lakes close to the lodge and reported good fishing and had taken the largest fish of the year with us catching a 46" northern.

After everyone had gone Linda and I were able to get out and do some fishing on our own and can report that the walleye fishing stayed strong well into July with the odd big pike making things interesting.

We fished some new lakes to scout them out and found a couple of "duds" but we did find a new lake that really looks good for those of you coming up with us next year.

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Both of us entered a local fishing tournament held on Burge lake with a \$10,000.00 cash prize for the largest pike. About 10 minutes into fishing I latched onto a good pike that would of/may of, been right in the running. However with the help of my assistant who was manning the net, we lost it getting it into the boat.

To make matters worse we watched an angler in the boat fishing behind us that was following us up the shore, catch a 44" northern that by the way won the \$10,000.00. Needless to say I spent the rest of the day and some quality time with my wife and if you think the topic of loosing that fish never came up..... you're wrong.

Fall Bear Hunting with Grey Owl-

In the first week of September we had a group of 3 hunters from Illinois join us for a fall hunt. We had lots of bait sites going for them but only a small fraction of the sites were getting hit as we had a tremendous berry crop this past fall. I thought it was going to be a tough week for the hunters but as it turned out I was wrong.

On the first night of the hunt there were no bears seen. However, two timber wolves met their demise which made for very unique trophies as well as the two bear that the father/son team of Roy and Adam Swope harvested on their 2nd night on stand.

There were a good number of wolves in and around the baits as our trail cameras had shown and our last hunter Dean Putman hunted a bait specifically to kill a wolf. Unfortunately no wolves showed but Dean was rewarded later in the week by killing a large, well "furred" fall bear.

The hunters ended up fishing on the new lake that Linda and I had found in mid summer, and it kept us fed with fresh walleye, gave the hunters a limit of walleye to take home, and allowed Adam Swope to catch his first " master angler" northern.

Moose Hunting With Lea Meadow Outiftters

We had an excellent year in 2010 with a 100% success rate on hunters shooting moose so the 2011 season had a hard act to follow. But, like the previous year 2011 was also a great year and here are a few stories and stats on this past year.

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Our first week was unusually warm with temperatures on a couple of days reaching the low 70's. Normally this kind of warm weather is not good for moose hunting but all of the hunters that came up that first week were successful.

Nick Pinckney of MI started his hunt out right on the first day by killing a moose that went over the 50 inch mark. He had hesitated on the bull because of it being the first day but after some input from his guide Jim Dickieson he decided to take this very fine animal. He also took another fine trophy home with him by killing a timber wolf later in the week on his bear license.

Chuck Adams from MN was hunting out of our "Broken Horn" camp with guide Scott Smith and they also got off to a quick start. On their second day they had spotted a good bull with a cow. The bull was not about to leave the cow and as a result Scott and Chuck had to work their way closer to the bull.

When Scott felt he was close enough to force the issue he challenged the bull with a bull call. The old bull didn't like the competition and headed the boy's direction to run the intruder off. That was his last mistake as Chuck put him down with some well placed shots.

Walt Cousin from MI & Larry Driver from FL., who were hunting out of the down river camp shot their bulls on the 3rd & 5th days with guides Bob Hyshka and Bryan Minnis. Walt's bull basically ran out in front of the boat when he and Bob had been travelling down a small creek.

Bob had immediately shut off the motor and Walt had to make a quick off handed shot which anchored the bull in his tracks. Bryan called a bull in for Larry that came right into only a few yards from them. Larry made no mistake and also dropped this bull with a well placed shot.

I was guiding Dour Gaskin of MI that first week and we were the last to tag out. I had called in a small bull for Doug on the second day but hadn't had much action for the rest of the week. On day 6 our luck changed with a little help from Jim and Nick.

Doug and I had been in a bay just west of main camp and had been calling there for 2 to 3 hours and had just left our calling spot when we spotted a big bull sticking his head out of the willows some 300 yards down the shoreline from where we had been calling. While we were trying to devise a plan Jim and Nick pulled up beside us.

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The bull we had been watching had slipped back into the bush and no doubt had seen us pull out with the boat and there was not much chance of calling him back. Jim and Nick however had another option for us.

They had been heading back to main camp with Nick's wolf and when they had been above the rapids close to their own camp when they had spotted a bull with a cow on the island across from their camp. Jim had cow called to this bull to get his attention and they were able to get a good picture of it. They showed Doug the picture and a decision was soon made to go after him.

After we manipulated our way through the rapids we came out on the south side of the island. Here there is only a small channel between the mainland and the island. There was no sign of the bull and cow but another bull was standing on the mainland right where Jim had called about 45 minutes earlier.

Doug made no mistake and put that bull down in short order and in comparing the bull he shot to the bull the boys had taken a picture of earlier there was no doubt that this was different bull.

Our second week also started off strong with two hunters, Wayne Krenz & Jim Kivela from WI, who were hunting out of the down river camp, both shooting their bulls about 5 minutes apart on just their second day. One bull had been called in and the other kill was a spot and stalk situation.

Harry Lawler from MN. hunted out of our upriver camp and had seen a couple of bulls earlier in the week, one of which was exceptional and was well up in the 50 inch range. Unfortunately they could not get the shot at this bull. It was not until day 6 when Harry put down his bull.

At the start of the second week at our Broken Horn camp Scott Smith was awaiting for his hunter, John Wheeler from MI, to arrive by plane from main camp. While he was waiting, Scott videoed 2 bull fighting across the river from the camp. What broke up the scrap was the arrival of the float plane.

On his first day in camp John had seen 3 bulls which he had passed on. Throughout the rest of the week he saw a number of cows and two more bulls but had not seen anything that he wanted to take home. Having seen his partner kill a 57 inch bull on a previous trip he had set his standards high as he knew what the area could produce. All though he never took a bull home this year he said he had a great trip and booked in for next year.

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Two hunters from WI., Wayne Hart & Dan Rezan, hunted together and came to camp halfway through the first season and hunted into the last week. All though they had seen bulls and cows earlier with Wayne passing up a bow shot on a smaller bull, it was not until near the end of the trip that they had success.

On this particular day I had been guiding them and it turned out to be a terrific day. Early in the morning we had spotted 3 moose, a bull cow and a calf, standing on a hill near the shoreline. We tried to stalk in on them but they had seen us on the water and had left the area when we moved in.

We went back to a spot where we had called the night before and after just one call we spotted a big bull swimming in the channel between two islands about 400 yards away from us. When the bull hit the shoreline on the other side I called which got his attention and started him our way.

I knew if he kept coming on the route he was taking he was going to wind us and sure enough when he was still about 250 yards away you could see the big palms of his horns flatten out and his nose raise up checking the air. He obviously didn't like what he smelled and headed into the willows.

Knowing that he had winded us we hastily made our way back to the boat. I knew it wasn't far across the island and I was hoping to intercept him on the other side. As we made our way down the far side of the island we spotted the big bull standing in plain view just outside of the line of willows.

I cut the motor right away and it was now up to Dan to take the shot if he felt he could get it done. The bull was about 100 to 125 yards away which doesn't sound that difficult but in water with a little chop, out of a boat, and off handed, it takes a skilled shooter to make such a shot.

Dan felt he could do it and with the shot the reaction of the bull indicated that he had been hit. Yes he was hit but not down, and he started galloping for the cover of the willows. Dan fired a volley at the bull but he did make it into the willows.

A short time later the three of us made our way into the area where we had last seen him and found the bull in bad shape unable to get up which resulted in Dan quickly dispatching him. We had a great bull on the ground but the hunt was not over yet as we still had more action to come.

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After photos were taken of Dan's bull we began skinning and quartering him. When we were about half done we heard what sounded like a moose sloshing through the water on the far side of the island. A short time later all hell broke loose with cow and calves calling & a bull responding right beside them.

This commotion went on for awhile and then the entire entourage stepped into the grassy clearing that we were in, and at about 90 to 100 yards out stepped a cow with two calves and a bull following behind the cow.

Dan's rifle and Wayne's bow had been taken back to the boat and Wayne made a mad scramble back to the boat to retrieve them while Dan and I watched the moose. The bull must of traveled some distance before he had found this cow because he bedded about 90 yards from us in the tall grass while the cow and her calves fed beside him all in plain view of us and our downed bull.

Wayne got back with us shortly and had brought the rifle and his bow. It would be an easy shot with the rifle when the bull stood but Wayne is an avid bow hunter and he decided to try and take him with the bow.

The stalk was going well and all Wayne needed was a few more yards to put him within bow range of the bedded bull but with all the extra eyes and ears in the mix he got busted and the group took off before he could get a shot.

Still it had been a great day. We had a good bull on the ground and Wayne could have easily taken the 2nd bull with the rifle, and we had seen a total of 8 moose in a very short time frame. Sometimes it's not all about the killing that can make for a good trip.

This year we had 11 hunters with 9 of those hunters killing bulls and with the 2 remaining hunters passing on bulls. We had only 1 bull this year that exceeded the 50 inch mark but we had some great bulls in the 40's that were very impressive with wide palms and lots of points. We had only one bull killed that was under the 40 inch mark.

During the hunt our 11 hunters had 74 sightings of moose 36 of which were bulls. Some good bulls in the 50's were spotted but not taken including a monster that was well up in the 50's and was videotaped at 69 yards by guides and hunters who were tagged out.

So with the young bulls that were seen and the big bulls that were left it appears that there is lots of quality stock for next year. Walleye fishing in front of main camp was good this year and supplied us with some great meals.

At the time I am writing this newsletter I am completely booked for 2012 moose hunts so if you are interested for 2013 let me know.

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Waterfowl Hunting

In southern and central Manitoba the summer of 2012 started off as a wet season and by the time fall had rolled around conditions had done a complete turnaround as it was quite dry. This resulted in a good early hatch of local ducks.

With the dry conditions in the fall once the local ducks had left we never did see a strong flight of northern ducks in our area and the ducks in the later part of the fall were hard to find. Hunters reported fair to decent hunting for ducks on the east side of the Shoal lakes.

The goose hunting for “Canada’s” stayed strong throughout most of the season and hunters enjoyed some very good hunts. In some areas the birds stayed right to freeze up which was well into November where they fed primarily on the later harvested corn crops.

Snow geese were a little less plentiful this year and primarily did not spend much time in this area until mid October with the majority of the birds having passed through by the 1st of November.

Deer Hunting

We did not receive much interest this year in regards to our archery deer hunts and nonresident deer hunting was down drastically across the Province. With the economy the way it is folks don’t want to travel for deer hunts as many can hunt them right at home.

We had only one archer hunt with us this fall and he had been up with us the 2 previous years in which he had harvested 2 nice bucks. It was unfortunate that no one else had hunted with us this year because we had lots of deer activity.

Despite having to shorten his trip up to just 4 ½ days due to other commitments he had seen a total of 48 deer while on stand, twelve of which were bucks. He passed on some smaller bucks as we focused our hunt on a large 160 to 170 class buck that I had trail camera pictures of.

The big buck was never seen when the hunter was on stand but he did get a shot at a very unique deer that was a high 4 point on the left side and an equal amount of horn on the right side with that beam angled towards the ground. Unfortunately the arrow shaved hair off the deer’s back but as far as I know this deer is still alive as I have not heard of anyone taking him.

If anyone is interested in a 2012 archery deer hunt get in touch with me as we have lots of hunting opportunity here.

******* New for 2012*******

As of January 1st 2012 all hunters in Manitoba (residents & non residents) will be required to produce a hunter education certificate or card when purchasing any type of hunting license. If you have held a hunting license before Jan. 1st 1975 you can fill out a written declaration and submit it to the wildlife branch and a certificate will be sent to you by mail.

For those of you that are hunting with us in 2012 I will be sending you more information on this topic in your hunt information packages. In the meantime if you have any questions just get in touch with us.

Linda and I will be going to only 2 sports shows this year with the first one being in Topeka Kansas from January 27 to the 29th and you can find us at booth # 201. The second show is in Madison WI. From March 30th to April 1st and we will be in booth #820.

The year 2011 was a great year for us in regards to hunter success, very little problems on the operational side, and more importantly making new friendships and renewing past acquaintances. For those of you that joined us for your hunting or fishing adventure in 2011 we thank you for your patronage.

On behalf of Linda and I we wish you all the best for 2012.....

Lyle & Linda MacMillan

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