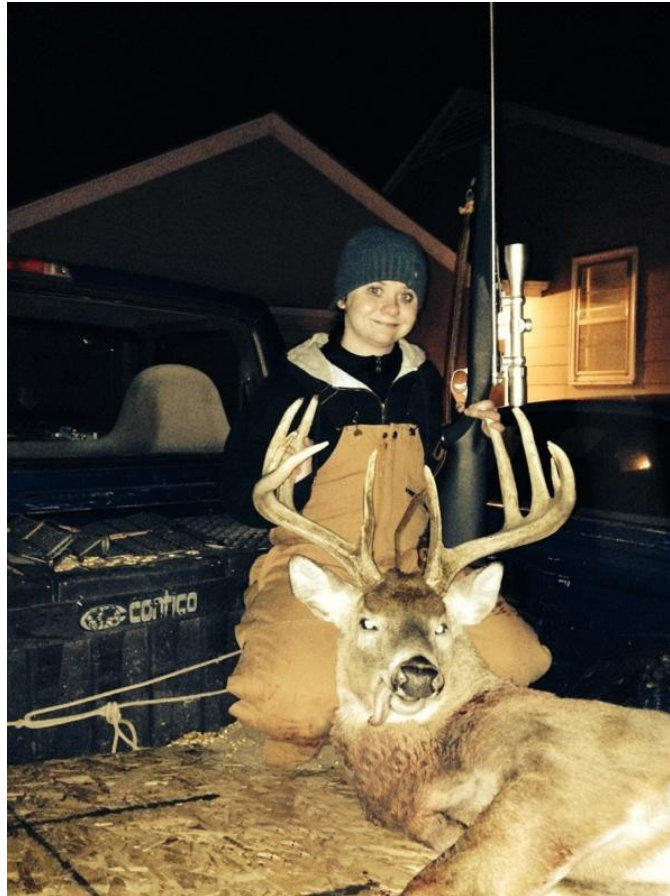


My First Buck

By: Erin Hamilton

As told to C.D. McNeal



Erin and her big buck

Photo courtesy: Marilyn Hamilton

I guess you can count me as one of those people who grew up in a family that appreciates the outdoors. Both my parents are hunters and you might say that I started tagging along on their trips from about the time I learned to walk. I never gave much

Because of the range the thought that I might actually get a shot at the buck was the last thing on my mind; that is why (some three hours later) when the buck suddenly appeared about sixty yards from us, it caught me completely by surprise. Kyle

thought to killing anything much less becoming a hunter. My main interest focused on the amazing natural beauty, of the wildlife, and all those things so many of us seem to take for granted.

Last June (2012) I received a rifle, a .243; the funny thing is that I didn't even know that I could shoot anything as large as a deer with it until Christmas which was why last year I had to settle for a doe. Of course, now I had to get a buck but would have to wait until opening day of this year to pursue one. For a person bitten by "the fever" a year can seem a long way off.

As a novice I needed help and that's where my boyfriend Kyle Kidwell came in. Kyle (a bow hunter) is a remarkable outdoorsman in his own right with a lot of experience and plenty of patience. He became my mentor and did all the leg work in getting me set up for this year's open.

We chose a portion of Clay County which turned out to be an excellent area with just the right habitat and signs. As it turned out we couldn't have made a better choice but I didn't think so at first. That morning going into the blind it was dark and cold and the only thing

gave a grunt and the deer stopped dead in its tracks and I took my shot.

Now as shots go it would have made seasoned deer hunters roll their eyes. There's just no candy wrapping it was just a plain bad shot and hit the animal in the neck but someone once said (I think it was Arnold Palmer) "I would rather be lucky than good." And that's exactly what the shot turned out to be because the big buck dropped dead in its tracks.

I am not sure that there are words to adequately express the range of emotions that come with such an experience, heart pounding, light headedness, joy, a touch of sadness at the sacrifice (on the part of the animal) to create such a memory, I don't know, but all the adjectives seem insufficient. What an experience!

I want to say that since my buck, my father has up-graded me to a 30.06 and Kyle (my bow hunting boy friend) bought me my own bow for Christmas and I am now ready for bigger game.

I promised though that I'll spend more time practicing my marksmanship. I owe it to myself

my dad, Kyle and I accomplished was freezing; we didn't see a thing.

and the animals I go after to become the best hunter I can become.

The afternoon was a completely different story; it was a gorgeous Kansas Fall afternoon; the surrounding colors were beautiful and sitting in the blind I took it all in. About 1:30 p.m. we noticed a buck chasing a doe in and out of the woods. It was truly a wonderful sight to behold; one of nature's scenes being played out by two of its most eminent performers.

Editor's note: Erin Hamilton is currently a nursing student at the Manhattan Area Technical College where she plans on graduating in May 2014.