

I have come to realize that being a kid has many more advantages than disadvantages. One advantage is hunting. Not only do we get a break on the cost of licenses and fees, but we also have the opportunity to qualify for really nice hunts with youth organizations. In 2016, I and 9 other kids were lucky enough to be drawn for a doe, spike, and hog management hunt at the Bamberger Ranch in Johnson City Texas. This hunt was put on by the Texas Youth Hunting Program organization. One adult was allowed to go along with each youth, so I asked my dad to take me. I was allowed to miss school that Friday to make the 7 hour drive to be checked in by 2 pm that afternoon. At check in, we were told that I was the only girl on the hunt this weekend. That made me nervous, but I made the most of it. The ranch was beautiful and we saw deer and turkeys on the drive in. The bunk house had a huge sitting/dining area with the biggest fireplace I have ever seen. On each side of this room were large bunk rooms, one for girls and one for boys. After making sure my rifle was sighted in correctly, we sat down to a very good meal. The next morning my dad and I were paired with our volunteer guide for the hunt. Mrs. Koy was very nice and a fun person to talk to. The three of us sat in a box stand and waited for the sun to come up. I noticed movement around the feeder at first light. It turned out to be several large turkeys. They were off limits, but neat to watch. No whitetail came in that morning but we did have 3 Sika deer walk within 20 yards of the stand. I have never seen this exotic animal in real life, so I was very excited. After the hunt we were treated to a nice lunch and a tour of the ranch. We saw several types of exotic deer and antelope. The biologist talked to the group about how the ranch was converted back to natural grass lands and we even got to see dinosaur tracks that were in the rock on a hill top. The afternoon hunt was very slow with only a few birds at the feeder. Two of the other kids were able to kill a hog, but that was it. That night after supper two local game warden officers talked with us about their job and the importance of doing the right things while hunting.

The next morning we drew a stand that was known for having a lot of deer coming to the feeder. Sure enough at daylight we counted 16 bucks at one time. These were the biggest bucks my dad and I have ever seen. They were like the ones I see on TV hunting shows. Our new guide, Mr. Mike, was able to pick out the lone spike in the bunch. I was very nervous because when I looked through the scope all I could see was horns. These deer were very much off limits and would cost a fortune if we made a mistake and killed one. Finally the spike offered a clear shot and I took it. He did the death kick they do when they are hit well and ran around a clump of trees. After what seemed like an hour, but was really about fifteen minutes, we were able to go look for him. There was good blood at the feeder and a very good trail through the grass. After going over one hill, through a valley, across a small creek, and up another hill, we finally found him on top of that hill. My dad looked through his range finder to see how far he ran. The yardage read 350. The shot was perfect and when we field dressed the deer, we saw that the bullet went through the heart. He definitely had a will to live. When we returned to the camp, I was able to tell my story to several of the hunters that had already gotten back. After the story, it was time to clean the deer. The organization requires any youth who kills an animal to assist with cleaning it. This is not a problem for me because I help clean the deer at our family lease. After cleaning the deer and filling out the proper paperwork we packed up and made the 7 hour trip back home. It was a great weekend spent with my dad and the outdoors. And come to find out, the only deer shot and recovered that weekend was killed by the only female hunter, Me...

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