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Hunting Blinds – Not Just for Hunting

As we approach November in Nebraska, we are moving towards deer hunting seasons for archery, rifle, and muzzleloader. As a hunter, I have enjoyed spending time in the blind with my husband and children. Getting up early, trudging through the cold November in the dark, watching the sun come up over the river and settling in for a long day in the blind. We've shared some great experiences over the years. Of course, our focus was to bring home something for our freezer but most often it was memories we harvested.

When you hunt as a family, there are some things to consider. It's important to be as comfortable as possible, take in all the wildlife that you can and make the most of those moments. Sitting in a small blind for hours can be a bit trying. To make our hunting trips more "family friendly" my husband built us a blind that was insulated. We could then heat it with a small propane heater, and as a bonus, it was a bit more soundproof. That came in handy with two children under the age of 10 in the blind. Those extra comforts made it easier for us to stay out longer. While watching and waiting, we would use that time for connecting with our kids. Sometimes they would bring their spelling lists or other homework and we would work on it together. Sometimes we used the time to discuss vacation plans or their dreams and goals.

We filled our memory banks with wildlife sightings that will stay with us for years. Who could forget the year we watched a river otter sliding in and out of the icy river? Or the time we watched a mama bobcat chastising her kittens when they wouldn't stay out of sight when she went to hunt. I have a 2-minute video of wild turkeys parading past our blind that still makes us laugh. So many great wildlife sightings that we shared over years in the blind.

Hunting as a family requires some extras: extra snacks, extra patience, extra hunter orange clothing, extra binoculars, extra battery packs for your phone/camera etc. Nothing ruins a day faster than hunger or boredom. So, I always packed extras to keep them entertained. When the kids were younger, we brought along our Nebraska Bird Identification books and talked about the birds we saw. Having their own binoculars eliminated the fight over “yours and mine” when a deer or other wildlife came into view. From one parent to another, a well-timed sucker can keep them quiet just when needed for a successful hunt.

One fun bonus to having the kids along was having someone with us to document the year. The kids took many photos on our cell phones of wildlife, sunrises and of course each other. We have great photos of fawns cluelessly wandering by and does nervously slinking by, just out of sight. We have selfies with each other and selfies with our targets. Photos that may not normally have been taken but we have them because the kids took them.

If your kids are like mine, they will want to show off those photos. There are many opportunities to showcase those photos at your local County Fair. See your local Extension office for project information. Not only can they exhibit their photos but there are many other projects that relate to their experiences in the blind with you. Ask for more information on these project areas: Photography, Environment, Birds, Harvesting Equipment and Taxidermy. We will be happy to help you find a place to share those hunting memories at the fair.

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