

Learning to hunt—an adult perspective

By: Michelle Cain



Many people are surprised when they hear I'm a hunter. Maybe this is because I didn't start hunting until I was an adult or because I don't look like the typical hunter. Regardless, I am a hunter and proud to be able to say that I am. As a child my mom told me hunting was wrong. She would say "there's nothing fair about a person with a weapon versus a deer with nothing". What a strange perspective considering we ate beef, chicken, and pork. Surely, those animals did not have a fighting chance either. But as I grew into an adult, I formed my own opinions, some based on education (degree in wildlife biology) and some on personal preference for knowing where my food is coming from.

In 2009, at the age of 28, I decided I wanted to try deer hunting. I knew the first thing I needed was a mentor, so I walked down the hall at work and asked Nate if he would help me learn to deer hunt, from start to finish. He accepted the challenge. We went through everything from sighting in the gun to shot placement to

deer sign and where to sit.

When opening day of firearms season came around, I had a borrowed blind, a borrowed muzzleloader, a borrowed camouflage coat, and my own nerves and excitement opening morning as we left the house at 4 am. I headed to set up my blind and my husband headed to the tree stand a few fields away. We sat there all morning with, well, nothing. It was a crisp fall day and it was quite an experience sitting in the woods and watching the sunrise and the birds and squirrels become active. But I have to admit, I was hoping to get out there and see something that morning.

We took a lunch break to clear our head that afternoon and headed back out around 3:30pm. As I got back to my blind and start unzipping the windows, I hear some crunching. Sure enough there's a buck just standing there staring at me on the other side of my blind. My muzzleloader is inside the blind and not loaded (always be safe!). I slowly try to creep into my blind, cap my gun, and get a shot off.....no luck. I thought that's it, I won't have another opportunity today.

About one hour later, I hear some leaves crunching in the distance and then there he is, a spike heading right towards the blind. This is it, I thought, am I going to do this or not? I get my gun ready, and wait until I have the shot. I pull the trigger and bam! There's a cloud of smoke, a ringing in my ears, and I see the buck run off into the woods, his tail tucked. Now, my question is, did I hit him? I sit and wait for what seemed like an eternity, then I get out of my blind to look for blood. Just then I look up and see Nate walk up the field. He had come out to hunt after work and heard me shoot. He walked up and said "Do you want to see your deer?" It had walked right in front of where he was sitting and dropped. At this point, I'm in shock. I didn't realize I was successful. He asks if I want to track it and I say yes. At that moment we hear a shotgun blast from my husband. He had harvested his first buck too. Who's that lucky to harvest a deer on their first trip out within minutes of each other?

That was it, we were both hooked. The next hunting season proved to be much more challenging for both me and my husband. I ended up harvesting a doe after many days of sitting in the woods and my husband didn't get the opportunity to harvest anything.

I've had many people since tell me that I should let the little ones walk by. But honestly, I'm not hunting for a trophy; I'm hunting to eat the animal. I will respect any animal I choose to shoot; after all I made that decision. I will never say, "Man, I should've waited for a bigger one to walk by". That animal gave its life for me, and I will never be ashamed to say that I harvested that animal.