

BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS BEAR HUNT INFORMATION

Hunting bear in the BWCAW and bringing the meat and hide out, presents a number of challenges that, although they require additional expense, physical effort, and determination to do the right thing, can be met, resulting in a high degree of hunter satisfaction.

There is an aspect of a BWCAW hunt other than the physical or logistical that is critical to hunters. Since contact with non-hunters can be expected in the BWCAW, please keep in mind the following:

- In exercising your right to hunt, do not infringe upon the rights of others. Consider all actions carefully and extend courtesy to non-hunters.
- The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness has special regulations to preserve the quality of the environment. Please comply to the fullest extent.
- Bear bait stations of the typical kind are not authorized in the BWCAW. The DNR recommends burning honey, with perhaps some oil of anise and liquid smoke added, on a small stove away from the campsite. Whatever is used, it should not be within a campsite, near a portage trail, or on the shoreline.
- People with guns or bows and arrows may intimidate some persons. Weapons should be carried and used with discretion. Bear should not be shot in any campsites or near campsites occupied by non-hunters, unless you are asked to dispose of a problem bear. The U.S. Forest Service prohibits the discharge of a firearm within 150 yards of a campsite or occupied area. Do not shoot except to kill. Practice shooting and sighting-in should be done before you reach the BWCAW.
- You must bury the entrails, bones, fat, and other waste material from your bear as fully and as far away from any campsite or portage as possible. A shovel should be carried by every party.
- Keep blood, entrails, and dead bears out of sight of other BWCAW visitors when possible.
- Hunters do not need to apologize for their way of establishing a link with our heritage and the legitimate use of a resource. However, if we expect acceptance by those with other views, we must respect those views and avoid offense as much as possible.

PREPARATION FOR THE VENTURE

Getting your bear meat and hide out of the BWCAW in good condition presents a problem that requires some special efforts and expense, to solve.

When you enter the BWCAW, you are not likely to know how warm it will be when you bring a bear out. It is best to be prepared to refrigerate both the hide and the meat during the trip from the kill site to your home.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS FOR BWCAW HUNT

1. Canoe of adequate capacity

You will note from these recommendations that you will be transporting a large and heavy ice chest and an equally, large and heavy bundle of bear hide in addition to the camping gear normally taken on a canoe trip by two persons. This means, first of all, that only one of two paddlers can bring home a bear. It also means that one canoe may not be big enough to safely carry such a load. You will need a canoe with enough capacity to maintain at least six inches of freeboard. We urge that you check the capacity of any canoe you intend to use by loading a cargo of similar weight and bulk, before you leave for the hunt.

2. Ice chest, minimum size: 60 quart

The largest bear likely to be taken (300#) will yield 70-90 pounds of boned out meat. A chest this size will hold that plus enough dry ice. If your chest is airtight, drill a 1/4" hole in the top to permit escape of expanding gas (carbon dioxide).

3. Dry ice, about 100 pounds

Dry ice is recommended because of its intense cold (-109°F), lack of wetness, and the deterrent effect of the carbon dioxide on bacterial action. This amount will cost \$30 in the Twin Cities or a minimum of \$40 in Duluth, but this or regular ice is essential unless you live close to the BWCAW. This quantity will fill the chest (60 lb. occupies 10"x10"x12"). The chest should not be opened much until you are ready to put the bear meat in it. There will be a loss of 5-10 lbs. of dry ice per day. If you get a bear 5 days after you fill your cooler, you will have about 50 lbs. left, 25 to go in the chest with the meat, and 25 to be wrapped with the hide. Caution must be used in handling dry ice because of its extreme cold.

4. Tarps, reinforced polyethylene. (two 5' x 7' size)

It is difficult to estimate the size of container needed to contain a bear hide with the head and paws left on as the taxidermists recommend. A tarp this size can be wrapped around any size hide, along with the dry ice and will keep leakage of moisture, blood, and fat at a minimum. Two are recommended because you need smooth, clean work surfaces for the bear butchering operation. They are inexpensive and can be used again for other purposes.

5. Large tarp (min. 9' x 12')

This is needed for overhead shelter from sun or rain while you butcher the bear. Meat should be kept dry or dried off. Damp meat will spoil more quickly.

6. Black pepper, 4 ounces per bear

Flies are detrimental to the preservation of both meat and hide. Maggots can hatch by the time you get home if precautions are not taken. Black pepper sprinkled on the meat and hide is a fairly good fly repellent.

7. Aluminum foil or freezer paper

Use this between layers of meat in ice chest. Aluminum foil is the more versatile and may come in handy around camp.

8. Stretcher to carry ice chest and hide bundle

Purchase 2-1/2 yards of Army duck (canvas) 36" wide. Sew the 36" wide ends together with three rows of stitches. This is the basis for a small stretcher that will make carrying the chest across portages easier. Cut two 7-foot poles about 2-3" in diameter. Do not use birch (too limber) and do not cut live trees for poles within the BWCAW wilderness.

Lay the canvas on the ground with the 3 foot seam on top and centered. Set the chest lengthwise on the seam. Insert the poles into the loops created at each side of the chest. If portages are steep, you may have to secure the chest by running a rope around the unit just under the poles. This system provides the strongest stretcher with the least sewing to do. The addition of shoulder straps will make carrying easier.

9. **Shovel, standard or U.S. Army issue**

A sturdy shovel is needed to bury the entrails, bones, etc., of your bear. If the site is too rocky, move the solid wastes away from camps and portages and bury to the extent possible.

10. **Bait to attract bear**

Forest Service regulations prevent baiting while the hunter is in the BWCAW. We suggest that you attract bear to an appropriate site by burning honey over a small stove. One pound of honey, burned a few tablespoonsful at a time in early morning and early evening, should last for about three days. You might try adding a few drops of "liquid smoke" or oil of anise. Heating bacon grease until it is evaporated is also a good attractant.

11. **Rope, good quality. 1/4" or 3/8" diameter**

Bring twice as much as you think you'll need.

12. **Headlamp type of flashlight**

It is likely to be dark before you finish butchering. Headlamps leave both hands free to work.

SOME DETAILS ON PROCEDURE

If you wish to save the head and feet of your bear, we suggest that you do not attempt to skin those parts. Leave that job for the taxidermist and you will save much time and trouble. Talk to a taxidermist before you go hunting and get advice on handling the hide.

If there are flies around, you will have to sprinkle black pepper as soon as you begin exposing raw flesh. When skinning is finished, cover the hide with a tarp and reduce access by flies and take care of the meat first.

Bone out the meat by taking muscle bundles apart rather than by cutting across. This makes it possible to remove fat from between the muscles. We advise this because fat spoils more quickly than lean meat. Body heat should be allowed to dissipate from the meat before you start packing it in the cooler.

Place the boned out meat into the ice chest in layers separated by aluminum foil or freezer paper. Break up dry ice that remains and place half of it along those layers. The other half of the dry ice goes with the hide.

After the meat is placed in the cooler, the hide can be given further attention. Scrape as much of the readily removable fat off the hide as possible. Then place it, hair side down, on one of the 5 x 7 tarps. Place the remaining dry ice on the center half of the hide and bring the head and legs into the center. Do this so further folding will hold the dry ice within the center of the bundle. Then wrap it with the tarp and tie securely with rope. The normal coat of a bear is a good insulator so this package should stay sufficiently cold.

Obviously, when temperatures are above 40°F, you cannot waste any time in getting your meat and hide to permanent refrigeration. On the other hand, do not overlook any rules of water travel safety in your return trip.