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Guide to Hunting
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# 1982 Maine Guide to Hunting

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**Editor**  
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**Publisher**  
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A Publication of  
THE STATE OF MAINE PUBLICITY BUREAU, INC.  
In Cooperation with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Welcome, hunters!

I am pleased that you have chosen the Great State of Maine as your hunting spot for this year. With more than 17,000,000 acres of forested land, and a total area nearly as large as the rest of New England, Maine's potential as a productive hunting state is one of the best in the nation!

Whether you are planning a hunting trip to Maine, or have already arrived, it is my hope that this booklet will help you. It is filled with valuable information concerning hunting seasons, license fees, and accommodations for hunters, and represents a major effort on the part of the Maine Publicity Bureau to keep Maine's sportsmen informed.

There is one other publication that every hunter should have however -- and that is the current hunting regulations summary. In it you will find the specific and general laws and regulations pertaining to hunting in the Pine Tree State, as well as a complete breakdown of season dates, some of which change every year. If this hunting regulations pamphlet was not supplied with your license, ask for it! It's a great help!

As you travel through Maine, don't hesitate to seek assistance from members of the Maine Warden Service. For everything from directions to interpretations of the law, the wardens are there to help -- and they know their business!

Again, thank you for choosing the Great State of Maine for your hunting experience -- and good hunting wherever you go!

Sincerely,

Glenn H. Manuel
Commissioner
Mentioning hunting in Maine usually connotes a scene where a nimrod is stalking an antlered whitetail deer. But for anyone truly familiar with the state no other place offers more diversified opportunities to share in a sport that still remains attractive to more than twenty million people nationally.

Assorted waterfowl, the kind of upland birds generally known as the ruffed grouse — partridge by Mainers —, migratory woodcock produced in large quantities in native coverts, bear, small game including the long-stepping varying hare or snowshoe rabbits, bobcats, squirrels, raccoons, are available to hunters in Maine.
Deer are the most popular attractions to resident hunters and the non-residents as well. This fall the state will be divided into three zones for the open season. (For a complete season schedule see page 5).

All of Maine is good deer range although in recent years the heart of the state has been considered the leading producer of whitetails to the gun. There are opportunities for both long and short range hunting and in much of the state nimrods have a fairly good chance of spotting a bear while looking for deer.

Waterfowl and woodcock seasons are set by the Department of the Interior but usually take place in conjunction with partridge season.

Salt water marshes, including famous Merrymeeting Bay which is the only area where loads in 12 gauge guns are barred, lakes, bogs and rivers offer excellent gunning for such waterfowl as black duck, teal, mallards, ringnecks and Canada Geese.

The hunter who enjoys the companionship of a dog whether a retriever, pointer, flusher or courser can find Maine an ideal place. Any covert that may look good to a nimrod with some experience will usually hold birds.

While some of the range is posted, few land owners refuse hunters opportunity to enjoy their sport if they ask permission. Virtually all of the wildlands are open subject only to registration at some check points, where fees for road use may or may not be asked.

The easternmost state in the Union, a land of mixed growths, Maine becomes an autumnal galaxy of colors as myriad shades spread over the ridges to provide unforgettable settings during much of the hunting seasons.

But Maine weather and elements can be temperamental. The drowsy mildness of one fall day can be followed by the chilly heralds of winter, including early snowfall, the next day.

Whatever the hunter's objective, he should come prepared, bearing in mind that you always can remove clothing if you have it, can't put it on when unavailable. As important as any individual accessory is a compass and knowledge how to use it. With the modern network of roads, even in so called big woods, there should be no cause for anyone suffering the agonies of being lost for any length of time if he realizes the compass is his best friend while afield.

Another outstanding hunting feature in Maine is that you can step over a log without fear of coming down on a dangerous snake. There are none in the state.

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Western: Nov. 8-20

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Western: Oct. 1-Nov. 5

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Western: Nov. 22-Nov.24

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HUNTING MAINE BLACK BEAR

by H. Schmidt

owner of The "Driftwood" on the Upper Shin

Whether you are a veteran bear hunter or you are about to embark on your first trip, the excitement of the hunt begins long before you reach Maine. Even as you plan this trip in the comfort of your home, the adrenaline begins to flow as you picture yourself crouched in waiting for the black shadow of the woods.

As you excitedly plan your trip, remember that there is no way to guarantee that you will return from this adventure with a trophy. However, this is the time when you can do the most to improve your chances. As you choose the location of your hunt and prepare your gear, keep in mind the many other aspects of the hunt besides the moment when you aim at your bear.

The first thing to consider is your choice of accommodations. Try to choose a spot where the bear population is high and in good health. If at all possible, talk to someone who has been to the camp. Or speak directly to the owner.

Next you must take into account the type of climate you will encounter when you reach Maine. The fall in Maine can be quite fickle. You may start the day with comfortable temperatures in the sixties and end it with a snow flurry. Don't let your hunt be ruined by something as simple as not having the proper clothing. Consult the weather bureau or a local outfitter each day to be sure that you are prepared when you enter the woods.

At present, the spring hunt in Maine has been indefinitely canceled, but
should it be reinstated and you plan your hunt for that season, be sure to prepare for the infamous black fly. Arm yourself with a good bug repellent on the first day — by the second day it will be too late. The black fly has destroyed more bear hunts than the fear of "Blackie" licking his chops after he has spit out your belt buckle ever could.

The dates of this year's season center on the fall months. Many prefer this time of year because of the cooler weather and the clean air, which enhances the fever of the hunt. Additionally, the bear's fall pelt is considered to be the best by many veteran hunters. It is jet black and at its thickest in preparation for the coming winter. If you are lucky enough to see your bear moving about before you take aim, you will notice the almost anthracite blue-coal gloss when the pelt ripples.

Unfortunately, many bears do not enjoy such a luxurious pelt for an entire lifetime, if at all. I once trapped, ear tagged, and released a beautiful male bear that weighed 375 pounds. While we were tagging him, we looked him over thoroughly. His pelt was prime, he had very good teeth, and overall he was the picture of health. Two years later this same bear was taken by a hunter and he weighed in at 225 pounds. Not surprisingly, given the condition of his pelt, we found that he was loaded with worms. It is of course, impossible to give each bear a full examination before shooting him. But it is possible to take a good look at his pelt. If his pelt looks ragged and in poor condition, don't shoot! Wait a bit and the bear that you do want will come along.

Finally, be sure to check your weapon before you set off. You may only get one shot and you don't want to miss or cripple the animal because you didn't take those extra few minutes to "sight in."

As long as you are taking a minute for this, also take time to review the anatomy of the bear. Remember, a quartering away shot is the best, and if placed right it will take the bear down before he has gone more than thirty yards.

If you're lucky, you'll return home from your Maine hunting trip and begin making arrangements to have that long-wanted bear rug prepared. If not, don't despair. Your fond memories of this first, second, or tenth bear hunt in the North Woods will be enough to carry you through the next season. Good Luck!

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At seven o'clock on a November morning in the great north woods of Maine, the light is as faint as a two-bit flashlight, diffused by snow and fog and trees. Peering through the gloom, Center Merrill, a Vermonter hunting in Maine for his fifth time, spotted antlers, then the faint outline of a big deer. He pulled his gun, sighted through the haze and fired. A tree exploded. The deer vanished. There was no blood, no hair. Center sighed and figured he had blown his one chance at a big buck for the year.

Three days later, however, within a mile of his first shot, Center saw the buck again. He didn’t miss. The deer was a 6-pointer but big — very big — so big that four men spent five hours dragging it a mile and a half over bare ground.

When the buck was hauled up on a scale, it weighed 276 pounds, field dressed. Live it would have gone around 345. And that buck was only four and a half years old.
Center's trophy was not a record for Maine, but it was big enough to take top honors in The Maine Sportsman's annual Big Buck listing for the 1981 season. It certainly was big enough to raise most deer hunters' eyebrows an inch or two.

In northern Maine a 200-pound plus deer is considered a decent trophy but nothing unusual. In fact, I would wager that the biggest whitetail in the East — no, make that the biggest whitetail in the country — is walking around somewhere in Maine's great north woods right now.

Before you take me on at 6 to 1, consider this:

Last year more than 600 hunters entered deer weighing more than 200 pounds in that big buck listing. The previous year, a banner one for deer in Maine, over 800 big bucks were registered — more than 4.5 percent of the total buck kill for the state.

Although big deer are taken throughout Maine, the majority of those monsters come from the northern hunting zone, that upcountry part of the state north of the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks, which bisect Maine east to west on a course running through Greenville. That town, in fact, sees so many big deer pass through that, according to a friend of mine who lives there, no one would walk across the street to look at a deer unless it topped 250 pounds.

If that doesn't impress you, try this: In 1955 Horace Hinkley shot a buck that, after being field dressed and hung for three days, still weighed in at 355 pounds. Biologists estimated that deer's live weight to have been around 480 pounds.

Where did it come from? Northern Maine.

Surely the great north woods is the place to go for big deer. The country is hard, and the deer do not run in herds as they do in some places in New England. In an average year, 8 percent of the bucks taken in Maine will be five and a half years old or older; the average weight of those deer will be 184 pounds. **Average!** Furthermore, 60 percent of the deer taken in the northern zone will be bucks.

Push a pencil a bit, factor in the deer kill for last year, which was just average, and you will see that nearly 4600 bucks were bagged up north. Using the state-wide figure of 8 percent, at least 368 of those deer hit 184 pounds. But statewide figures don't apply up there. If you looked at the listing of 200 pounders, you would see that most of them come from up north. I would guess conservatively that 500 deer topping the 200-pound mark fell to hunters in the northern zone. And that is why I would bet that the country's biggest whitetail is now browsing around up there.

Maine whitetails are big for several reasons. First, there is a well accepted postulate in biology that says for a given species, the animals in the most northern range will have chunkier bodies than those in the temperate, southern range. The chunkier the body, the heavier the animal. Since northern Maine is in the extreme northern range of the whitetail, the deer there grow chunky — and big.

Second, there is good food in Maine, particularly in the northern zone, since much of that area is intensively logged. Logging means second growth; second growth means good browse; good browse means big deer.

Third, the older the deer, the bigger he grows until he reaches eight or ten. He then starts to go downhill (don't we all), losing body weight and showing inferior antler development. In the north woods of Maine, where property is measured in millions of acres, there is plenty of room for deer to roam, avoid hunters, and thus grow old.

The key to bagging a big deer in Maine, then, is to go to an area where
the deer have the opportunity to grow old. There is no one motherlode of these big deer. They are scattered about the northern reaches of the state in remote pockets. Your mission (should you decide to accept it) is simply to get back in to those remote areas.

Such advice has a string attached to it, however, like a good news-bad news joke. The good news is that you can find such a remote spot — there is plenty of opportunity to do so in northern Maine; look at a map and you will see areas as remote as any you can imagine. You inevitably will find big deer there. The bad news is that those spots are very hard to hunt.

Before you pack your kit and buy an oversized freezer, realize that hunting Maine’s north country is far different from hunting some 40-acre woodlot. The woods here are big. You must be prepared. A mistake in the backcountry could be more than an embarrassment; it could be your epitaph.

Make sure you know how to use a map and compass. Get topographic maps of the areas you plan to hunt and study them carefully, memorizing major terrain features. When you get to Maine, inquire locally about logging roads that probably do not show on your maps. Those roads may save you much walking and can serve as important landmarks in the woods.

Make sure you are in good condition and well dressed for severe weather. Carry a small survival kit: matches, food and some kind of shelter — a small tarp or a Space Blanket. Tell someone responsible where you are going. And don’t go alone.

When you are ready — mentally and physically — you should decide where to go and how to get there. You have several options.

The easiest way to hunt the north woods is to stay in a motel or a hunting camp and drive to the area you plan to hunt each day. Greenville, which is the hub of northern Maine, has several motels, and all through the north country you can find sporting camps — some very remote. Since there is such an extensive network of logging roads, you can literally drive to within a few miles of very remote country. Be alert for new roads, cut each year, that may open up new areas. Just remember to look out for logging trucks and skidders and respect private property. Maine’s paper companies are really great about allowing hunters the use of their land. Abide by their wishes.

You might consider flying back to a remote lake and setting up your own camp. Folsom’s Flying Service in Greenville will put you down on a gob of spit, then pick up you (and your deer) at a predetermined time later on. Just remember that if you fly in, you will be on your own. If that bothers you, there are several commercial sporting camps on backwoods ponds accessible only by air.

Finally, consider doing it on your own. Really on your own. By pack or canoe you can penetrate to the heart of the north Maine woods and conceivably have a crack at a deer that has never seen a man. That sort of trips takes much planning.

You will have to buck severe weather, slash, blowdowns, thickets, swamps, rivers and contend with the chance of getting lost. If you are good — and lucky — you may get to an area where no one has hunted for years and find some monster whitetail around eight years old, a prime buck pushing a quarter of a ton. Keep your wits, shoot straight and you will be a legend. That is, until the next big buck comes out of Maine’s great north woods.
MAINE GUIDE TO HUNTING

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The ruffed grouse is the most popular game bird in Maine. Of the top five grouse hunting states, Maine enjoys the highest hunter success. Distributed throughout all of Maine, the grouse is most fond of the mixed growth, second growth, old burns, and abandoned farmlands. They are hunted statewide except in urban areas or where their habitat has otherwise been destroyed.

Hunting along roads, by driving or walking, is the usual method of finding grouse in the thick, coniferous forests of northern and western Maine, generally north of the Appalachian Trail (it should be noted that it is illegal to carry a loaded firearm in a motor vehicle). More typical grouse hunting conditions exist throughout eastern, coastal, and southern counties and bird dogs are most effectively used here.

The leading fall food item is apple (leaves, buds, and fruit), and successful grouse hunters are usually found in and around old orchards and scattered apple trees. Clove, quaking aspen, white birch, beechnuts, and hawthorne are also important fall foods.

Grouse population cycles are often a subject of discussion, and although hunting may be better one year than the next, there is no well-defined grouse cycle in Maine. Periods of abundance or scarcity may exist locally but not simultaneously in all sections of the state. Hunting pressure succeeds only in making the grouse more wary and had little effect on the population.

The woodcock has gained tremendously in popularity both in Maine and throughout its entire range. The best estimates available indicate a rangewide annual harvest of about 1.4 million — about 70 per cent increase from the mid-1960s.

This secretive, little bird is a prized upland game bird among sportsmen using pointing dogs. Much of the southern two-thirds of Maine offers favored woodcock habitat — young, second growth woods; bushy pastures; and
abandoned fields. The best hunting for this species is in the coastal belt and major river valleys.

Hunting in the early part of the season is largely for local or “native” birds that have nested and spent the summer in Maine. Later — depending on the phase of the moon, the vagaries of the weather, and migration instincts — the flight birds filter down through the state and provide spectacular shooting for gunners lucky enough to find them. The flights usually peak in late October and early November. The best late-season shooting is along the coast and on certain coastal islands.

RING-NECKED PHEASANT

Pheasant hunting in Maine depends largely on a stocking program. About 9,000 birds are being raised this year and will be released in suitable areas prior to and during the fall hunting season.

Maine is marginal range for pheasants, due primarily to a shortage of good winter food supplies in close association with good protective cover. Only a small number of pheasants taken in the fall are carry-over or wild-bred birds.

Most pheasant hunting takes place in coastal, south-central, and southern counties. The greatest number of birds are stocked in good covers in areas where there is the greatest interest in pheasant hunting, as determined by sportsman participation in the Department’s co-operative pheasant rearing program.

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The Maine Publicity Bureau has been providing a free, complete and personalized information service about the Pine Tree State, its resources, facilities and accommodations for nearly 60 years. It is a pioneer among state-wide publicity and promotional agencies and has been of valuable service to millions during these years.

You, too, are cordially invited to make full use of our services—free at all times—when planning your visit and after you arrive in Maine. Our sincere wish is to help make your visit to the State of Maine as enjoyable as possible.

Maine Information Centers have been located at the following places for your traveling convenience.

- **AUGUSTA** (summer)
  54B Western Avenue

- **BANGOR** (summer)
  Bass Park, 519 Main Street

- **BETHEL** (summer)
  Jct. Routes 2 and 113

- **CALAIS** (summer)
  North Street

- **FRYEBURG** (summer)
  U.S. Route 302

- **HOULTON** (summer)
  U.S. Route 1

- **KITTERY**
  Between I-95 and U.S. Route 1

- **OLD TOWN**
  I-95, off Stillwater Avenue Exit

- **PORTLAND**
  142 Free Street

In addition to the above Official Information Centers, you will find allied offices located at more than 40 strategic points throughout Maine.

For further information about the State of Maine, please write:

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