

## Finding New Foundland



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

A couple years ago, a long-time hunting buddy of mine and I were trying to come up with a hunting trip. We wanted something that would be an adventure as well as a hunt we have not done. We decided on a moose hunt in New Foundland/Labrador in Canada. We took the trip this past September, and it turned out to be way more than we expected.

New Foundland and Labrador is the newest of Canada's 10 provinces, joining in 1949. Post World War II the Truman administration gave consideration to New Foundland becoming a U.S. Territory. It is the most eastern island in North America and was thought to be a possible military base during the Cold War.

The Island has a total of 14,400 miles of seacoast and the total area covers 42,000 square miles or roughly half the size of Colorado. The population is just over a half million people. I found the residents to be the friendliest and most laid back folks I have run into anywhere.

Four moose were introduced to the island in 1904 and that population has swelled to 150,000 today. Moose hunting was the reason my hunting buddy and I were there, with the Shiras Moose being one of the critters on my bucket list.

The island also has a substantial population of caribou but their numbers are decreasing. The government is currently studying for reasons why but the locals blame the decrease on the over population of coyotes. I encountered coyotes every morning while there, but saw no small game such as rabbits. Perhaps there is a bit of truth to this hypothesis.

The area we hunted was a wilderness area, located in the south central region of the country. It comprises many square miles of government owned Crown Land, which is similar to our BLM lands. This area is the wettest and soggiest bog I have ever seen.

You would have to search to find a piece of solid ground, but the area is strewn with large boulders. The area we were in has an annual precipitation of over 64 inches and I think most of it came during the time I was there.

This land is so remote that it is only accessible by seaplane or helicopter.



A wilderness area of New Foundland. The outdoors skills we learn are useful anywhere we go and this trip tested a few of those skills. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

We came in by chopper to a very primitive building that the crew affectionately referred to as "the lodge." The lodge came fully equipped with running pond water for cooking and washing; wood stove heat and outdoor refrigeration.

I still learn things about the outdoors every time I go out. My preferred method of education is the "hard way," and this trip was no exception. That rainfall came for 60 hours non-stop, with 30 mph winds and temperatures in the upper 30's as the remnants of Hurricane Jose went past. This was the classroom demonstration for my lessons on this field trip. There were times, admittedly, that I wished my wife had not signed my permission slip for me to take this trip.

The outfitter recommended knee high rubber boots as the preferred footwear for the trip. I showed up with a good pair of Muck Boots, although I doubted his judgment at the time, it was the right choice.

The ground is just a sponge; everywhere you go, with a collection of moss, lichen and berry plants. Standing water is everywhere you step, and many "sucker" holes are hidden, just waiting to break an unsuspecting ankle. I fell into a hole at least once a day. Other than my ego, I was fortunate not to break

anything vital. Even though we walked 8 to 12 miles a day, those boots were the right choice; that is until I tore a hole in the side. Next time I will carry a small repair kit with me. The duct tape did not hold up so well in the rough conditions.

I learned a long time ago that packs are not completely waterproof, no matter what the manufacturer claims. Zippers leak no matter what. I remedied that with a pack cover. It is simply a bonnet that covers the outside of the pack and sells for about 20 bucks. I used mine for the trip and my pack and contents stayed completely dry.

The biggest test of the trip was for my rain gear. Unfortunately, I do not have a solution but will share the problems encountered with you.

I carried two sets of rain gear on this trip. The one set is a very compact and lightweight outfit that packs up to the size of a softball. It stows neatly in a pack. This gear is great for those quick Colorado type-passing thunderstorms that usually end in a half hour or so. The material this gear is made of does not breathe and will make you wet inside with perspiration if you undertake any type of activity while wearing it. It is best to just put it on and hunker down until the shower passes.

The other set I brought along is the one I wore throughout the stormy days. This set is made of a Gore-Tex material and is much heavier in construction. It also has a lining in it to help wick away any accumulated perspiration. At least that's what the brochure said.

Wearing this gear for an entire day, carrying a 40-pound pack and a rifle, slugging it up and down the bogs, you are going to perspire. You can't take it off because of the falling rain either. This was a recipe for hypothermia if I wasn't careful, especially with the steady winds.

The only relief was to break off during the day at lunchtime into one of the small timbered areas and light a fire. Hard to imagine a fire in such a soggy environment, but we did, and it dried us out nicely.

The secret is finding dry firewood. Do not pick up wood from the ground as it is going to be full of moisture. Take your dead wood from standing trees. It helps to carry a fire starter with you, like a 5-gallon can of gas, but that was not practical. Here we used birch bark, which burns nicely, even when wet.

All in, I would say that this trip was one of the most physically and mentally challenging hunts I have ever been on. I learned a great deal about the

outdoors and will hopefully share some of it with you in future columns.

My buddy got a nice bull on the first day out, so he spent most of the trip staring out the "lodge" windows. I scored a great bull on the seventh day of the hunt, and I feel like I really earned him. I had the meat processed there and donated it to the guides and their families, as moose is a staple there. They do not have beef and I suspect it is because there is no solid ground for cattle to graze on.

Robert Ruark wrote about leaving pieces of your soul behind when you visit exotic places. He said you would never be complete until you return to collect the left behind piece. I will one day return to do this hunt again and not because I am a glutton for punishment, but because New Foundland is one of the greatest places I have ever seen and I left a part of my soul there. Until next time, see you on the trail. I will be the guy making the sloshing noises because of the water in my boots.

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## Catios: Giving felines safe places to enjoy the outdoors

By JIM WEIKER  
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Why do dogs get to have all the fun, with their fancy-schmancy dog houses, dog runs and dog beds?

Cats deserve some love, too.

And with "catios," they're getting plenty of it from some central Ohio homeowners.

Catios, like their occupants, can be many sizes, but they are basically screened porches for cats.

They allow indoor cats to leave the house without wandering off or getting exposed to other animals.

Larger catios can be closed off from the house with a door, just like a screened porch, but most are connected through a pet door or an open window, allowing cats to come and go

as they please.

Owners say catios have revolutionized their pets' lives. (The cats declined to comment.)

"They spend hours out there. My boy cat especially, Marley, begs to go out," catio owner Linda Blount-Jacobs said.

She built a second-floor catio on her home two years ago with the help of her father, Dave Blount.

Blount-Jacobs' catio is a screened space, 2 feet by 4 feet, that rests on the roof of her Florida room and is accessible from a second-floor window.

Dana Russell went a step — or two, or three — beyond. He built what amounts to an addition onto his South Side home for the eight indoor and two outdoor cats that he and his wife, Debbie, care for.

Two screened porches — one about 12 feet by 20 feet, the other about 4 by 8 feet — are attached to the rear of his home.

"They love it out here," Russell said.

Linda Orenchuk built a catio onto the back of her home for her five cats that, like Blount-Jacobs' catio, is accessible through a window. The space is more modest than Russell's, but the goal is the same.

"It just bothers me that a creature can't have sunlight or fresh air," Orenchuk said. "But if we let them out, there's the danger of disease or injury and they'll get the birds."

Cat experts say catios can serve important functions for cats, beyond simple exposure to the outdoors. Catios provide entertainment

and exercise, especially if they are outfitted with climbing structures.

"They're happier, like any of us, when they get a little exercise. They're less stressed," said Kellie DiFrischia, co-director of Columbus Dog Connection, an East Side rescue shelter for both dogs and cats. "It's visual stimulation. It's really invaluable."

"Giving the cats an opportunity to climb is important," she said. "It's such a natural behavior for cats and gives them an opportunity to get up high."

Columbus Dog Connection includes a 16 by 16 foot catio outfitted with logs and other play things. DiFrischia said the staff is hoping to expand the furnishings with some donated

lumber.

For cat owners considering building their own catio, experts caution that it's important to take the specific cat into consideration. Not all cats enjoy the outdoors, said Michelle Matusicky, an assistant professor at Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

"Although plenty of cats are in need of enrichment — and a catio could certainly provide it — plenty can either be outright frightened or overstimulated, which could result in further behavioral issues in the home," she said. "So watch your kitty closely if you are going to attempt to take him/her outside."

Some experts also cautioned that catios can potentially expose cats to fleas and diseases. Matusicky advised

pet owners who are building a catio to make sure it includes no sharp edges or isolated ledges that would require a dangerous leap. She suggested designing a space that includes plenty of interesting spaces for a cat to explore — paths, hiding spots and perches.

And finally, pet owners need to make sure any catio is secure. Orenchuk learned that lesson when she discovered an opossum in her catio one morning before letting her cats out.

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