

For more information about Stevi Haynes and his Florida fishing trip see page 2.

Tracks™

November 2009



Florida Fishing Trip Of A Lifetime (Cyndi Haynes, AL)

Stevi Haynes and his dad went out on the boat the first morning, and the boat itself was hardly bigger than a regular bass tracker. The water they fished in was about 3 feet and they could see manatees and dolphins constantly. They also saw people who dive for clams and sell them to the restaurants there, (I personally thought that was the coolest job to have!). The black drum, which is what Stevi's holding in the picture, is a pretty good size fish and he loved catching them.

The second day they had the option of going to the same place or coming closer to Cocoa Beach and fishing for a different fish, but Stevi decided to stay where they were at and they again, had a great time.

During the rest of the stay there, Stevi and his girlfriend, Miranda, as well as his sister, Nikki, her boyfriend, Ernie and a couple of other friends, Cody and Jasmine who all came down the following day were in the pool at either our hotel or theirs, on the beach, riding the waves, go-carting, going to the mall, walking the strip, rock climbing, playing laser tag or eating (Stevi's favorite past time!!). They realized quickly that this was not like Panama City and the Gulf of Mexico and the waves were bigger and the jellyfish more abundant!

Hunt of a Lifetime made one of the things on his "things to do in life" list a reality by going on this trip.

Stevi was diagnosed with chronic Mylogenous Leukemia 5 days after his 12th birthday. Being so rural in Alabama, our clinic sent us to Children's Hospital in Birmingham, 100 miles away. The doctors told us the only cure was a bone marrow transplant. After a week in the hospital, they sent him home on an oral chemo and begin to look for a donor. They told us he was in the last stages of the cancer; he had a 30% chance of survival with the transplant. By December they had found two matches and he went into the hospital in January. They began around the clock chemo, killing all his white cells, red cells and platelets. On the 10th day, they gave him the bone marrow and waited.

He never quit fighting and the most humbling thing I've ever seen was this: Stevi's father had befriended another couple in the hospital and their son's heart was not beating on its own, and wouldn't make it. He was 7 years old. I walked in my son's room to see him sitting in the bed, hooked up to a chemo treatment, bald headed and swollen

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cheeks making a get well card for this little boy. Here my son was fighting for his own life, concerned about another child. (I have to share that--it made a huge impact on me.)

Stevi came through his transplant well, and eventually, after 6 months of being away from family and friends, we came home. He is the child who wasn't suppose to make it, even his oncology doctor was surprised to see him again and told me "Frankly, I'm surprised to see him". He became stronger and stronger and eventually started cycling, riding in rides like Ride Yellow and Ride of Love (for Camp Smile A Mile). He does karate also and MMA fighting. I worry that the cancer will come back. He says if it does, it does, right now he's too busy living.

*For more information about **FLF2**, contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.*

Hunting Black Bear With Dad (Jenny Troyna, IA)

My dad and I arrived in camp on August 29 around 2pm. As we are introducing ourselves and getting our licenses, our guide, Lucas, informs us that once we are settled into our cabin we can head out to our stands. We were not expecting to be able to go out until the next day so we were excited and rushed to get ready!

Once I was settled into my stand, I reviewed in my mind everything Lucas had told us before we came out. "The bear should stand between the 2nd and 3rd ring on the barrel; if the barrel is tipped over, its body length should be that of the barrel; if a smaller bear is at the bait and gets nervous or runs off, then a bigger bear is in the area. There are three main trails into the bait, they should come in on those. The bear's senses are nose, ears, and then eyes – in that order. If you remain still, they will not see you." So much to process! At 5:00pm I got to see how much I remembered as the first bear came in to the bait. The bear was of shooting size, but did I really want to end the trip in 20 minutes? I decided to pass and sat in amazement watching the bear eat as this was my first experience with a bear in the wild. The second bear came in at around 7pm. Still not wanting the hunt to end on the first night, I sat and watched as he ate. He wandered off about an hour later. It was time for me to head out for the night too. After picking up Dad from his stand, I learned he hadn't seen a thing all evening.

August 30: Lucas goes out early to check the baits and the trail cameras at both spots, where there was lots of activity during the night hours. We are in our stands by 4pm. Within an hour, I had a bear sniffing the bottom of MY tree. As he left, I got out my camera and binoculars ready. Since I wasn't going to shoot him I could at least try taking pictures of him. A second bear came in 20 minutes after the first one left and stayed for almost an hour. At 7:50pm a third bear comes in. This one is big! His back is level with the barrel. I took a couple pictures of him as he was tipping over the barrel and then got ready to take a good broadside shot. He doesn't give it to me. He sat up on the far side of the barrel, looked around, put his paw on the barrel and pushed it. As he walked behind a tree to leave, I realized it is also my time to leave for the evening. Back at the lodge, I informed Lucas of what happened and he assured me that if the bear wasn't spooked, he will return. So I crossed my fingers as I fell asleep that night. And Dad still hadn't seen anything.



August 31: After Lucas came back from checking the baits again, he showed us the pictures of the activity at our baits. The bears are going to Dad's bait before and after he is there. At my spot there was a picture of a chocolate bear and then one of two large bears together with one that could easily tip the scales at 500 lbs! Dad decided he wanted to try being out a little earlier according to the activity on the trail cameras, so we are in our stands by 3:30pm. I see nothing for 3 hours. By this time I am thinking I blew it by not shooting the big bear last night and start to beat myself up. Then, at 6:50pm a small bear came in. I decided I should probably take it, but then I hear brush breaking in the distance. The small bear jumped up and stood broadside. I started to raise my gun when he

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turned around and bolted in the other direction! Whatever he heard and smelled had scared him. I waited anxiously to see if in fact, it was a bigger bear. Those 10 minutes seemed like an hour until the bear came in very cautious and slow. I didn't even use the barrel to measure him. I knew - he was big! I had to calm myself, as my heart felt like it was pounding thru my chest. He kept walking and sniffing around the entire bait site. He started down the trail towards me then turned around. I took this opportunity to get my gun up and ready. Now I just had to wait for him to turn broadside. When he did just that, I squeezed the trigger and he took off like a bolt of lightning! I was shaking so much I could barely hang onto the phone to call Lucas. As I was talking I heard the bear fall in the woods and everything went quiet.



Lucas was on the way, the bear had fallen and I am still shaking so bad I can barely call my dad to tell him the news. I sat in the tree stand, calmed down and waited for Lucas to get there. The bear didn't go far and when we first got up to him, he didn't seem quite as big as I remember. Lucas assured me that he was a good size bear. As Lucas started to break off seedlings to get him untangled and straightened out, we could see he how big he was. We tried to pull the bear out of the brush and could barely budge him. Somehow, we managed to get him out onto the trail to take pictures and then called for help to get him out. We stopped at the scale on the back to the cabin ... a surprising 450 lbs and 7 feet nose to tail! I couldn't be happier and my dad couldn't be prouder! What an experience! This will be one I remember for a lifetime!

For more information about **ONH6** contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.



Out West Hunts (Jim Duberowski OC-MN)

For a lot of people, the first time they hunt "Out West" it's for pronghorn, which are better known by their antelope nickname, and for a good reason. Antelope tags are generally easier to come by and the trip, as a whole, is far less expensive than many other western big game hunts. It was no exception for me as my first western trip was in pursuit of the unique animal that we often refer to as a speed goat. The problem for me was that I had so much fun the first time, I just keep going back.

Antelope are truly one of a kind. In fact they have no relatives anywhere on earth. They are only called antelope because they were mistakenly thought to be related to the antelope found in Africa. The graceful animals not only make a beautiful trophy mount but if properly cared for, they are also excellent table fare.

In Montana, applications are usually out in April and must be submitted by June 1st. You can apply as an individual or in a group of up to 5 people. I didn't really think we'd draw buck tags sending in as a group and with the fall schedule filling up none of us were really set on going. We had nothing to lose.

That being the case, I talked my dad, uncle and cousin into applying with me. Having hunted BLM land many times, we have a pretty good handle on the ranches and where we can find animals. This year however, I was a little nervous, especially seeing how I convinced 2 rookies to come along. I felt a sense of responsibility to make sure they had a good trip. Reports were coming in that the population had been devastated by spring snow storms. I knew the chances of us getting 4 mature bucks on BLM land would be slim and so we opted to go with one of Outdoor Connection's Approved Outfitters for the region (MTH2).

The drive out there was treacherous as we hit a snow storm that had us crawling on I-94 from Fargo to Jamestown. Everyone was very tired and a little tense after that white knuckle trip. I could just sense that they were asking "what had I gotten them into?"

(continued on page 4. Want to learn more about hunting in Montana, contact your Outdoor Connection franchise owner)

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DEC. 1, 2009 - MAY 1, 2010



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Well, two days of great antelope hunting definitely helped to relieve the stress of that overnight trip. Funny how hunting of our guide, "Dinosaur Don", we had no problem bringing home four nice bucks in the 13-15 inch range. The trip home can do that to a person isn't it? The population was certainly down but thanks to the great instincts and knowledge was a treat and the uneasy feelings of the guys heading west had been turned into smiles and good stories for a much better ride home.

Hunting antelope is a great experience and if you are thinking about heading west but don't know where to start just give an Outdoor Connection agent a call. There are many options available from on your own to fully guided. Just don't be surprised if you find yourself in my shoes, going back time and again.



For more information about **MTH2** contact your local Outdoor Connection franchise owner.

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