

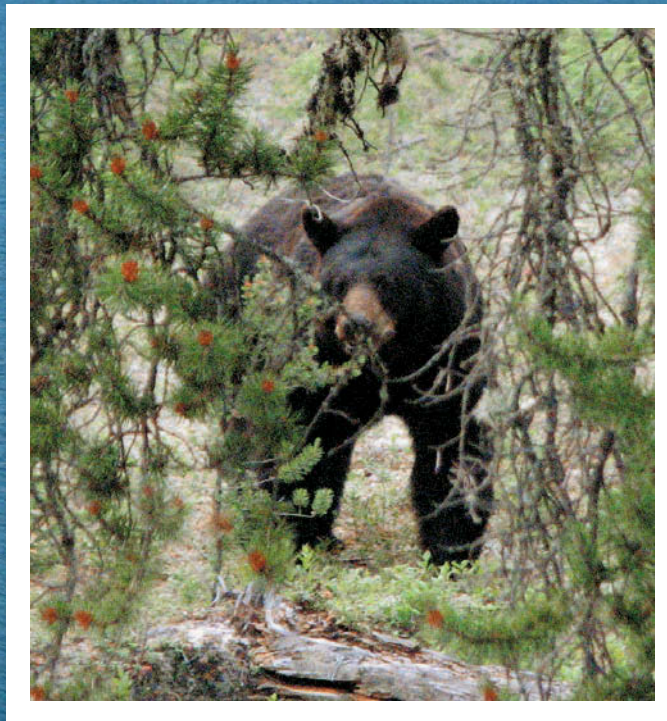
BEARS OF CREE LAKE

BY CODY DYCK

Cody Dyck of Pierceland, Saskatchewan, with the colossal black bear he took up in the northern part of that province in 2010. The Cree Lake brute's estimated weight was around 450 pounds. These northern bears can easily put on another 100 to 150 pounds by the time fall arrives.

In the summer of 2010, I went up to Cree Lake, Saskatchewan, with my friend Brandon Schreiber to help his family at their fly-in fishing lodge. The area around the lake is amazing, almost untouched, and very inaccessible. At first my time was spent getting the lodge ready for the first visitors of the year, learning the lake, and doing some fishing. The next task was to set up some bear baits. This is an interesting area to hunt since hunting pressure is non-existent and the bears aren't used to any human presence. It was also a very dry year, resulting in a lot of forest fires around the lake, and smoke was a constant sight on the shores.

Baits consisted of a mixture of oats, grease, and old food. It was very different getting things set up because you had to boat to all the different sites and carry the bait in. After placing a few stands and cameras, we left them alone for a few days. When we went back to check them, the results were mixed: a few were hit really hard while others weren't touched at



Here is Cody's bear as he filters through the trees and makes his way towards the bait.

which easily weighed over 500 pounds.

It was soon time to head back home, but the stands and cameras needed to be retrieved first. We picked everything up, then checked the camera pictures when we got back to the lodge. Two big bears were hitting up one bait. One photo actually showed both of them: a chocolate one that was

all. The cameras revealed that one big bruin was hitting one of the baits.

Two of the guys that were up fishing, Walt and Nick, saw the picture and were eager to try for that bear. A tag was obtained and a plan made. This bait was a blast going into because it was a ways up the Cree River and a fun run to get there. The site was rebaited and a natural ground blind was created there to increase their odds.

The next day their guide took them up to the site, and they got settled into the ground blind. Fifteen minutes after their guide had dropped them off, the bear simply came walking out and they anchored it. Another boat was taken down the river to pick up the beast,



smaller and really glistened in the sunlight, the other a big black that made the other one look small. Our plans instantly changed, and we quickly grabbed a stand and some bait and headed back out to try for one of them.

Arriving at the bait site, I worked as quickly as possible to get the stand up because I only had the afternoon. Hoping for the best, I was looking for either one of the two big bears but honestly didn't think there was much chance of getting one.

Brandon Schreiber shows us another massive bear taken by one of his clients. They figured this brute would have weighed in at around the 500-pound mark. Look at the enormous head on this bruin.

After sitting for 10 minutes, a small bear walked out. He approached my tree more out of curiosity than anything. Fifteen minutes later, he sauntered off.

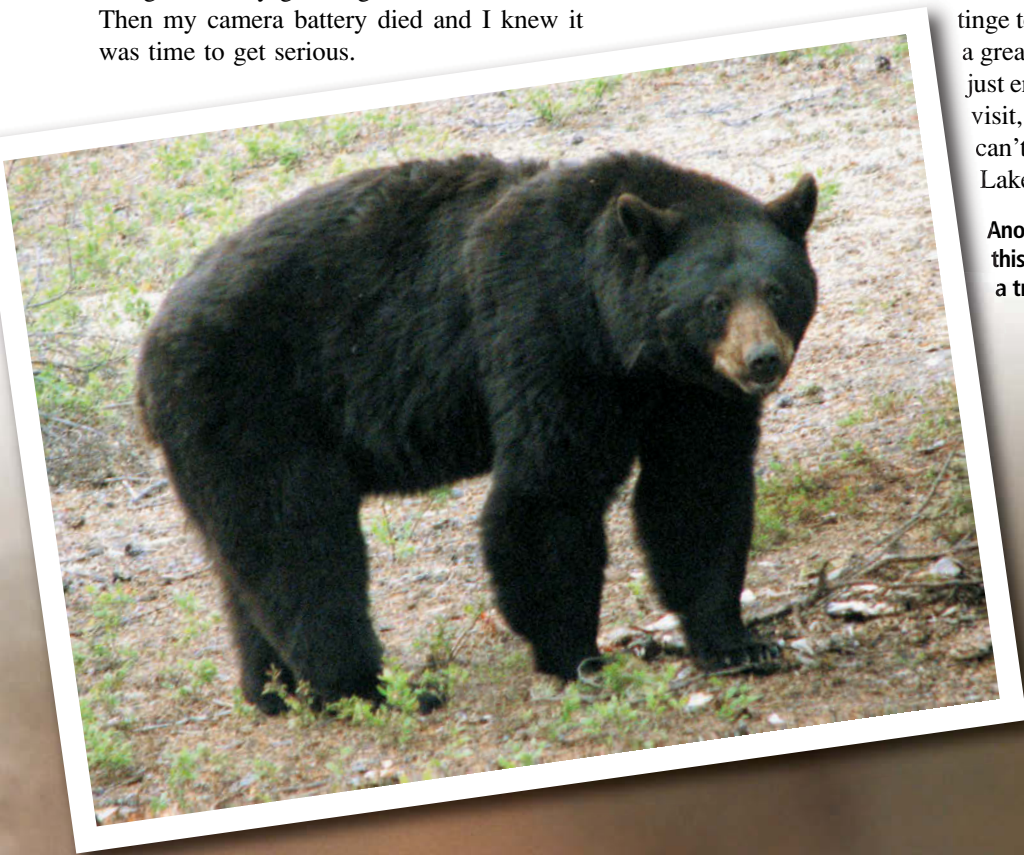
Finally, after four uneventful hours, I heard some twigs snapping. I looked over and could see something black heading towards me, so I got my camera ready. As he closed the distance, I could tell it was a good bear but not the big black. I snapped some pictures as he walked up to the bait. He came straight in, only glancing over at me once he was at the bait. Then my camera battery died and I knew it was time to get serious.

At the blast of my rifle, he hunched up and started running back into the bush, but he only made it 80 yards before dropping. I quickly checked to make sure he wasn't going anywhere before jumping in the boat and returning to the lodge to get Brandon to help me load up the beast.

When we arrived back at the site and walked up the bank, another smaller bear was there checking out mine. After a short standoff, he left and we were able to get my bear into the boat.

He weighed about 450 pounds and had a chocolate tinge to his coat that really shone in the sun. It was a great end to an awesome summer of fishing and just enjoying the outdoors. It's an amazing lake to visit, with spectacular views all around you. I can't wait for my next chance to head up to Cree Lake Lodge. 🐾

Another photo of Cody's monster. When you can see this much daylight under the belly, you know this is a true giant.



Cody and Brandon witnessed this roaring forest fire as it raged across the terrain. It can be pretty intense when this happens and sometimes the only place you feel safe is on the water.