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Mountain

# Hunter

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**A Bear Named  
destiny**

**Choose Canada for Your  
next hunt**

**Fourth Quarter  
bruins**

**Big Boar  
black bear**

**Finlay River  
billy!**

**Risky?  
You Bet!**



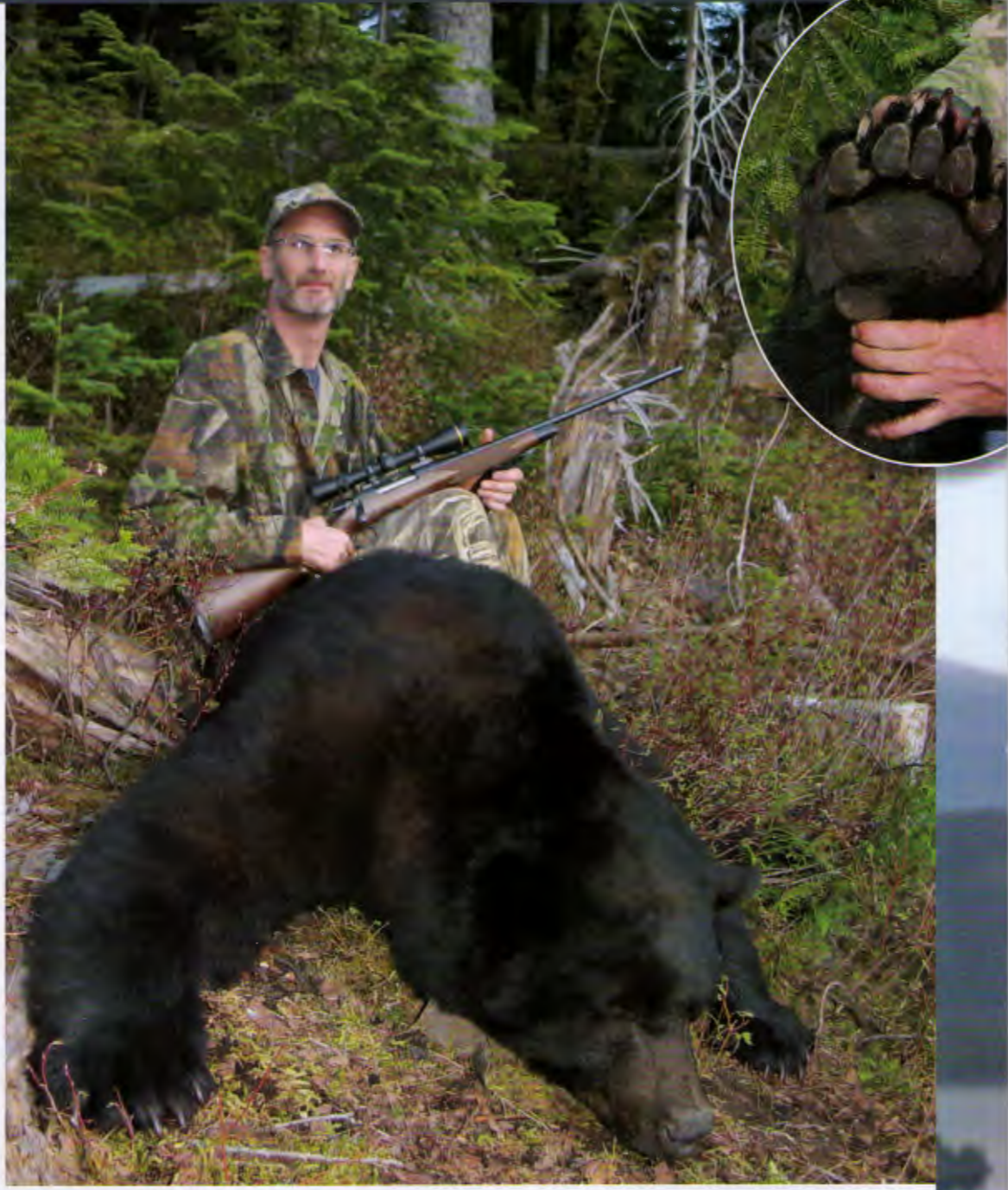
# A BEAR *named.*

story by Andy Hahn

Silently admiring my first-ever black bear, I felt awestruck by the bruin's size. Events leading up to this hunt left no doubt that our paths had crossed because of fate, not blind luck. Yet it often takes hard work and perseverance to help events unfold even when they "are meant to be."

When I decided to go on a spring bear hunt the first step involved researching possibilities on the Internet. Since I live in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I wanted to make the trip to bear country well worth the cost and effort. It didn't take long to realize that British Columbia held fantastic opportunities, and I was considering several outfitters in the Prince George area that offered reasonable prices and very good chances of bagging a blackie. Before finalizing any choices I consulted some professional contacts and this opened the door for fate to step in.

My job as Senior Editor of *Sport Fishing* magazine puts me in touch with charter captains and guides in many of the world's premiere saltwater angling destinations. When I mentioned my bear quest to David Murphy, who operates fishing lodges in several locations on Vancouver Island, he recommended Darren DeLuca of *Vancouver Island Guide Outfitters*.



# DESTINY

Some quick research revealed Vancouver Island's reputation for producing trophy-class bears, so I traded a few emails with Darren and scheduled a hunt for mid-April 2006. "Bring waders," he wrote. "In the early season we often hunt from boats, looking for boars on grass flats along the rivers."

Seems there's no derailing destiny once it starts rolling. My editor-in-chief confirmed an assignment to cover the salmon and halibut fishing at Sund's Lodge on Malcolm Island (just off the northern tip of Vancouver Island) in mid-June. What are the odds? A business trip – yes, outdoor writers can refer to fishing as "business" – to the same Island I planned to hunt! Rather than travel the long diagonal from the southeastern part of South America to North America's northwestern edge twice in a two-month span, I decided to combine my hunting and fishing for a BC blast and cast. Darren graciously adjusted his schedule to host me June 5 to 9 so I could then stay on the Island and head north for "urgent business" after the hunt.

Fate wears two faces; one smiles and the other frowns. In September 2005 my doctor diagnosed me with ALS, a neurological disorder that robs the body of strength and coordination in a gradual, tortuous process. By May I was experiencing difficulty walking and relied on a staff to keep my balance. The doctor advised against any hunting trips

but I matter-of-factly told him it would be far worse for me if I didn't go. My wife, Ligia, agreed that facing such challenges outweighs the pain of regretting missed opportunities for the rest of one's life.

June finally arrived and we began the trek to British Columbia. While hurrying to make a connection at the Dallas airport I was stopped by security agents because my reading glasses set off the metal detector. Most people would just feel their heart skip a beat in reaction to the surprise and sudden jolt of adrenaline; however, my neurological condition caused my legs to shake so badly that I had trouble standing. Although we sorted out the problem quickly, my legs kept trembling for another 20 minutes.

The remainder of the trip went well and Darren greeted us in Port Alberni around noon on Sunday, June 4. He explained that he usually wraps up his spring hunts by mid-May, but had made an exception to accommodate my travel schedule. "None of the guides have been afield for nearly three weeks. It might take a day or two to figure out the best areas," he warned. "The bears are harder to pinpoint now because they don't eat much fresh grass this late in the season. They scatter in search of other vegetation, grubs, whatever they can find. And the rut is in full swing so the big boars tend to stay on the move."

*"Fate wears two faces;  
one smiles and the other frowns."*





My guide, Kim Cyr, arrived soon after we reached the lodge. He suggested we get started hunting right after lunch. Upon rescheduling my hunt for June, Darren had told me to leave the waders at home. Kim explained the strategy we'd follow: Drive along logging roads, making frequent stops to glass clearings and slashes to locate bears. This style of hunting suited my physical condition much better than climbing in and out of a skiff.

Ligia joined us for the afternoon hunt and marveled at the mountains' rugged beauty. We saw Blacktail Deer and quite a few grouse, both ruffed and blue. The only bear we spotted was a young adult among whitened stumps in a logging slash. Definitely not a shooter but we had broken the ice!

The next day we saw eight bears, including juveniles, small adults and several sows with cubs. Numerous piles of bear scat littered the old logging roads, and Kim pointed out saplings that had been broken by boars to mark their territory. "Bears use these roads as game trails, so there's a good chance we'll bump into one if we put in the time," he said. "It'll be impossible for you to do any stalking in a slash because of the stumps and downed timber. We have to find the right bear in the right place."

Tuesday's hunt brought only two sightings by 6:30 p.m. Suddenly the moment of truth came as we rounded a bend on a rather open mountainside to see what resembled a black and furry VW Beetle on the road 100 yards ahead of us. Kim stopped the truck and I stepped out, pushing the clip into the .30-06. The big bear turned to face



us, then sat on its haunches. Kim handed me the shooting stick to support the rifle. "There's your shot," he said softly. "Center of the chest."

Easier said than done! Similar to the airport incident, the adrenaline surge at sighting our long-sought quarry caused muscle spasms in my legs. I didn't risk a shot because the dancing crosshairs would not hold steady. While I took a deep breath to regain my composure, the bear flopped down to lie in the middle of the road. "No shot there. Let's wait for him to get up," Kim advised.

The bear rose after a few minutes and, incredibly, began walking slowly toward us. Twice it stopped and turned to offer me a perfect broadside opportunity, but my Human Earthquake act kept me from locking confidently on target. Kim showed tremendous patience and understanding while waiting for my tremors to subside. And the bear kept plodding toward us. It finally stopped at a range of just 40 yards. After sniffing the air, the bruin turned and started ambling ever so slowly away from us. "This could be our last chance, Andy," Kim said calmly. "Better take your shot."

BAM!

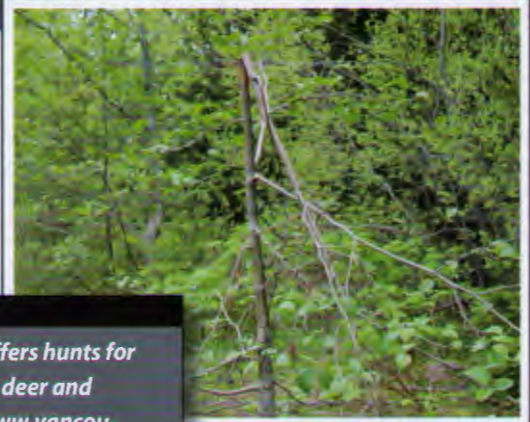
I tried to place the bullet in the bear's ribs but the angle proved too steep. Wounded in the right hip, it scrambled into the timber where I was unable to follow. I could only watch as Kim found the blood trail and disappeared in the woods. Several eternities passed before his .300 spoke once. A minute later he waved from the edge of the timber and shouted, "We got him! And he's HUGE!"

I hadn't dared to dream of harvesting such a trophy: The hide squared at 7 feet 2 inches and the skull scored 20 9/16 inches. Kim deserves all the credit for our successful hunt. He never backed down from the challenge of finding "the right bear in the right place" for a hunter with limited mobility.

When we got back to the lodge that night I told Ligia how the bear had given me numerous shot opportunities. It seemed willing to wait – and even closed the distance to make things easier – until I could finally pull the trigger. Perhaps destiny intended for me to take this particular animal and the bear accepted its fate. Ligia nodded knowingly and said, "You were blessed with this bear." ■

### EDITOR'S NOTE

VANCOUVER ISLAND GUIDE OUTFITTERS offers hunts for spring and fall black bear, cougar, blacktail deer and Roosevelt elk. For more information visit [www.vancouverislandguideoutfitters.com](http://www.vancouverislandguideoutfitters.com), call 250-724-1533 or write them at Box 1062 Station A, Port Alberni, BC V9Y 7L9.



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