



# The Double Dirty Deer Hunt

**By Steven Bridges  
Goldthwaite Eagle**

One of the great joys of being an outdoorsman in Mills County and Goldthwaite is that I get to take kids hunting from time to time.

I love taking kids who either don't have the opportunity to hunt or weren't raised in a hunting family. I like getting them acquainted with the outdoors and all that goes with it. I enjoy showing them what I see when I look at the animals, tracks, the deer, birds and everything in nature that is part of this process.

Nowadays, it's also a great way to get kids to turn off their phones and plug into the earth and natural world around them. Not to mention, sometimes the hunts turn into quite a memorial adventure.

Last fall I had such an adventure when I took Ridge Stegemoller and Cutter Campbell out for a hunt. Ridge had been hunting with his dad and made many deer harvests, and he wanted to guide Cutter on his first deer hunt. So my idea was to drop Ridge and Cutter off at a deer stand where I knew we had deer, and Ridge would help talk Cutter through his first deer harvest.

It was an early morning hunt, and they were trying for a doe or spike. All that came into the food plot that morning, however, were deer with good antlers or babies. The boys hunted all morning and saw a lot of deer, but none that fit our criteria for what we needed to harvest at the ranch.

When I picked the boys up, I found out they didn't get anything. They didn't even shoot at anything.

"Let's drive around and look through the brush," I told them. "Maybe we'll get lucky on our way out of the ranch."



**Steven Bridges sunk his truck to the axles in Mills County mud while guiding Ridge Stegemoller and Cutter Campbell on a deer hunt last season.**

We had gotten a lot of rain last fall, as you probably remember, and it was really muddy that morning. I joked with the boys, saying, "I hope you don't have anything to do today, because we might get stuck."

Not 10 minutes later, on the far side of the ranch, I sunk the truck all the way to the axle. My joke was suddenly less funny.

"Well boys, it's a long walk to go get the tractor," I offered sheepishly, but they are country boys. They understand the long walk to the tractor to pull the truck out. They weren't upset in the least. We all unloaded and started to walk. Then it struck me.

"Wait a minute, guys," I said. "Ridge, go back and get your deer rifle. We're not done hunting yet."

I could see then that this might be an opportunity to at least learn about how to hunt while walking, which is not something that happens a lot in Mills County. We primarily sit in the blinds and wait on the deer, but here was a chance to hone our skills on stalk hunting, when you see the prey at a distance and have to sneak up on it.

I knew that at this time of the morning, the deer might have walked back into the brush or were on their way to the brush, still eating a little in the shade that was left.

I knew a few places to check out on our walk, hoping to see them close to the brush.

I suggested to Ridge we talk about how to carry your rifle in this situation. I told him to put ammo in the magazine, but carry the chamber unloaded, the rifle on safety, and I usually carry it over my shoulder with the barrel pointed up when stalk hunting.

I let Ridge carry the rifle since he had more experience, and we only took the one rifle so as to not be too complicated on this impromptu hunt.

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