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The kids could sit in the truck safely with me and look for animals in my snares. It is natural for kids to want to shoot an animal when hunting. How many times have you heard a young son or daughter ask, "When can I shoot a deer?" In a practical sense, parents don't want their kids to wound an animal and have a bad experience. So, the parents have to hold the kids off until the kid is ready to make a clean harvest.

But with trapping, I didn't have to worry about the child not being able to make the shot or wounding the animal. What could be better for a kids' shooting confidence than a target at five yards that can't run away. It was the perfect hunting training.

The moms signed off on the idea of my taking the kids trapping. So, we were off to the ranch early the next morning. The weather had turned bitterly cold overnight. But, both kids kept their heads stuck out the back window on the driver's side of my truck, each trying to see if the next snare held a catch or not. It became quite a competition between the two. There were many many shouts of, "I think there is one up ahead!" and "I think I see one!"

It didn't take long for us to drive up on an actual animal in a snare. It was a large grey fox. I told the boys earlier that we would take turns shooting the animals in the traps. I let Luke shoot first at the juking and jiving fox attached to the snare. My Ruger 10/22 Rifle holds ten shells in a magazine. And, I had at least 50 more shells in my pocket.

I've seen Luke shoot before. I thought it might take all 60 shells to get this fox harvested. But, Luke coolly put the stock to his shoulder and swung the rifle to and fro with the fox's movements. When the fox hesitated, Luke shot the fox and killed it with one shot to the head. I'm not sure who was the most surprised, me, Flint, Luke or the fox!

I took copious photos of the boys with their first trapping trophy. You'd



Pictured above are Flint Bridges (left) and cousin Luke Thompson (right) showing a gray fox they helped trap and dispatch over Christmas vacation in Mills County.

have thought they bagged a ten point buck. We were all so proud! That was far from the end of our day.

We went on to check my whole trap line covering over 30 total miles. Thank goodness for my Polaris Rang-

er! The boys took turns driving with my help. They also took turns dispatching the various animals caught in my traps.

We talked about the importance of wildlife management, the impact of humans on the environment and the responsibility of carrying on our family ranching heritage. At least I talked about these things. The boys sort-of just tolerated my speeches while racing to see which of them could see the next animal trapped in one of the traps. Then they'd scream and yell, "Grab the pistol... we got one!" Maybe some of my orations sunk in along the way.

When Luke went back to pre-school at his church in Waco after Christmas, his 'non-hunter' teacher asked the class what they got for Christmas. The kids spoke about the toys and various gifts they received under the tree on Christmas morning.

When Luke's turn came, he began a 15 minute speech on his trapping adventure with Uncle Steve. His story was complete with trap types, numbers of various animals trapped, and graphic descriptions of each dispatching pistol shot. The teacher repeatedly tried to sit Luke down and shush the boy, but she could not stop him. She finally had to physically pull him into a separate room.

Luke's teacher was aghast at his obviously outlandish tall trapping tales. She spoke to Luke at length about the sins of lying. But Luke stuck to his story. The more the teacher pushed, the more Luke pushed back. So, the teacher finally called Luke's mom Lisa to have a meeting and set Luke straight.

As soon as Lisa arrived, the exasperated teacher went through all Luke had said in class and to her. Lisa calmly smiled and explained to the teacher that Luke was, in fact, telling the truth.

Lisa said after the meeting, "I'm not sure what the teacher thought was worse... the thought that Luke was lying and telling tall tales or the thought that I'd actually let him go trapping with Uncle Steve!"