

NEXT GENERATION OF PATHFINDERS

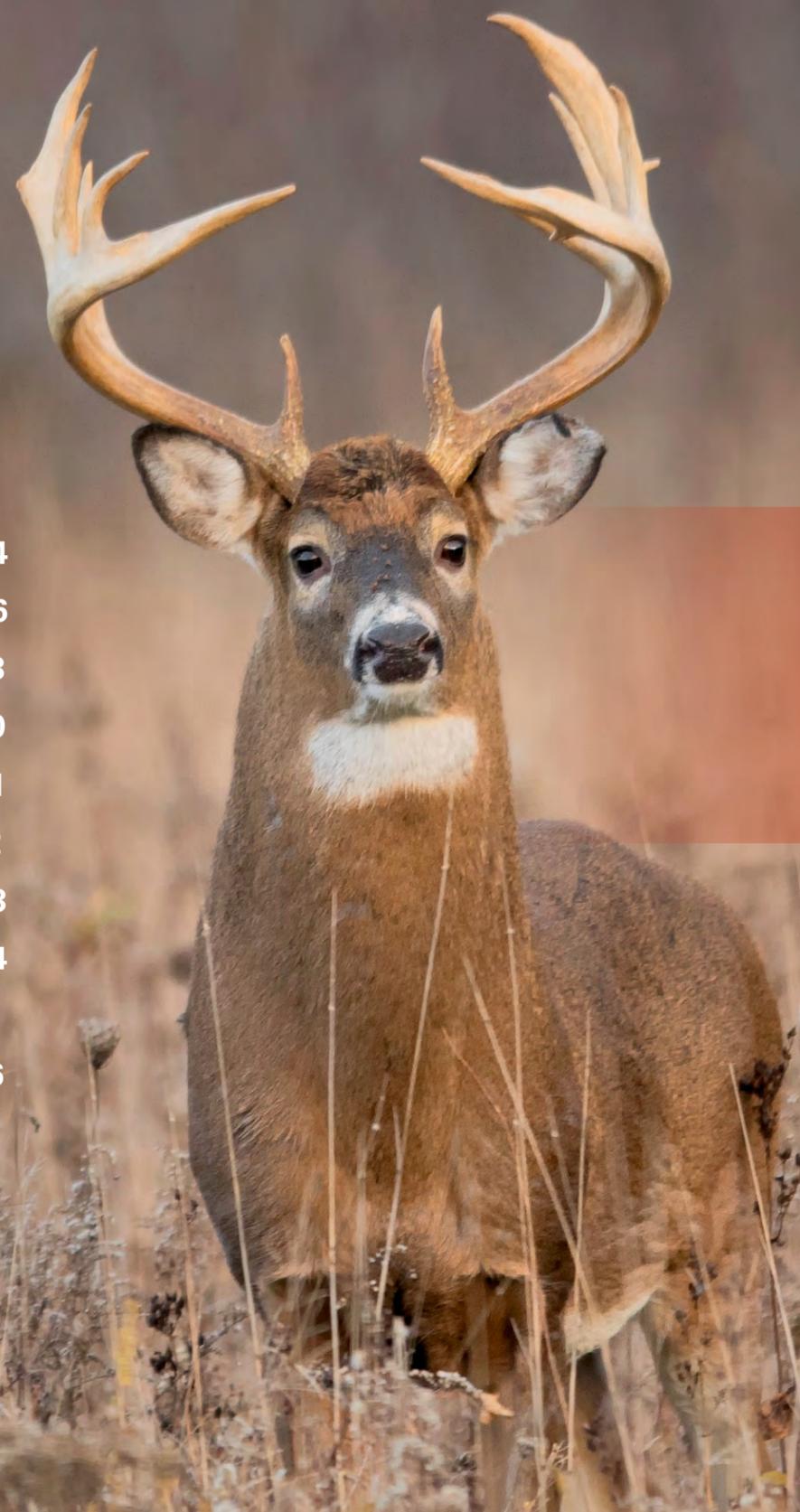


**WINNERS
ANNOUNCED**

See our NGOP
winners for 2019

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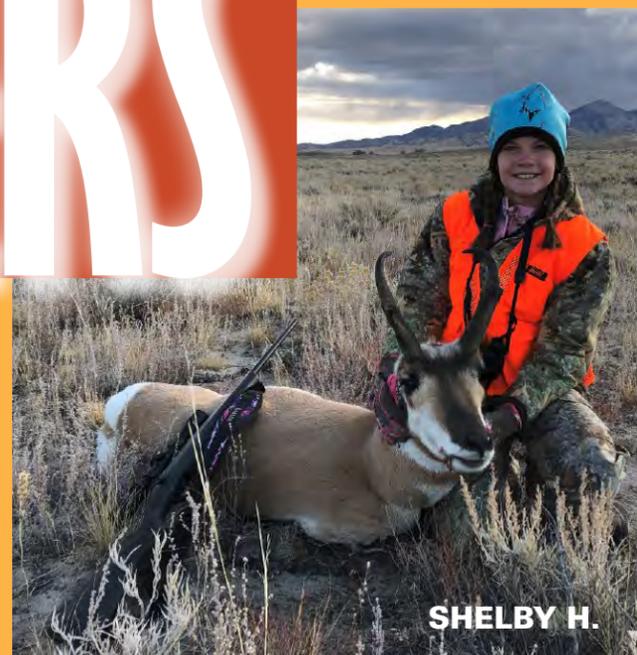
NEXT GENERATION OF PATHFINDERS

2019

WINNERS



WILL P.



SHELBY H.

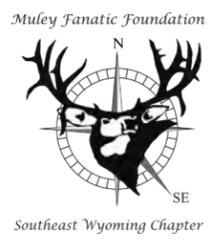
YOUTH OUTDOOR STORY & PHOTO ACTIVITY

Encouraging youth to explore the Wyoming outdoors through hunting and photo journalism.



TAVIA O.

SPONSORED BY:





ROCKY

by Tavia O.

My name is Tavia Ossa, I am 13 years old and a second-year hunter. My journey began even before the hunting season was open. For the past six weeks my dad I had been practicing shooting my rifle, a zebra-print 6.5 Creedmoor, a gift from my aunt and uncle the year before.

It was finally the day I had been waiting for ever since I heard about the Pathfinder Ranch, opening day of antelope rifle season. The day before, my little brother, Karsten; my dad, TJ; and I went deer hunting and scouting for antelope. It was around noon when Karsten finally spotted "The One." The minute I saw him I knew that was the antelope I wanted to shoot. We had seen quite a few nice bucks but none that really stood out. I was so excited about finding that buck, I could hardly sleep that night!

We all arose bright and early the next morning, excited to embark on the first hunt of the year. Dad and I packed all the necessary items that we would need for the hunt, like our knives, guns, ammo, licenses, and the GPS. We jumped into our Viking and sped off to where we had last seen the gorgeous buck that I planned on harvesting. We arrived at our destination around 6:00 AM, to my surprise the buck hadn't gone far from where we had last seen him the day before! As Dad, Karsten, and I waited anxiously for shooting light we kept a close eye on the buck. The herd had no care in the world as we watched for the next half hour. Finally, Dad told me it was time to start the hunt. I knew that it would be a challenge, as the buck had what seemed like 50 does with him.

We slowly started down the hill. The wind was perfect, blowing right in our faces. Now the only thing we had to worry about was not being seen by the many does that the buck had with him. Once we reached the bottom of the hill, I loaded a bullet into the chamber of my rifle and clicked on the safety. We then started to slowly crawl closer, as we could see part of the herd and didn't want to be busted by them.



We crawled about 50 yards until we dropped down and began to army crawl up closer. We got within 200 yards of the buck, shooting range. I found the buck in my scope, all I had to do was get steady; but that's when he took off after

one of his does. He ran out to about 400 yards. We continued to watch him in hopes that he would return. We waited for about five minutes just watching him graze. We decided that we would have to sneak up on the buck a different way.

We went back to the base of the first hill and started to walk in the direction that the buck had gone. We began to walk over another small hill when three does came up over it. We immediately froze, I was so worried that they were going to run off, ruining the hunt. It was a staring contest us versus the antelope. They slowly crept closer curious about what we were. After about two minutes, they decided that we were not a threat; turned and ambled back over the hill. Dad, Karsten, and I were all very glad that the does had not run away. We stayed on the hill for a little bit to make sure that the three antelope were gone for good and that we wouldn't meet again. We continued our stalk

and finally reached our destination, the rock pile that we had spotted from the other hill. We got down and began to army crawl up the rocks.

Once on top, my dad ranged the buck at 200 yards. I quickly put out my bipod, found the buck in my scope, and got steady. I took a deep breath in, that's when I remembered I hadn't clicked off my safety. Calmly, I switched off the safety and got steady on the buck again. I gently squeezed the trigger and hit the buck. He didn't drop instantly so I found him in my scope again and took another shot. Once again I hit the buck, this time dropping him. We all jumped up and gave each other high-fives. I was so excited to have dropped my first animal of the season! As we walked back to our Viking, we talked about how much fun we had that morning. I joked that I was the first person in Area 72 to claim a buck, as I had my beautiful buck down by 7:30 AM.

Once we got the Viking and all our gear to field dress my antelope we, hurried down the main road. He had died about 100 yards off the road. By 9:00 AM, I had successfully field dressed my antelope, with help from my dad. I found that my first shot was a little back, but not in the guts, and that my second shot had nailed him right in the heart!

After getting the buck loaded into the back of our Viking, we walked over to where I had shot my antelope from. Karsten and I investigated and played in the rocks. We were about to leave when Karsten found an old antelope or deer bed. It was the perfect place to get shade on hot days. He even laid in the bed, pretending to be an antelope. I thought that it was really cool to find that old bed.

One of the things I love most about hunting is just being in The Great Outdoors. In our family, it is a tradition to name the buck that you shot. This year I named my buck Rocky because when I shot him, I was lying next to this interesting rock formation. As we walked back to the Viking, I told Karsten and Dad what I had decided to name my buck. They both thought that it was the perfect name.

We headed home, after making a quick stop for celebratory ice cream at Sloane's in Alcova. I couldn't wait to tell my mom about all the fun I had hunting with Dad and Karsten on the Pathfinder Ranch. I was so excited and proud about my buck, which rough scored 70", and even happier that I got to share the experience my dad and Karsten. I am so glad that I had the grand opportunity to hunt on the Pathfinder Ranch and write about my wonderful experience.





view of my antelope herd. Dad quickly showed me where to go and I laid on my stomach and set up my gun. I found a nice pronghorn and lined it up in my crosshairs. It moved and I saw female laying right behind it. I was at risk for hitting the female if I took my shot.

I moved again, now laying in sharp cactus. There were so many antelope to choose from and I knew which one was mine when it suddenly appeared before me. It was the perfect shot at about 200 yards.

I looked at my dad and he whispered, "Shelby take your shot."

I started shaking, and I was so excited and nervous. I made sure I could do it

and looked at my dad once more. I slid the safety off and BOOM! I stayed in my position and didn't look up for what seemed like forever. I put my gun back onto safety and slowly sat up.

"You hit him!"

I saw my antelope laying a couple feet from where I shot him. The herd started to get up and move, so I backed up so Ella could see. My dad lined her up, but it was to late. They were all gone, except for the one I harvested.

A moment later, I was standing at my antelope taking pictures, while holding its long, black horns. I was so excited to field dress it, so my dad walked back up and pulled the truck down. Every-

one helped me gut it and soon Ella and I were dragging my dead antelope out of the hills. He was very heavy, but we made it to the truck. I was very proud of myself for that shot. We left the sight with a fascinating antelope in the bed of the truck. It was now Ella's turn, and after a good lunch of my dad's tortilla wraps, she got hers. Another amazing shot and my dad was very proud of both of us.

Later that day, I thought about the amazing experience I had at Pathfinder Ranches on that beautiful and chilly morning. I will never forget the amazing animals, views, and so much more that I saw, smelled, and did on Pathfinder. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity.

A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY

by Shelby H.

It was a chilly morning as I woke up to a beautiful sunrise shining in my eyes through the window of the humongous Pathfinder mansion. I had been waiting for this day for many weeks and now it was time to hunt. I was out for antelope with my dad Matt, and his intern Ella. Ella and I both had antelope tags to fill and today was the day to do it.

Every time I come to Pathfinder Ranches; I always see the great herds of antelope running through the prairies. Today, I was ready to get one. So, we pulled out of the driveway, and started for the Buzzard Ranch. I sat in the front seat and looked out the window while I drank my chocolate milk. The truck ride felt very long but soon the road became bumpy, and I knew we were almost there. My black .243 sat in its case in the back, ready for me to use. I was so excited and just wanted to arrive already.

We got off the road, stopped the truck, and started to glass the hills that stood in front of us. I loved looking out of my new binoculars at the breathtaking land I was on. My dad pointed to a certain

area, so I moved myself so I could see it. Then I saw them. A big herd of antelope bedded down in the small canyons of the hills. I proceeded to put on my gloves and my favorite orange ballcap. I stared at my dad and Ella, and we were all excited.

Dad leaned in and said, "We have some antelope. We are going to get out of the truck very quietly and sneak up on them from the top."

He backed the truck out and parked it out of sight, even though we were still so close to the antelope. I smiled at Ella and as I got out of the truck into the cold breeze that blew across the mountains where the clouds spilled out from the sky. I walked around to the other side of the truck where my dad handed me my gun.

"This gun is loaded, but on safety," My dad said to me as he helped me put it on my shoulder.

My dad led the way and I followed him, staying as close to him as I could. The fast walk we did wasn't long, and I now had a good



MY FIRST BIG GAME HUNT ON PATHFINDER RANCH

by Will P.



When I looked through my scope, I could see this buck was the one I wanted. I put the crosshairs behind his shoulder, I was super nervous. My dad said if I had a clear shot, I could shoot, but I waited a second to make sure I had the best shot. He walked a few more steps and started to graze. As soon as he stopped, I knew I had the shot, so, I slowly pulled the trigger. The shot went off.

When I looked up, the buck was running. A nervous feeling came all over my body that I missed. I whispered to my dad, "Did I miss?" My dad said I hit him well. Right then, the buck crashed into the prairie at a dead run. I was both excited and relieved. I could not wait to see my buck.

We collected our things and walked to where the buck was lying. I did not realize it at the time of the shot, but when we got to the buck, my dad told me it was a very big antelope and I was lucky to get one like this for my first big game animal. My dad gave me a big hug.

We spent the next hour taking pictures and quartering the antelope. We had to take two trips to get everything back to the truck. It seemed super long. On the ride back home, I was excited but exhausted. The whole hunt was special.

I am glad I live in a country where we have the freedom to hunt. I am glad to live in Wyoming that has lots of wildlife and public land. I am glad that there are ranches like Pathfinder that take care of the land and that lets people hunt. Most of all, I am glad that my dad takes me hunting.

Now that I have even more experience with hunting, I can't wait to go again next year. I am sure I will have many new hunting adventures, but I am not sure any will be more special than my first big game hunt.



It can be easy to forget how special hunting can be, living in Wyoming and growing up in an outdoor family. This year, I turned 12 years old, the first year I could hunt big game. Before this year, I would go along with my dad on deer, antelope, and elk hunts. I also went hunting for rabbit, dove, turkey, and ducks, where I could shoot.

My dad bought me a rifle for my birthday, but he also won a Ruger American 7mm-08 from Muley Fanatics, which I was going to use for my first hunt. We went to the rifle range several times before antelope season to practice.

When antelope season came, I remembered loading up our camper and driving to Pathfinder Ranches. My dad and I got there at 7:30 p.m. We were both starving but we still had to set up the camper and unpack everything. We had freeze-dried food for dinner because it was so late. My dad opened the wrong package, so he had an omelet.

After dinner, we setup our beds and packed some of our stuff for the morning. I had trouble getting to sleep because I was excited for tomorrow.

I was tired when we woke up the next morning, but still excited to go. I ate Fruit Loops in a cereal box for breakfast, which my dad would never let me do at home. After breakfast, we packed

our backpacks and got ready for the hunt. We saw antelope as soon as we left the camper, but they were too far away. Then we got in the truck and drove a little. Right away, we saw a little herd of antelope. We got out of the truck and snuck up closer. The herd had several bucks. I setup for the shot. However, I could not see the antelope clearly because they were too far down a hill and I could only see the tops of their heads.

We waited, but my hands started to get really cold. We decided to go back to the truck and get warm and find a new herd. We drove around. There were a lot of antelope and we made several more stalks.

Each time the antelope saw us or they were too far away. A couple hours later, we were driving around and we saw a large herd on a hill. We parked the truck and started the stalk. When we got closer, we saw two bucks, but they were still too far away. So we just decided to wait lying down on the prairie.

One buck was chasing the other buck and they both eventually went behind a small hill. When they were out of sight, we quickly walked to the next hill. When we got to the top of the hill, we saw three new bucks 100 yards away looking at us along with a group of does. I was going to try to shoot one of the bucks, but my dad said wait. He pointed to another buck grazing behind the three bucks. We slowly crawled over to a place where I had a clear shot at this buck.





LIAM'S STORY

by Liam W.

MCKENNA'S STORY

by McKenna S.

In July 2019, my dad and I were invited to go on a hunting trip in Wyoming with the Holy Pursuit's Dream Foundation. My initial reaction was, "Wow, I've never really though about hunting before and wasn't sure if I would like it." After a day or two of thinking about it, I thought it would be neat to try something new.

To prepare for the trip, I practiced shooting with a rifle with my dad's friend. The first time I practiced shooting at a range, I shot for three hours and immediately fell in love with it. I liked the satisfaction of hitting a target that I was aiming for.

We arrived at the Pathfinder Ranch near Alcova, WY on Sunday, September 15. The next day, we went out to hunt for the first time with Jeff Cowley from the Muley Fanatic Foundation SE Chapter and Hannah Turner from the Holy Pursuit's Dream Foundation. Jeff helped me get comfortable with my surroundings and with the .243 rifle I was using. Although I did not get anything the first day, I was determined to get an antelope the following day.

I was excited to hunt again on the second day. I told Jeff I wanted to find the biggest antelope possible. We set up in a few spots in the morning, but I could not get a clean shot. I kept telling myself to stay patient and I never got



frustrated. Early in the afternoon, we were on a hill and came upon a buck in the valley below. We sat on the hill for about an hour and the wind picked up and it started to rain. The buck laid down and I could not get off a good shot. We decided to move on and then, while walking down the hill, we spotted another buck about 100 yards away. I quickly got into position and had the buck squarely in my scope. I took a deep breath and slowly squeezed the trigger.

"You got it!" exclaimed Jeff. I was so happy that I had gotten the buck on my first shot, all my practice had paid off.

I am so glad that I had the opportunity to hunt on the Pathfinder Ranch. Even though I never had hunted before, I gained a new appreciation for it. I learned it takes patience, determination and confidence. I am thankful to everyone who made this trip memorable for me and would definitely come back to Pathfinder Ranch again.

I have been hunting for as long as I can remember. I've gone with my Dad, Mom, Grandpa, and my little brother back when I used to live in Colorado since I was born. We wouldn't always harvest something, but when we did, it was a big celebration! That night, we would dance around the campfire with my Grandpa and sing songs. When we moved to Wyoming, we didn't know where we would hunt and that was the only year that we didn't go.

This year, my Dad drew for all his tags except bull elk, and I drew for my antelope. This was the first time I have ever hunted something bigger than a chipmunk. When my dad came into my room and told me that I drew, it was one of the happiest moments of my life! He pulled me out of school and on October 18th, and we headed up to Casper to stay with my grandpa and head out.

I woke up around 4:45 with the feeling that you get when you wake up and it's Christmas morning. I was so excited to finally go hunting. We left my Grandpa's house but we remembered that we didn't grab the hunting loads, so we had to go back and get them. When we left again, I had a feeling in my gut that it was going to be one of those days where nothing goes right. After about 10 miles of clear roads, we came upon some light sprinkles. Those little raindrops got bigger and bigger until they were huge and turned to snow. We were going only about 30 mph because we could not see 10 feet in front of us. That only happened for about 5 minutes, from there on, it was fine weather.

Once we turned onto Buzzard Road, we stepped out and looked around. It was just too dark to see through the scope, but after 10 minutes, we started down the dirt road. After only about a minute of driving, we saw the first herd and jumped out of the truck and started towards them. I was nervous and excited all at the same time. When we were about 200 yards apart, I took a shot. My knees were shaking so bad that I missed and all of them ran off. After driving for about 20 more minutes, we saw another herd and this time I knew what to expect. I took another shot but missed since it was windy and my hands were cold. This same scenario seemed to keep happening over and over throughout the day. Disappointment and frustration was starting to set in. It was time for a lunch break and we went to a spot my Grandpa called Point of Rocks. We decided to hang it up for the day and I was fine with that because I was exhausted. I fell asleep on the

way back but my dad stopped to site in my scope and to have a little fun just shooting. We set up a milk jug and I shot it to pieces, that really restored my faith that I was a good shot since I had missed so much that day.

When we got back to the house my mom and brother showed up and we went to dinner. Waking up the next day wasn't hard, since it took a long time to get to sleep. It was about the same temperature, but it wasn't windy. When we got on the highway, there were no setbacks. It was a nice clear morning and when we got out to Buzzard Road, it was smooth sailing.

When I took the first shot of the day, the antelope were about 200 yards away. I missed, but I was feeling better about that day than the last. After we (me, Dad, Mom, Grandpa, and my brother Jack) got back in the truck we kept going. I felt so much more confident than the day before. We drove and passed the bridge over the Sweetwater River and we saw a buck with 2 does. This time I was just calm, I don't know why, but I knew this was the one. I jumped out with the tripod and took a shot. BAM!! It was about 150 yards and it hit him right through the hind quarters, (not where I was aiming) but I ran up there at a full blast and made sure to put it out of its misery as fast as possible with one more shot. I felt the best feeling ever!

I was jumping up and down and almost cried. This was one of the best moments of my life. My dad and me gutted him and drug it the 300 yards back to our truck and loaded it up and drove back to town.

On the way home, I could barely keep the smile off my face. And I got to eat at my favorite restaurant, Buffalo Wild Wings for dinner. This has been the story of how I, Liam Williamson, shot my first antelope. Thank you for reading.



PRONGHORN HUNT ON PATHFINDER RANCH

by Jake G.



MY FIRST ELK HUNT

by Eli W.



It was an early September morning when my dad and I headed out to Pathfinder Ranches for some Pronghorn hunting. This was the first time I would shoot my rifle in 2019, I was pumped! The Pathfinder Next Generation hunt allowed me access to a pronghorn Mecca known as Buzzard Ranch. I had been to Buzzard Ranch before during Pathfinder volunteer days where I helped place one-rock dams across a dry stream bed to capture water. That day was unbelievably hot without a breath of wind, but on this early morning we had our puffy coats on and the wind was howling.

The Pronghorn, *Antilocapra Americana*, is the fastest animal in North America being able to run 30 miles per hour for days, so it's impossible to catch up to them if they spook.

Pronghorn have eight power binocular vision which means you have to army crawl on the sandy ground hiding behind sage brush and cacti to get close to them. Aside from avoiding predators with their remarkable vision and speed, this day the wind seemed to make the antelope even more skittish.

We spotted our first shooter buck from a couple miles away. He had a herd of does and several other bucks were around. We were army crawling for hundreds of feet as we snuck up on this buck. My forearms started cramping once we got to where we thought the buck was.

When I sat up to look for the buck, we couldn't find him, we only saw the other smaller bucks and does. Then we walked up a little hill which got my heart rate up and then we saw him with all his does, he was a great buck and as I pulled the trigger... click, my gun dry fired. I calmly reloaded another bullet in my 30-06 and pulled the trigger and the gun fired, however, the buck ran over the next ridge at top speed. I missed. I must have had buck fever because in previous years I would have made that shot. I felt super bummed out that I missed the big buck but I knew I would have more opportunities if I kept my head up.

While I had two more opportunities on big bucks I started questioning my confidence because I missed them as well. While leaving the ranch for more opportunities we spotted another buck. I focused on bringing this buck down. I took a deep breath and my first shot the buck dropped and I felt so relieved. It wasn't the biggest buck but it was my buck, and it was the first animal I cleaned all by myself. I want to thank Pathfinder Ranches, Sportsman's Warehouse and the Muley Fanatic Foundation-Southeast Chapter for letting me participate in the Pathfinder Next Generation hunt.

My elk hunt started well. We arrived at the Buzzard Ranch and Keith told us about how he couldn't find any elk on the ranch. We got to talking and he told us about the wolves he had shot previously. He had pictures of one next to a coyote. They were huge. After talking to him, we met up with my dad's friend Jeff and his kids. We went to bed early as we wanted to be up and moving at first light.

The next morning, we had a good breakfast and started on our way. No elk whatsoever! I couldn't spot a single thing except for deer and antelope, so we decided to look and check out Junk Hill. We grabbed binoculars and began to look around and finally spotted about 15-20 head. From our perspective that was all we saw at the time but found later that there were many more.

We started to walk and had to cross a small stream and then up a rocky hill. Soon we hit a road and followed it. We then peaked over a couple of ridges but still could not spot the elk after losing sight of them on our approach. We continued on the main road and took a break. We contemplated having lunch but decided to look over the rise of a hill before doing so. My dad started out in front and after 50 yards quickly ducked and turned around letting us know the elk were right there in front of us.

I grabbed my gun and chambered a round in preparation for a shot. We quickly positioned ourselves behind a rock. It was a good setup as we had the high ground, the elk hadn't noticed us yet, and we had good rests with bedded elk at 150 yards. Dad asked me which one I wanted to shoot. I described one that was bedded against a rock. We soon realized it was quartered to us and may not be the best option. We then found another cow bedded facing us directly. "BLAM" "BLAM" I was able to fire a bullet straight through the chest which was immediately followed by Jeff's shot. It took a follow-up shot to finish the job. We had 2 elk down!

Knowing our quartering was going to take a while, we quickly ate lunch. We waked around the corner to have a look and spotted a Bighorn Sheep ram walking slowly into a patch of trees.

We were able to quarter the elk and take it back to the trucks. We were on our way home to a full freezer. All in all I was happy with my experience. I look forward to being a better hunter by making one shot kills, and making memories with my Dad.



A DREAM HUNT

by Braden T.

I recently had a chance to hunt at Pathfinder Ranches and it was one of the most unique experiences I've had. My story may be a little different than most who hunt, but I loved getting the chance to try it out. My family does not hunt and I had never been around a rifle being fired until shortly before my chance to hunt. A friend asked me if I was interested in a hunting experience and when my parents asked me I thought it sounded pretty cool, but wasn't sure how it would work. I was born with Spina Bifida, have had about 34 surgeries, and use a wheelchair most of the time to get around. I really wanted to figure out how I could hunt, especially since I had brain surgery a week and a half before we left for my trip to Pathfinder.

My first day of hunting I was a little nervous about how it was going to work. We got up super early to take care of my medical stuff before having a good breakfast to get ready to go out on the ranch. We left with Matt, Andy, and my parents to go out and explore the ranch. We drove around a really long time on some really bumpy roads. Matt and Andy were teaching me how to glass for the antelope bucks and Andy even let me use his nocs so I could see some. We finally found a group that seemed to be staying still for a while and all snuck out of the truck on the side away from the group of Antelope. My wheelchair was already in the back of the truck so my dad set me on the tailgate and my mom and Andy helped me set up with the field pod and the rifle. Andy and Matt taught me how to look through the scope and hold the rifle the correct way. I finally saw the buck in the site and took a shot, but I missed and he ran away.

Missing made me a little more nervous and a bit anxious about having to shoot again, but Matt and Andy helped me through my anxiety. We were in and out of the truck a few more times like that but I never was able to get one that day.

My second day of hunting we started again early to head out and hopefully get a shot at my Antelope. Matt and Andy went out with me again, but we also had Shane and Scott come with to help. We were hoping to find a place that was Antelopeney. We found a place that I could set up on the ground to see if that would help with my aim some. There were a couple of big groups of Antelope that everyone was keeping an eye on. I tried looking some more with the rifle I had been using but kept having trouble with the scope so Shane let me use his rifle for a while. I liked his scope better and we found another one for me to take a shot at. I was having trouble staying bent down and when I took my shot it missed again. We went back to have some lunch because it started to rain and got really really windy. After lunch we headed back out and went further

into the ranch than we had been before. We saw a group of Antelope heading over a ridge and decided to head them off to see if there were any bucks in there.

When we came around the ridge they had disappeared. We decided they were all Ninjalope. After not being able to get close to any of the groups all afternoon we decided to head in for the night.

My third day of hunting we headed out super early again and had a big group of people with me. Since I had been having such a hard time staying down in position because of my back they decided to help me modify how I was going to shoot today. I was able to use a scope camera so I did not have to be so close to the rifle to shoot and a modified trigger so I didn't have to stay bent down when my back was hurting. We found a big group early on and all snuck out of the truck once again.

Shane and Andy helped me get set up in the back of the truck while Matt kept an eye on the Antelope. Once we were all set up Matt pulled the truck up so I could see the Antelope on the scope camera. The guys helped me get all set up and make sure my site was right and I pushed the plunger that pulled the trigger and held my breath while waiting to see if the Antelope went down. Everyone cheered, I finally got my buck after 3 tiring days of hunting and different changes to figure out what would work for me.

Hunting is not something I ever thought I would be able to do, but thanks to Matt, Andy, Shane and all of the organizations that brought us to Pathfinder Ranches I was able to get my buck. We even got to taste a bit of the tenderloin for lunch because Matt cooked it up for me. Hunting was not easy, but it was an awesome experience that I will always remember.



THE PATHFINDER PRONGHORN

by Barrett H.

I started hunting when I was eight years old and harvested my first whitetail buck that year. I have been fortunate to be able to hunt each year and have taken deer, feral hogs, javelina, and a management pronghorn antelope in west Texas. I have been taught about my hunting heritage from my dad, grandfathers, and friends.

Three years ago my dad and Dr. McBride got selected and hunted antelope on the Pathfinder Ranch. After hearing stories about the hunt and seeing pictures, I wanted to go with him next time. I asked him if I could go next time - he said, "if you keep your grades up - you can go." We were unsuccessful in drawing a tag for two years. On June 20th of this year, I woke up with great anticipation of checking the draw results. I clicked on my account on the Wyoming Game and Fish website at 10 a.m. with the word "Successful" in red! I couldn't believe we got drawn. I called my dad right away to tell him the good news. We started planning our trip right away, but it seemed like the summer dragged on. School finally started and the hunt would only be nine weeks away.

The time finally arrived for us to leave for our hunt. Coming from south-central Texas it would take us two days to drive to the Pathfinder Ranch, so we thought. I told my dad before the hunt, "I hope it snows while we are there!" It has only snowed once in my life at home. As soon as

we crossed the Wyoming state lines, it started snowing. It wasn't long before we arrived in Laramie and the weather conditions were getting worse and worse. The snowstorm actually turned into a small blizzard and all of the roads were closed. We ended up losing a day of hunting because we had to wait until the next day to drive.

We finally made it and the first thing I noticed was all of the beautiful country and land. My first instinct was to take loads of pictures for my 4-H photography project. The mountains covered with snow and the hills and plateaus with sage grass on them, I had never seen anything like it. Our first evening of hunting we saw tons of antelope but we decided not to shoot any because they were either too far away or we didn't quite like them. The second day was much windier and we saw several nice antelope. We found a buck that I wanted to shoot. We got into a position to make a stalk upwind. We managed to do it and I shot my antelope. I was so excited, I was speechless. Later that day my grandpa shot his pronghorn and my dad shot him the following day.

Overall we saw over one thousand antelope in three days, it was amazing. Hunting on the Pathfinder Ranch was an experience that I will never forget. From the seeing antelope, mule deer, sage grouse, mountains, and snow, this is easily my favorite hunt ever.



FROM BETTER TO WORSE

by Tylar G.

It was a chilly morning on November 15th, as we sat upon the top of Bryce pannel, looking down into the bottom of Eagles nest. The beautiful red, orange, and blue sunrise reaching over the hill gave a feel of peacefulness and beauty beyond measure.

That morning we packed our guns, lunches, our backpacks full of hunting equipment, and our licenses. My name is Tylar Gray, age 13, and a second-time hunter. This year I drew two cow tags, along with the rest of my family, in area 23.

The soft sound of the radio in the early morning almost urged me to fall asleep but then you could hear Kevin, a friend of ours, voice nearby.

"Lenny, there is a herd of 500 head coming our way," Kevin told my dad.

"Thanks, Kevin," My dad responded.

We all kept our eyes wide open to look for them, until there, below us was a heard of about 500 head. We raced down the hill in the old Chevy. The bumps rocked us back and forth.

"You all ready?" My dad asked excitedly.

"Of course," I smiled.

We reached the fence line and searched for the elk. There in our sight was 500 head coming our way; they stopped all grouped up, knowing we were there.

"What do we do?" I asked.

"The elk know we are here which is why they haven't run to the fence, yet. I think if a few of us walk up to the heard, and maybe get some shots off they should split and the others can follow the heard before they get to the fence," my dad suggested.

I decided to walk with my dad, while my mom and brother went the other direction. My dad and I got closer and the heard split. At that moment I knew my dad and I would not be able to get a shot off. This was frustrating to me because this is the only heard we have seen all season, but I hoped that everyone else would get some.

I ran toward my friends and family hoping to maybe catch up. Finally, the last couple was over the fence. But I saw that a lot of people got some and I was happy that they did.

I helped everyone gut and load their elk. After, my family went to the top of the hill and looked to see if we could find a small group.

"There!" I shouted, pointing to the hill about 600 yards away, "They are coming this way!"

They were running across the hill almost reaching beyond our sight. I quickly shot. I hit a cow, at 446 yards.

"Who shot her?" My dad asked.

I smiled and he knew it was me. When I saw the proud smile he had on his face that was all I really needed. We went over to the cow I shot, and I filled my tags; notching the date, and signing my name. I was really proud of myself for hitting an elk that far away, with one shot. I thanked her for the meat that she would put on the table, and I thanked my family for taking me on this amazing journey.

I started hunting when I was very little, it was something my dad always did. My dad has been a major person throughout my hunting season. He was the one who got me behind the gun, taught me to aim straight, and always be thankful for the meat that is put on the table at the end of the day.

This year has been a season with ups and downs, the snow ended our season quickly, our truck broke down a few times, and we didn't see a lot of elk in general. Luckily, we were able to fix it and we gave it our all to the last day. For the last 4 years, we have been hunting on pathfinder ranches drawing antelope, deer, and mainly elk.

We met a couple of friends who showed us the area, and we made it a tradition. Every year I go up with my family and friends and have a good time even if we don't get anything. I hunt to hear the sweet click of the bullet going into the barrel, the country music on the radio, and the laughter that will create memories that could never be erased.

NEXT GENERATION OF PATHFINDERS

