

# OUTDOORS

C-12  
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## Bear hunter blessed with beginner's luck bags record

By Ed Culhane

Post-Crescent staff writer

Howard Schwamer got the meat back from the processor this week. All 355 pounds of it.

That's a lot of bear meat, more than most folks have in the freezer.

"I have my family to help me eat it," said Schwamer, who is 65. "We're going to be eating it for quite a while."

The bear weighed 588 pounds when living, when Schwamer first saw its nose and then its head coming out of the brush in Bayfield County, in far northwest Wisconsin.

It was a huge bear - not the biggest ever shot in Wisconsin, but big enough in all likelihood to put Schwamer's name in the

Boone & Crocket record book. In Wisconsin, most bears shot weigh 250 to 350 pounds. A 450 pound bear is big.

Schwamer shot this bruin on the second day of the first bear hunt he ever attempted. Given the years it could take to draw another tag, it could be his last bear hunt as well.

"I am going to be satisfied with what I have," he said. "It's a once in a lifetime."

He's been hunting for most of that lifetime, since he was old enough to walk in the woods with a .22 rifle and bring home small game. Mostly it's been deer hunting, with gun or bow, but he's made a few trips out west, hunting antelope and mule deer.

This year he was in a hurry to wrap up the bear hunt because he was scheduled to leave for Colorado to hunt elk. He was surprised

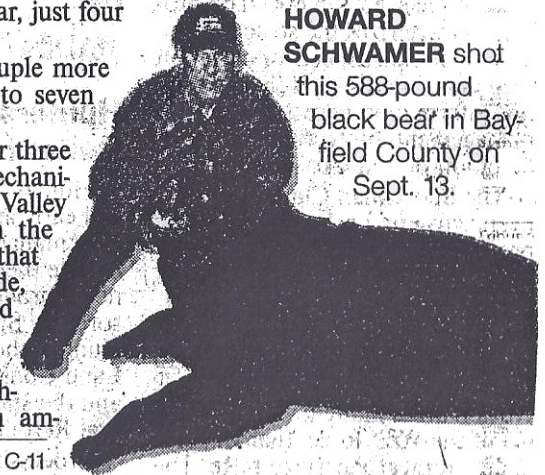
when he drew a bear tag this year, just four years after he began applying.

"I thought it would take a couple more years. They say it can take up to seven years."

Schwamer has been retired for three years. Before that he worked mechanical maintenance for the Fox Valley Technical College. It was from the conservation instructors there that he got the name of a bear guide, Keith Holly of Iron River. He held on to that name for years.

There are two ways to hunt bear in the dense forests of northern Wisconsin. You can sit in am-

**HOWARD SCHWAMER** shot this 588-pound black bear in Bayfield County on Sept. 13.



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