

GIRLS WHO HUNT



The Boone and Crockett Club hosts the Jack Steele Parker Generation Next Youth Banquet every three years in conjunction with its Big Game Awards program to honor youth hunters aged 16 and younger who have tagged animals that qualify for the B&C records program.

The banquet also honors the legacy of Jack Steele Parker, a former B&C chairman of the Records of North American Big Game

Committee. Parker later served as the president of the Club, and he is one of the main reasons the Generation Next Youth Banquet exists. Of note, Parker received the Sagamore Hill Award for leadership and counsel, the highest award given by the Club.

Of the 27 youths recognized, nine were girls. Josey A. Norris had two entries, both typical whitetail deer from Kansas. Tony Schoonen, B&C CEO, said that

almost 50 percent of the youth entries in the past three years were from girls.

For this article, I met with and talked to six of the girls while onsite in Springfield, Missouri, during the 31st Big Game Awards. Here's what those girls had to say.

BARBARA BAIRD

Morgan Burns

Morgan Burns tagged a black bear in 2018 that scored 20-13/16 points. Her dad was at her side for the hunt in Marshall County, Minnesota.

Is this your first bear? How'd that happen?

Yeah! When I was babysitting for a family, they asked me if I wanted to go bear hunting since they'd seen some bears in their corn. And I was like, "Sure!" and I got a tag. We [she and her dad] hunted five days, and on the sixth day, I went out there, and he came out into the corn.

I was sitting along a tree line, and there was a little stretch of beans, and then it was corn. I just sat in an orange-webbed lawn chair. It was in September.

I have the bullet because it went right through both lungs and got stuck in the muscle on the other side. The bear ran about 100 yards and then dropped. They figured it was over seven feet tall and weighed over 600 pounds before we gutted it. Afterward, it weighed 473—twice the size of an average bear up there.

Is that the largest bear in Minnesota?

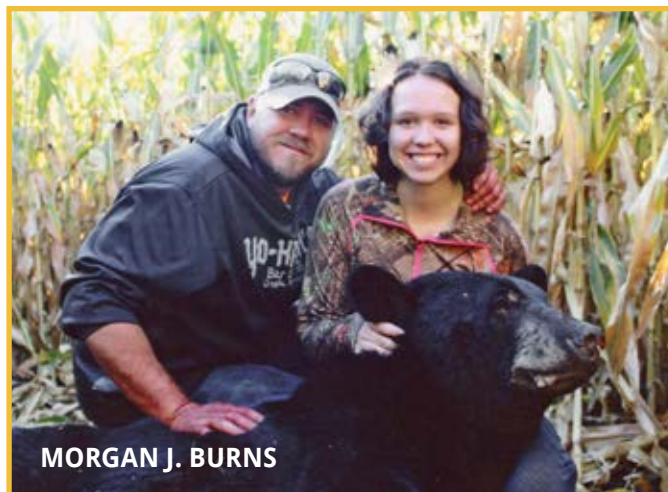
No, I think it came in second. Minnesota law states that every time you shoot a bear, you have to send in a tooth, and I got a certificate saying he was 11 ½ years old.

Tell me about your hunting.

I've hunted deer, pheasants, geese, coyotes, and rodents. The only reason I even shot a bear—and I don't even remember any of this—I guess when I was three, my uncle shot a bear, and he passed away when I was 11. He wanted to take me bear hunting. So when this chance came up, I told my dad, "Listen, I don't care how big it is, how small it is, I want the exact same mount that my uncle had for his." So when I shot the bear, my dad asked, "Is this what you want?" And I said, "Yes, this is what I want!" I finally got the mount back, and it's almost the exact same mount as my uncle's, but mine is bigger! A couple of months ago, I got his mount back, and I have a side-by-side picture of the two.

Did you eat the bear?

Yes, we got about 300 pounds of meat off it.



MORGAN J. BURNS

What's your favorite bear recipe?

Chili.

Do a lot of girls hunt where you live?

It depends. They don't do the hardcore hunting; they do the evening sit-type thing with their dads. I don't have a tree stand. I usually sit by a rock or a bush. It's more the guys in my area asking, "What time do you get up in the morning?" I say four in the morning, then you push the woods, then you go home, and then you do it again for the next three days. I did a lot of hunting with my dad since I am the oldest and a girl.

Ryleigh Campbell

In 2019, Ryleigh Campbell tagged a typical whitetail that scored 184 gross and 161 net points in Warren County, Kentucky, while accompanied by her dad.

How did the hunt happen?

We weren't there for that deer. It was 100 degrees in September. The field was covered with a bunch of does. We had this eight-point buck come out, and it was a regular. We watched it and passed to let it get bigger. I said, "Oh, Dad! There's a shooter!" Dad said, "No, no, that's the eight-point." I said, "No, no, no! This one was behind the eight-pointer."

I'm sure it was a father-son deer because they looked identical. We let it work until about 20 yards from the food plot. I was at the wrong angle, angled for the other deer that

was supposed to come from the other side. He came in straight up. We've got two windows in the blind and in the middle of the windows, right where it was standing, I could not see its head, but I could see its body, and I knew it was him. I went ahead and took a shot. It looked like a liver shot but didn't kill him instantly.

We went back in the morning to look for the deer. We brought my dog because we thought it might help a little. There was no blood, and my dog couldn't pick up a helpful scent. At this point, I was doubtful that it was a good shot. So I headed back to the truck and ate some breakfast. Then we went back for one final look and decided to sweep the river bank. We brought my dad's friend, who said, "Before we leave, we need to check these crows." The crows were in this one little area, just crowing their heads off. We went over there, and the buck was lying in the cane, about six feet in. It had bled internally for about 160 yards and then broke the bolt off on a tree.

We got it scored by a taxidermist. I didn't know much about B&C stuff. I didn't know what it meant. My dad explained it to me, and I thought I'd done something important and cool.

How does it rank in your state of Kentucky?

In 2019, I think it was the second-largest harvest for youth hunters in Kentucky and 11th overall for Kentucky.

I heard you love turkey hunting, too.

I'm working on a slam. I've only got two so far. I think we're going to try to go to Kansas to get a Merriam's.

Do a lot of girls hunt around where you live?

Not really. Some people comment like, "You're hurting them." I tell them, "You gotta realize you're eating chicken right here at lunch." Hunting is more about conservation than most people realize.

What is it about hunting that you like?

I like the process of it; you get to watch them on camera when they're in velvet. I like that nervous/anxious feeling before you take a shot. It's good to learn to handle the pressure.



RYLEIGH CAMPBELL



JENNA SMITH

Jenna Smith

On Christmas Day 2019, 12-year-old Jenna Smith got her first mountain lion during the first year she could legally hunt. She set the bar high, as it made the B&C record books at 14-10/16 points. Jenna is from Alberton, Montana. Of note, her dad and mom were there.

Why did you go mountain lion hunting?

My dad has always done it for a really long time. We like to go together, the whole family—my mom, younger brother, and my dad. I've gone out with my dad many times, even before I can remember.

What does a typical hunt look like for your family?

We wake up very, very early. We drive to one of our favorite spots, and sometimes we'll meet friends there. My dad will go on the snowmobile and look for tracks, and if he finds tracks, he'll come back, and we'll all go out. We have English coonhounds.

Can you tell us more about that day?

It was Christmas Day, so we got a late start. We went somewhere that we rarely go, around Butte. We went up a road, and we saw a truck had been there before us. We kept going up the road. The truck had pulled off to the side, and they were target shooting with a new gun they got for Christmas. We went over some cattleguards, and on the other side, there were some big lion tracks that my dad saw first. We got very excited, and we let the dogs out. They had a hard time at first, and then they got it and ran it. It was a short race. It was over in a couple of minutes.

When you saw the lion, did you think, "That is huge!"

Yes! I was like, "That's not the average size!" It was really easy. It was one shot. I had the gun up on a tree branch, held it steady, and fired one shot. I used a 6.5 Creedmoor.

What a Christmas present!

Definitely! [Her mom added that her dad had taken his first mountain lion on Christmas Day in 1991, at 11 years old.]

Where did you take it to be measured?

Justin Spring, Director of Big Game Records, is our neighbor, and we took it down to him. He measured it for us. At first, we weren't sure, and he said, "Oh, I think it's going to make it!"

Let's talk about girls and hunting. Where you live, is it normal for girls to hunt with their families? And what would you say to girls who might question why you hunt?

Yes, there are quite a few. I'd say it's just because it's something I've always done with my family, and we like to do it together.

Claire Flood

On November 18, 2020, Claire Flood went hunting in Breckinridge County, Kentucky, with her dad. She tagged a non-typical whitetail, which scored 208-1/8 points.

How did the hunt for this whitetail go?

We hunted on my grandparents' farm, about two or three miles from our house. I hadn't been hunting that much before I killed that deer. I was 15. I killed it with a .243. It was my uncle's gun. After I killed the deer, we took it to our friend Joe Brown's house. He's a big deer hunter. The next day we went to take pictures because Joe said, "Claire, you have to do this; you're going to be in magazines!" Joe took the pictures, and he did a really good job. (It's been in *Fair Chase* and *North American Whitetail* magazine.)

Is that the biggest deer that anyone in your family has ever taken?

It was luck, really. Dad and I had been hunting a few times and passed on a few deer. We were getting ready to go home, and I was getting really cold. Then, we heard something. Dad said, "Look at that deer over there." And I said, "I'm definitely shooting that one!" We had no idea it was down there at all. Our neighbor had it on camera, but they didn't tell anybody! He was chasing a doe. Dad sent the teeth to a biologist who said it was around 3 1/2 or 4 1/2 years old. Our friend had the sheds from this deer the year before, and they scored about 182, so Dad thinks it's more like 4 1/2.

What did it feel like to walk up to that deer?

Even before I shot it, I was shaking. I was really nervous. When it walked up, Dad said, "You gotta shoot it now!" I shot at 30 yards, and it died right in front of us. His antlers were swaying before he dropped. Its antlers were massive. I realized it was big, but I didn't realize it was that big until we brought it to my mamaw's barn. All kinds of people came to look.

What's your favorite recipe for venison?

I really like summer sausage, but I'm a really picky eater.

CLAIRE FLOOD



If there are any teenage girls out there who are wondering if they should try hunting, what would you say to them?

Definitely try it! It was such a rewarding and memorable experience. It's a feeling that you cannot even explain.



Ella Perkins

Ella Perkins was one of the youngest hunters in the group at this year's banquet. She stepped up to receive recognition for a non-typical whitetail taken in Cowley County, Kansas, in 2021. It scored 205-1/8 points and had 26 points. She also hunted with her dad.

How long have you been hunting?

Just two years. I've been out with my dad dove and quail hunting, too.

How did the hunt for this whitetail go?

We went out super early in the morning, like five. We hunt on the ground.

Ella's dad described the hunt this way. "After a long day of hunting and having already spooked a herd of deer, we headed back to the truck. Then, this happened. There 'he' was with tons of does out in a field. We stopped and started glassing. We just dropped all of our gear, took our essentials, and booked it. She's carrying her gun, and we're cutting through a bean field. That was our cover. I laid it out to her real quick. It was at 200 yards. I told her what to do. I said, 'You know what to do. Aim a little higher.' She made a clean, 200-yard shot from a .243 Winchester on shooting sticks."

It was eating, and I just put the crosshairs on it and pulled the trigger. I was nervous that the coyotes would eat it. [That night in the dark, they finally found the buck about 30 yards away from the shot.]

Where does that deer mount hang?

It is in our living room, right next to Dad's mount.

What do you like about hunting?

I like being with my dad.

Josey Norris

Josey was only nine years old when she first pulled the trigger and downed a monster typical whitetail buck in Kansas in 2019. The buck scored 186-4/8 points. The following year, she shot another record-book typical whitetail (with the same gun), scoring 161.

How's that make you feel to win not one but two awards?
Happy, lucky, and fortunate!

What do you remember about that hunt?

The first one (2019) was about 165 yards. I was really excited. The second one (2020), I remember, and I remember more because I was older, and I like being able to know what I was doing more.



Do you hunt for other species?

I hunt some coyotes sometimes.

What do you like to make with venison?

I like to make smothered deer meat. I fry the deer meat, pour some of the oil out, and keep the breading that's left in the pan to make gravy. And then, I keep it in the crockpot until it gets really, really tender. We serve it on rice or noodles.

What do you like most about hunting?

Getting to watch the wildlife!



Read the full recap of the 31st Big Game Awards events in the Fall 2022 issue available online in the Communities section.

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