

The ALLIGATOR HUNT

— LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #273 —

They call it alligator hunting, but you could just as easily call it alligator fishing. Actually, it takes a combination of hunting and fishing to get the gator on the boat. First, you gotta hunt to find him, then you gotta catch him with fishing poles. Sometimes the first sighting is through someone’s binoculars, as the gator lies on the bank sunning in the distance. Other times, it’s looking at him on a “fish finder” screen, after he has splashed in and is laying on the bottom in 25 feet of water.

This was a guided, private land hunt in Florida. Within the regulations and quotas, an outfitter can take clients alligator hunting all year long. They use heavy-duty fishing rods, with big treble hooks, specialized boats, a fish finder, and the most interesting thing – a “bang stick,” with

which they “dispatch” the alligator with a bullet in the brain.

The “Bang Stick” is a simple tool; it likely got started in the SCUBA diving industry, as a defensive

underwater gun. It is a contact firing gun (no trigger) – the firing pin is fixed; when the front of the bang stick is forced abruptly against the head of an alligator, the cartridge moves back and the primer makes contact with the firing pin. The cartridge fires and the bullet exits the chamber (end of the stick) and into the alligator’s head. This typically happens just under the surface of the water and doesn’t make much noise.

The hunting was very straightforward. We launched the



Results of the first day’s hunt; granddaughter Eliza, daughter Sara, myself, Brenda and grandson Jay. Now, to be fair; I was just along for the ride!

boats in old, abandoned phosphate pits that had naturally filled with water — about 20-30 feet deep. Cruising around the edge of these pits, we would surprise an alligator that was out sunning on the bank. The gator went immediately for the water and the hunt was on, using the fish finder.

With heavy duty fishing poles and big treble hooks, we would cast over the gator and hook him as the line was

“The gator went immediately for the water...”

retrieved. Sounds easier than it is! One hook/line really isn’t enough, so a second hookup is required. With two hooks in a gator, you can get him to the boat, but regularly a hook pulls out and you have to re-engage. Sometimes both hooks pull out and you have to start all over. We hooked up with five alligators on this trip. While we had some get “un-hooked,” we never lost one. Interesting hunting/fishing trip — for alligators.



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Jay and one of the guides are hooked onto a gator, at the bottom of this phosphate pit — about 30 foot down. Brenda’s gator is already on the boat.



The alligator is still hooked and has a rope over his mouth. All that’s left is poke him in the brain with the “Bang Stick” (orange rod), then bring him onto the boat.