

Richard Loppnow — 501#

We had been working to get a chance at harvesting this large bear for the last four or five years without success. In 2005, we had two opportunities to get him jumped, but after cold trailing him for several miles (always to the east) the dogs would lose the track at the main and very busy Highway 35.

This year, I assume because of the extremely dry summer, even the big fellow changed his pattern of behavior. The swamp had dried to the extent you could walk in all but the hard core center without getting wet feet. These conditions gave the bear huge areas of undisturbed sanctuary to bed in, saving him the trip of several miles to his normal bedding area.

It was about seven days into the harvest season and the night had been crisp, leaving a frosty morning. We did not get a chance to put down on the track until around ten a.m. The frost, although now gone, left us with at least some moisture in the woods and dry swamp.

The previous day my jump dog had been injured fighting a real nice 350 pounder with a beautiful white V that was harvested by Josh Pardun under real nasty conditions (great job Josh); therefore I had to keep her in the box until -----ahh but that is another story. Fortunately, Merrit McDowell and his wife Teresa (a great Vikings fan) had acquired a hound named Joe that is worthy of being called a jump dog. We put him down and he cold trailed about a mile to the east. Thinking the bear was once again following the same path as the years before, we were surprised when the dog trailed the track to a man made pond and then turned, heading into the huge swamp area. At this point I felt the dog, although not jumped by any means, was moving the track well enough that another hound would stick with him. I leashed a dog and headed into the swamp. Even though the swamp was dry, I could not move fast enough to close ground on the jump dog. I decided to turn my dog loose hoping he would cut the track or hear the jump dog and go to him, he didn't. I kept working my way towards the Joe dog, which I could still hear cold trailing. About this time two things happened. First I heard the dog get the bear jumped and second I heard and saw a lot of ducks! It was only a matter of a hundred yards or so and I hit the center of the swamp, open water, no way to get across and about a two hour walk around. I climbed a dead windfall and tried to give the guys help by describing where the bear was. I am standing on the windfall

looking across a quarter mile of open water, listening to Joe baying his heart out looking at a dandy bear and I could not give him any help. I informed the guys that I was heading back to the truck and could only hope things held together until I could get back in the hunt.

When I reached the truck, I was told that two or three of the younger legs had finally gotten to the dog, but it was too late. After five hours of cold trailing and hard baying alone, Joe

had worn himself out, laid down in the water to cool off and rest, allowing the bear a chance to slip off.

By this time I had driven the four or five miles around to where the younger guys had come out with the dog. The decision was made to walk some young dogs back into the area and hope the bear had not gone too far. If he had not beaten feet back around the swamp, the dogs might be able to cut his track and bay him up.

It took about thirty to forty-five minutes for the fellows to get back

to the area where they had picked up the Joe dog. After they turned the dogs loose, things happened fast and all in our favor. As it turned out the big fellow had only traveled two or three hundred yards and bedded down again. When he heard the dogs coming he decided to head for high ground, why I do not understand! I could hear him coming towards me grunting and puffing but could not see him yet. When he hit the open spot, two shots and close range put him down just as the dogs arrived. Although down, the bear was still gnashing and biting trying to reach a dog. One more shot brought the hunt to an end.....The next day I found a fresh track in the sand-----ahh but that's another story!

