

The Parting Shot

Thom Jorgensen

Each spring a few of us go to hunt free-ranging hogs along the Savannah River in South Carolina during our "off" season. It was this hunt three years ago where I was introduced to the MLA via *STICKTALK*; I told that story a while back. A few weeks ago it finally came time again for us to return to the swamp, anticipation burned those last days before departure much like I remember December 23rd as a kid.



I met up with Rick Butler and Doug Gilmore and we filled a minivan with bows, arrows, hunting gear, and optimistically several coolers. I say optimistically because as much as we love this hunt, it's pretty tough hunting where we choose to go and at this point we had yet to bring one back. To air all the dirty laundry: these guys had gone for a couple years before I started, and I'd given a few tries on other trips they couldn't make. Collectively we'd chauffeured a lot of empty coolers to and from Michigan in the name of hog hunting.

That sort of track record might put off some folks, but what I really appreciate about hunting with these gentlemen is that they just see it all as paying dues. Each year we get closer, we learn more about the hogs, we adjust our gear, tactics, and packs. Each new trip comes with renewed enthusiasm and the feeling that when a hog is finally taken it will be well earned. When other guys in camp hold this kind of philosophy it's really easy to adopt the "delayed gratification" mindset!

I think back at my first trip and remember how ready I felt I was. I had a good shooting longbow, good arrows, good boots, and sharp broadheads. I really felt that I was ready, and when I saw hogs I got to put my stalk on! I had two failed stalks on that hunt and never loosed an arrow. I've now got about 30 hunting days for hogs under my belt, that's not as much as many, but I'm feeling pretty

comfortable in the swamps these days. With that amount of experience my perspective on that first trip has done a 180. I wasn't shooting good enough, I did need a better arrow setup, I needed much sharper broadheads, and my field craft wasn't tuned for hunting hogs at all.



I'm so thankful that on all these trips fellow hunters took time to show me a little trick about using the wind, or glassing techniques, or sharpening broadheads. I brought an eagerness to learn, and a willingness to put all of this into practice, but all of the knowledge was being passed to me. A few times hunters would "buddy up" with me and show me how they move through palmettos or running water. In short I've been blessed with many great mentors who've guided me along this journey so far.

I'm very thankful to say that it all finally came together for me on my first morning out on this trip. I was in a good spot for hogs, I was using every bit of field craft knowledge I had on my approach, and I shot with complete confidence in my bow, arrow, and broadhead. A short tracking job later I had my hog in hand! While this was exhilarating for me, there was also a feeling in camp that just maybe our curse had been lifted! The next evening Doug and I went out to hunt a section together and I got to watch him take his first hog right in front of me! I think I might have been as excited as he was because we were both drawn on two different hogs when he loosed his arrow!



While my freezer would have been happier if it was filled with hog from my very first trip, my heart is happy to know I've put in some sweat equity and did it the way I wanted to do it: spot and stalk hunting free ranging hogs with a longbow.

With camp still in the rearview mirror we started planning for 2014...

