

The Moose Hunt Revisited (2019)
by
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After 30 years and reaching the old age of 65, I was finally blessed with getting a moose permit. This is my story, such as an old man can recall a week after the hunt ended.

Some of you may have read my previous experience on a moose hunt where I was a sub-permittee.

<https://umaine.edu/svt/wp-content/uploads/sites/105/2015/05/MooseHunt1.pdf>

In this latest adventure story about moose hunting, I was the permittee or permit hold.

Since some readers may not be familiar with the Maine moose permit, let me begin by stating the process of obtaining a moose permit.

Every year, within a designated time period, individuals can apply for a moose permit. It is a rigged lottery system. I say 'rigged' in a laudatory manner since the drawing will favor those persons that consistently enter the lottery over time.

After 30 years of trying, the governor should have handed the permit to me personally. She didn't but I'm not one to complain much.

The day of the lottery is a much heralded event in the State of Maine. The public drawing is done with some fanfare in a packed room. The drawing takes place at some designated location within the state that needs an economic boost for the day in the form of lodging, food, and liquor sales. This is followed by a statewide economic uptick by the sale of heavy caliber guns and ammunition. If a spouse can demand new curtains after new furniture is purchased then surely the hunter can use the opportunity of winning a moose permit in order to purchase a new rifle.

When speaking of the moose hunt, I need to give a little advice to recently married men in which category I fell when I successfully drew a moose permit in the moose lottery. When a recently married man says that he can't stand to be apart from his new wife there is an exception that I would not think needs to be stated. The exception occurs during hunting and fishing season. The hunter will abandon their spouse with much regret – not enough regret to stay at home. If the new spouse does not come from a hunting family, the eager departure of the hunter and subsequent absence without apparent remorse causes some disharmony in the new marriage.

While on the topic of spousal communications, it might be worth clarifying with a new spouse that when a male hunter promises he will never chase another female again, there is an exception when the hunter draws a doe permit or a cow moose permit.

I will not dwell into the machinations often employed to legally hunt a moose under a permit. I would refer to the earlier article I wrote on moose hunting.

I had made application for the last moose drawing at a gathering following my father's memorial service. Consequently, there were numerous relatives present at the memorial service that I could ask to determine if they wanted to be a subpermittee or alternate subpermittee. Some people might suggest this venue is not an appropriate place to ask about moose hunting. Hunting is always an appropriate topic at any of my family gatherings. My nephew, Kurt, and my niece's husband, Jeremy, eagerly volunteered for the positions.

Jeremy is affectionately known as 'Hog.' My family has no problem being politically incorrect and generally proud to be known as rednecks. In Jeremy's case, at five feet, nine inches, weighing 170 pounds, he got his nickname for his proficiency in consistently shooting a large number of groundhogs rather than his personal appearance.

When applying for the moose lottery on line, I warned Kurt and Hog that my chance of drawing a moose permit had the same chance as being alive when the second coming of Christ occurs. I have drawn a permit so I would suggest everyone make themselves right with the Lord – sooner rather than later.

Having discovered I drew a moose permit and having previously experienced a moose hunt, I remembered the effort it took to move a moose on to a trailer. At age 65, I have trouble walking up the stairs using a handrail. I decided I would allow Kurt, my subpermittee, to shoot the moose. Of course, this decision was greeted with considerable happiness by my nephew and entailed purchasing a new rifle, new hunting clothing, binoculars and so on. There is no doubt that some female, non-hunter reading this would think these expenditures excessive. Yet, this same female would spend much more on a wedding. Statistics suggest it is more likely the woman will get divorced and have a second wedding than a man will draw two moose permits in their lifetime.

Kurt was not going to allow any chance of not shooting a moose given this opportunity of a lifetime. He arranged for lodging and a guide from Allagash Adventures Guide Service located in Allagash, Maine. Wayne and Julie Bernier are the owners. They are both registered guides. Two nicer people would be hard to find. I learned a lot from Wayne. For example, I had no idea there were 27 swear words in French that can be substituted for English swear words.

In the area where we were designated to hunt, Wildlife Management District 2, the vast majority of moose habitat is owned by private woodland owners. The area is composed of woods, lakes, and bogs, interspersed with logging roads. There are no houses in the area of the North Maine Woods. The North Maine Woods is comprised of 10,000,000 acres. I suspect a few bodies have been dumped in the North Maine Woods and will never be found.

We arrived at Wayne and Julie's place late Saturday afternoon. On Sunday we did some scouting. For those unfamiliar with Allagash, Maine, the town of Allagash is along the Allagash River near the Canadian border. It is composed of 24 houses and 32 camps. The town of Allagash is where paved roads end. It is a collection of houses scattered along the paved road with camps along the Allagash, St. Croix, and St. John

Rivers. There is one general store. The nearest 'town' is Fort Kent. Restaurants and businesses all close early. They roll up the sidewalks at 8:00 p.m. They roll them back in place at 3:00 a.m. to get the loggers and logging trucks on the road. Their first load of logs is heading to the mill at daybreak to arrive for the opening of the mill.

There is one museum in the Allagash. I was informed at 6:00 p.m. on a Sunday night that I should visit the museum at that time. "But it must be closed," I replied. "Never," was the reply. "The owner never locks the door. Just turn off the lights when you are done looking." Allagash is where everyone owns a gun and the only crimes that occur would only interest a game warden.

On Sunday, Wayne, our guide, wanted to be sure he was not wasting his time by finding a moose only to have Kurt miss the moose because his rifle was not sighted in. Wayne, Kurt, Hog, and I went out to a gravel pit. For those curious and wishing to visit this landmark, it was the gravel pit with the "No Shooting" sign that obviously didn't apply to local residents. I suppose that Wayne, given some past clients, would appreciate if the client could hit the side of the gravel pit. Kurt's shot hit the gravel pit. Since the bullet also went through the target before hitting the gravel pit, Wayne was satisfied the moose would be hit.

Monday arrived. In the dark, within Wayne and Julie's camp, we prepared for the upcoming hunt. At 65 years of age, I was more worried that I had sufficient toilet paper than shells. At my age, using a shell would be lucky. Using toilet paper was essential. The shotgun shells I had with me I had reloaded when I was 16 years old. If they were cars, they would have been entitled to antique license plates.

An hour before the season opened we were on the road heading to a location where the big moose hung out - except they weren't. No amount of moose sex calls stirred the moose to make an appearance suggesting that the bull moose was sexually sated with his present harem or the rut was over.

If calling doesn't work, a hunter goes looking for the moose while driving on the numerous logging roads. Some people will probably think such hunting is unsportsmanlike. Before thinking in such a manner, go to a woods filled with bog, saplings, fir, and spruce. Place a pallet a tenth of a mile into the woods, load the pallet with ten 80 pound cement bags, and try pulling that loaded pallet out of the woods. That's what it would be like pulling the moose out of the woods. A hunter that shoots a moose and doesn't want a heart attack getting the moose on to a truck or trailer must shoot the moose close to the road. The way to shoot a moose close to a road is not to shoot any moose you can't see from the road.

While driving and looking for moose, our other guide, Julie, sat in the very back of the vehicle. Despite her position in the vehicle, she managed to spot a number of moose during our travels. I think her ability has something to do with female perception and a male's lack of perception. This phenomena is often exhibited when a husband is unable to detect a new dress or new hair style on their wife.

While driving, we often found partridge along the dirt roads. Since partridge were in season and good eating, upon seeing a partridge, we stopped, exited the vehicle,

loaded a shotgun, and shot the partridge – perhaps shoot at the partridge may be a better description of what often occurred. Kurt could hit a target at 200 yards with a rifle. He could not seem to hit a partridge standing on a dirt road, 20 feet away, with 350 lead pellets. We saw fourteen partridge. All but two partridge were still living when we ended the day. Hog had been charged with recording all the hunting events. The last I heard, he was seeking \$100 from Kurt not to release the video of Kurt partridge hunting on Facebook.

We eventually saw one cow moose and thirty two stumps and trees that looked like moose. The sight of an actual moose caused what is akin to a Chinese fire drill. (A few Youtube videos will reveal what constitutes a Chinese fire drill.) To our dismay, the cow moose did not have any bull moose suitors nearby.

Tuesday, began as Monday did except we saw the back of a moose crossing the road on the way to the location where we were to broadcast the sounds of a moose brothel in business. That day we saw five partridge. Hog purchased a license and shot a partridge. Hog is demanding \$50 not to release a video of Kurt shooting at partridge that day. We saw forty-one stumps and trees that looked like moose.

Wednesday was devoted to entering through a checkpoint into the North Maine Woods. We immediately saw a cow moose and calf in the middle of a clear cut contentedly watching logging trucks and moose hunters drive by. The discovery of these moose were followed by two more moose spotted and identified as cows. Every cow resulted in a Chinese fire drill. Hog can't extort any money from Kurt for partridges missed on this day since Kurt was no longer allowed to shoot at partridge. Nevertheless, one person that will remain anonymous did get one of the two partridge that were shot.

After looking at four cows and twenty-five stumps and trees that appeared like a moose a distance, at 5:30 p.m. Wayne spotted a moose. The actions taken in a moving car when spotting a moose involve sudden braking, backup, and binoculars protruding from every window on the side of potential observation. Wayne, the experienced observer, quickly made it known that the moose was a bull.

Kurt was out of the vehicle loading his magazine into his rifle in seconds. Hog was sprawled across the roof with the video camera. Wayne was still shouting that it was a bull moose and to shoot.

Kurt was questioning whether he should shoot through all the vegetation between the bull moose and his position. This question was not a question about positive identification of the bull moose. It was a question whether the bullet would get deflected by numerous sprouts, trees, and branches between Kurt and the moose. It is always good to have an excuse for why you might miss hitting something the size of a car at 167 yards, 3 feet, 2 inches away. I had to admire the quick thinking it took to get the excuse ready before shooting rather than waiting until later.

Kurt was shooting a 300 Winchester. That bullet would go through both side of a typical home. If the Union army were armed with 300 Winchester rifles at Gettysburg, they could have shot Confederate soldiers as they climbed over the wall on Seminary ridge over a mile away prior to forming for Picket's charge.

Kurt shot. One inch saplings flew threw the air. Three inch fir trees along the line of fire waved with the passing shock blast. Dust rose from the moose. It is always smart to keep shooting until the moose drops. One shot might kill the moose but if it runs 300 yards into a swamp to die, all night would be spent removing the moose. A second shot followed the first and the moose wobbled and began to go down on its knees. A third shot followed and the moose went down or else disappeared. It is a shame that Kurt could not have shot the moose one more time. Shooting a 300 Winchester and hitting a moose four times, may have gutted the moose and saved us some work.

Given the dense new growth, who could be sure at that moment that the moose was dead? Kurt and Wayne went to the site where the moose was seen last. Given my arthritis, I thought I should hang back and follow them slowly to make sure the moose, if alive, didn't sneak around us.

Hog continued to film the events. Let me say for the record that Hog had a much different approach to filming than I did when I participated in a moose hunt with Jack Liimakka some years previously. While Jack was shooting his moose, I thought it important to film what the sky looked like, what type of dirt was present on the ground, what the woods looked like behind us, and so on. Hog focused exclusively on Kurt and the moose. Viewers will never know the important details of the sky, ground and surrounding terrain that existed at the time Kurt shot his moose.

The moose was found dead. Pictures were taken that would surely raise the ire of PETA and other animal rights groups opposed to killing animals. After 10,000 years, man has finally worked his way to the top of the food chain. I see no reason not to be proud of that accomplishment and prove it by pictures.

Unless a moose drops dead in the road, getting a moose from where it died and into a trailer or truck is the most difficult task the hunter encounters during a successful moose hunt.

Julie went off with Hog to get the trailer and rope. Wayne, Kurt, and I went to prepare the moose for removal. Preparing the moose required gutting the moose. I suppose political correctness requires that I say 'dress the moose.' Wayne took one look at the knife I brought and decided he would rather cut a path for dragging the moose with his pocket knife – it would be easier. Fortunately Wayne had a chainsaw.

Kurt and I gutted the moose. My knife was definitely not made for cutting moose hide. The closest material akin to moose hide is sheet metal. There is a reason that Native Americans used moose hide to make moccasins. Nevertheless, we managed to gut out the moose with my knife and an ax. By the time we were done gutting the moose, Wayne and his chainsaw had a fairly decent path cut to the moose. It was now night and very dark.

Apparently, Julie still loved her husband because she returned with the trailer and rope spool. Imagine how many wives would take advantage of the fact their husband is dozens of miles away from civilization, had no phone service, no shelter, no food (other than moose meat), no vehicle, and with temperatures dropping

below freezing at night. They could claim they got lost on the endless logging roads. The possibilities for marital payback are endless.

Julie and Hog returned. My engineering mind wanted to use a skidder with a 500 yard cable or at least winches, block-and-tackle, snatch-blocks, and a moose skid plate. Wayne preferred red-neck engineering on-the-fly to move the moose. His way worked. You hook the rope up to the moose, bend the rope around a tree, and hook the end of the rope to the hitch of the vehicle.

The men wanted Julie to make a 70 mph running start with the vehicle to see if a 700 pound moose could be yanked through the air to land on the road. Julie, as a woman, had more sense than men and made a slow and steady pull. Using her method, the rope only broke twice giving the men some excitement as the broken ends whipped around in the darkness. I suppose had we done it the men's way, the moose would still be there.

Eventually the moose was dragged on to the trailer. The hair was missing from the hide on the one side of the moose. The moose could have been dragged across broken glass and I doubt the sharp glass would have cut through the hide.

The law requires that at least some part of the moose be visible while moving the moose until the moose is brought to the tagging station. The tagging station would not open until 8:00 a.m. the next day. Kurt was really excited about shooting the moose. So, while the law says you can't hide the moose. Nothing in the law says you can't display the moose by placing lights to shine on the moose and drive up and down main street of Fort Kent at 8:30 p.m. tooting horns with an Allagash Adventures Guide Service sign hanging above the clearly visible moose on the trailer. Julie brought out some scotch whisky before the trip was made that night to Fort Kent hoping the men would get drunk before they woke up the town. Eventually, celebrating was chosen over waking Fort Kent's entire population of 326 people unless Mildred had her baby then it would be 327 people and most of the citizens would be at her house.

The next day the moose was brought to the tagging station, better known as the bragging station, and properly registered. A fictional writer was there to record the hunts and statistics. So ended a successful and happy moose hunt for all those involved.