

Is the 1000 Pound Black Bear Story True?

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Extra Version #1

A huge hibernating male black bear was killed Nov. 26 in northern Dunn County when it was hit by a combine.

Neil Schlough of Boyceville was harvesting corn in a field on the Pinehurst Farm at about 7 o'clock that evening a few miles south of the Dunn/Barron county line, just off of County Road VVV, or about 22 miles north of Menomonie.

The bear was denning in the field, having dug a hole about a foot deep to lay in and pulled in debris from the corn stalks in on top of itself.

According to his wife, Phyllis, Neil came upon the bear with the outside row of his combine head and drove the outside snout into the animal's neck and shoulder and pushed it about six or seven feet. She said Neil felt the combine strike something and the outside snout was pushed up into the air (the combine wasn't damaged).

"He stepped out of the combine and saw that he had hit an animal," she said. "At first he thought one of our dairy steers over there had gotten out, went in the corn field, ate too much corn and died."

But it didn't take long for Neil to realize it was a bear, but it did take longer to realize how big it was. She said he called her and told her he thought it weighed about 300 pounds.

The DNR was called immediately and Conservation Warden Jim Clevon responded.

A skid steer was taken to the field, and the bear was lifted up so that it could be dressed out..

"With the lights ... we could see that it was a pretty big bear," Phyllis said. "But we had no idea until the locker plant put it on a scale that it weighed as much as it did."

The bear was taken to the Augusta Locker Plant to be prepared for mounting. It was there that the animal was first weighed and measured.

Field dressed, the bear weighed in at 618 pounds and measured 7 feet from head to tail.

The Schloughs were told at the locker that they could add 80 to 100 pounds, depending on the size animal, to reach an approximate actual

weight.

"So we figure that bear had to weigh at least 700. We figure 700 to 720," Phyllis said.

It's too early to tell if the massive animal will break any records since the skull has to be dried for 60 days before it can be scored.

Phyllis says they believe it has the potential to break the state mark and will probably break the Dunn County record.

More common

DNR wildlife specialist Jess Carstens said, "This is a thing that, for whatever reason, is happening quite regularly that [bears] are denning up in the middle of fields and corn fields seem to be particularly common. Due to the amount of debris from harvesting the corn that's on the ground. There's a little more stuff to pull in on top of them as they snuggle into the hole that they've dug.."

Phyllis reported that they frequently see bears on their land. And she said she recently saw a sow and cub in a corn field that was being harvested.

A full-body mount

After paying \$75 to keep the bear, Neil is having the bear full-body mounted by Tom Persons, owner of TP Taxidermy.

"He's hardly ever had time to hunt or fish or anything because of farming," Phyllis said of Neil. "And so, he's going to keep the bear, and he's going to have it mounted.. He's really proud of his trophy." She said they were told by Persons that he'll have to use a grizzly bear form to mount the bear because there aren't black bear mounts big enough to do the job.

Person reportedly also believes the bear to be 15 to 20 years old, but a tooth will be pulled during the mounting process to determine its age..

Here's the rest of the story:

"Updated: 1/29/2009 11:42:05 PM

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Extra Version #2

DNR: Bear was shot dead before hit by combine

By Joe Knight
Leader-Telegram staff

A 57-year-old North Dakota man accused of illegally shooting a large black bear in Dunn County during November's deer gun hunting season is expected to be charged.

The bear, which may have weighed more than 700 pounds, was initially reported to have been killed by a combine.

The hunter, a former Dunn County resident, was hunting Nov. 25 on the Schlough farm, 20 miles north of Menomonie, when he shot the bear, according to the state Department of Natural Resources.

The DNR is not releasing the name of the accused shooter and other details of the case until the Dunn County district attorney files charges.

The suspected bear shooter, of West Fargo, N.D., has admitted to shooting the bear, after being interviewed by conservation wardens from North Dakota and Minnesota, according to state officials.

The Leader-Telegram reported in a Dec. 11 story that the bear had been killed by a combine the evening of Nov. 26 while it was hibernating in a field of standing corn, based on an interview with Phyllis Schlough, who owns the farm with her husband, Neil, who drove the combine.

A warden inspected the bear and, after some haggling, sold it to the Schloughs for \$75. Phyllis Schlough said they intended to have it mounted.

The Schloughs are not expected to be charged with any wildlife violations, and the story they told the DNR and the media about hitting the hibernating bear with a combine may be essentially correct, said David Hausman, a warden supervisor with the DNR based in Baldwin. However, it is also clear that the bear had already been shot when Neil Schlough encountered it while harvesting corn, Hausman said.

"It was definitely dead when he hit it with the combine," he said.

The DNR has confiscated what remains of the bear from a taxidermist, including the hide and skull. An inspection of the skin showed two bullet holes, Hausman said.

The Schloughs will get their \$75 back but not the rest of the bear, he said.

"The statutes state that unlawfully taken wildlife shall be retained by the state," Hausman said. Also, the DNR has a policy of using "exceptional" wildlife specimens for education or displaying them in a public place, he said.

The field-dressed bear weighed about 618 pounds when it was weighed on Thanksgiving, Phyllis Schlough said. It may have weighed more than 700 pounds when alive, which is unusually large for a black bear.

The DNR warden who inspected the bear initially didn't suspect the bear had been shot, but additional information caused wardens to take a closer look at its remains, Hausman said. The DNR will release more details after charges are filed.

A red flag for wardens was that a man hunting with the accused shooter tried to buy a bear permit the day it was shot.

"After they killed the bear, they thought they could find a permit for a bear, not knowing how the season framework works in Wisconsin," Hausman said.

By late November the state's bear season had been over for weeks, and hunters who apply for bear permits must wait for years to receive one, he said.

Bears are measured for the record book based on the dimensions of the skull, not on weight. Hausman said he expected the skull would be measured once it has gone through a required drying period.

"It is big," he said. "Whether it's a state record of some sort, we're not sure yet."

The Schloughs could not be reached for comment Thursday."

So now we have apparently the same bear story from two different states.

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Extra Version #3

Here's what happened.

BISMARCK, N.D. - A North Dakota man accused of illegally killing a 700-pound black bear in Wisconsin told authorities he had gone deer hunting and mistook the bear for a big buck, a game warden says.

Michael C. Graff, 57, of West Fargo, was charged Monday in Dunn County, Wis., with hunting bear during a closed season, shooting or harming a hibernating bear, and shooting a bear without a license.

Graff is slated to appear in court on March 22, said David Hausman, a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources warden supervisor. Graff faces up to 27 months in jail and \$30,000 in fines if convicted on the misdemeanor charges, the warden said.

Telephone calls to Graff's home on Wednesday were not answered.

Wardens initially believed the bear had been killed by a combine in a corn field in November in northwest Wisconsin, but a tip from a citizen led authorities to Graff, Hausman said.

Wildlife officials in North Dakota and Wisconsin were involved in the investigation, he said.

Graff later told authorities that he shot the bear while deer hunting, and mistook the sleeping bruin for a big buck, Hausman said.

Graff has relatives in Wisconsin, Hausman said.

"That's what brought him here to hunt deer," Hausman said. "During the hunt, he encountered a hibernating bear in a corn field, and he shot it."

Hausman said the bear was hit by a combine the next day, and the farmer, Neil Schlough, believed he had killed the animal and notified

authorities.

"At that time, we didn't have any reason to believe it had been shot," Hausman said.

"We seized the hide and the skull as evidence of a crime," he said.

Hausman said the farmer who thought he had killed the bear with his combine wants the carcass, and has threatened to sue to get it back.

"The farmer wants it back but I'm not going to speculate if that will happen," Hausman said.

The bear could challenge the Wisconsin record for its size, Hausman said.

The size of the skull is what it takes to get it into the record book, Hausman said, but no official measurement had been taken as of Wednesday.

"A 400-pound bear is a big bear and this one is alleged to be more than 700 pounds," Hausman said.

He would like to see the stuffed carcass on public display.

"Because of its unusual size, and the unusual case, it has a lot of interest," he said.

Deer on my walls, Deer in my freezers, Deer on my shirts, Deer on my calendars, Deer hair tumble weeds on the shop floor, Deer in my life,

Last edited by Paul Thompson; 01-19-2010 at 10:57 AM.

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