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'My biggest deer ever': 8-year-old wins ALBBAA Big Buck Photo Contest

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (Feb. 15, 2023) – As Grayson Milner sat in a deer stand with his dad just before sundown on New Year's Eve, the 8-year-old was running out of hope and daylight.

"I don't think I'm going to get to shoot again," Grayson thought.

He had missed a deer earlier in the day and figured darkness would put an end to the day's hunting. Then, just before dusk, a buck emerged. Grayson and his father, Daniel, knew this was likely their final chance.

Daniel peered through his binoculars at the deer about 130 yards away. "That's a shooter right there," Grayson's dad said.

Grayson, an experienced hunter who began hunting at age 3, took aim, squeezed the trigger and bagged the 9-point, 200-pound buck on private Dallas County property owned by family friend Keith Vickers.

"It's my biggest deer ever," said Grayson, a student at Wilmer Elementary near Mobile.

Added Daniel, "He's got the biggest one in the house."

Daniel snapped a photo of Grayson with the deer and submitted it in this year's Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association Big Buck Photo Contest. Milner's photo garnered more than 1,000 online votes to emerge as this year's winner from more than 50 submissions.

Grayson said his classmates at Wilmer Elementary definitely helped him win the Big Buck Photo Contest. "All of them voted for me," he said with a smile.

As the winner of this year's Big Buck Photo Contest, Grayson won a \$300 gift card sponsored by Tutt Land Company for use at any outdoor retail outlet.

The deer was processed and used for family meals, and Grayson said he was happy to contribute to his family's dinner table. In addition, the trophy will be mounted for a keepsake to display in the family's home.

"Our annual Big Buck Photo Contest is designed to celebrate the amazing deer hunting available in the Black Belt," said Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association Director Pam Swanner. "We received so many photos of young hunters this year, and that's especially gratifying because it showcases the family memories made by enjoying outdoor recreation in the Black Belt. Those are the memories that last a lifetime.

"We thank all of the hunters who submitted photos this year and everyone who participated by casting online votes."

All of [this year's Big Buck Photo Contest entries remain available online](#) for viewing on the ALBBAA website.

Daniel Milner said Grayson has hunted on the property in Dallas County in the past, but he usually makes the trip with his grandfather. This time, however, it was a father-son trip from the family's home in Mobile and featured Grayson harvesting the buck that won the photo contest.

"I was really excited for him, and it was exciting to witness him do this," Daniel said.

The Black Belt includes the following 23 counties: Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Pike, Russell, Sumter, Tuscaloosa and Wilcox.

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The Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association is committed to promoting and enhancing outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in the Black Belt in a manner that provides economic and ecological benefits to the region and its citizens. For information, go to www.alabamablackbeltadventures.org.