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SPORTS

Busy week in the outdoors!

By Luke Clayton

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There are weeks when I find myself spending far more time in the studio recording the outdoor radio shows or on the computer writing than actually out and about in the outdoors. This past week was certainly not one of them. There was a lot of fun stuff going on, enough in fact to fuel several columns; let's just touch on some of the highlights.

The Dallas Safari Club was a huge success as always with scores of folks walking the aisles, enjoying the sensory overload. This convention truly is the greatest hunting show on the planet! Its proof positive that the love for the outdoors is strong, even into today's modern world. It was good to see parents and grandparents with their youngsters at the show. It's a fact that many youngsters of this generation are not partaking in the outdoors. This is something that we all need to work on.

I was privileged to be one of the three judges in Steven Ray's "Rattling Forks Antler Rattling Contest." Outdoor radio personality Billy Kinder was the MC of the event and Larry Weishuhn the chief organizer and ramrod. Well-known outdoor writer and host of the TV show *Winchester's World of Whitetails* Ron Spomer and Steven Ray were the other two judges. The contestants all did a remarkable job of using their Rattling Forks and mouth-blown deer calls to mimic a fight between two bucks. It was a tough contest to judge. The winner was Robert Blackstock, one of the hosts of B3 Films www.b3films.com.

Robert is also a bow technician at Bass Pro Shops in Garland. Blackstock won a 4-day hunt with Ray in West Texas next fall where I'm sure some really serious rattlin' will be taking place. I've hunted with Ray on the 10,000 acre ranch the past couple years and can attest to the number of big bucks on the ranch.

I was fortunate to help in the recovery of a youngster's first trophy boar this past week which really made the week special. Twelve-year-old Donovan Sowards has been hunting with his grandpa Paul Sowards for several years but, until last week, Donovan had yet to harvest his first game animal.

Donivan was indoctrinated into the ranks of hunters when a big, toothy black boar stepped out of the darkness one cold evening last week. We had no way of weighing him, but he was well over 200 pounds which I consider heavy for a truly wild hog that has to work for a living! We had seen his tracks on the lease where we hunt and he had shown up occasionally on trail cameras but when he eased out of the brush last week, Paul tells me Donivan's eyes were as big as saucers.

"The boy knew he was looking at a really big hog," says Paul. "The moment he came in, an owl hooted from a nearby tree and spooked the boar and several coons that were around the feeder. There was standing water in the adjacent woods and we could hear the hog walking. The aroma of the corn soon pulled him back in. Donivan had him shot the instant he turned sideways with his single-shot .223. The hog headed back into the standing water but soon hit a well-used hog trail. He went a circular route before intersecting the trail and we found him within about 70 yards from where he was hit."

Congratulations to Donivan and his grandpa and everyone else that takes the time in today's busy world to expose a youngster to the outdoors.



Donivan Sowards spent his time in a cold hunting blind after dark with his grandfather Paul Sowards to harvest this fine boar. *photo courtesy Paul Sowards*

With all the other “goings on” last week, I found time to do a little night hunting with a good friend on his little piece of “hog heaven.” A piece of my buddy’s property is isolated from the rest by water and receives almost no hunting pressure, thus the hogs are a bit easier to hunt than at many places. You have probably heard me bragging about the Nite Site night vision that I use. My goal on this hunt was to introduce my friend to this awesome, economically priced method of lighting up the night. We used a jon boat to access the hunting area and

settled into his roomy blind just before dark. The little Coleman heater soon took the chill off the night air.

When daylight faded into darkness, I turned on the Nite Site "Spotter" which, just like the NS scope mounted sight, works on infra red technology. He was soon scanning the field edges several hundred yards out. Like most people I've introduced to my Nite Site, he was instantly impressed. I also mounted the Nite Site on the rifle scope and he learned how easy it was to acquire the target in the darkness.

I've often said that you can learn more about a person during a two-hour sit in a hunting blind than spending hours together chit chatting at a dinner party. After we each gave accounts of past hunts and some past life events, my friend whispered he was looking at what appeared to be a BIG hog heading toward the feeder from the far side of the field.

The feeder was positioned about 220 yards from the stand and our intent was, once a shooter hog appeared, to close the distance by half and make the shot. As the lone hog made his way toward the feeder from one side of the field, we cautiously closed the distance from the other. On the edge of the woodline, about 80 yards from the feeder, my friend began scanning the night with the NS Spotter and I focused the Nite Site mounted on my rifle scope on the ground below the feeder. My goal was to shoot an "eater" pig for an upcoming sausage-making day. The hog that stepped into the Nite Site's viewfinder was definitely NOT what I was looking for.

This was a big old rank boar with obvious traits of the Hampshire breed in its distant bloodline. With a white band across his broad front shoulders, he was an imposing sight through the viewfinder. We watched the hog for a couple of minutes and true to the nature of all mature boars, he soon became nervous, grunted a couple of times and hightailed it to wherever lone boars go to spend a cold winter's night!

We're planning on round two with the porkers soon. My meat grinder and Smokin Tex electric smoker are on standby, ready to transform some fresh wild pork into smoked salami!

Luke will be at Hootens Hardware in Emory Saturday January 23 from ten until two for a book signing, celebrating the publishing of his new book, *Kill to Grill, the Ultimate Guide to Hunting and Cooking Wild Hogs*.

Listen out Outdoors with Luke Clayton and Friends on weekends on radio stations from Nebraska to Texas or online anytime at www.catfishradio.com

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