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Co-winners crowned in ALBBAA Big Buck Photo Contest

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (Feb. 29, 2024) – The Alabama Black Belt Adventures 12th annual Big Buck Photo Contest received dozens of entries and thousands of online votes.

In the end, two photos – one of a smiling 7-year-old girl after harvesting her first buck and a Pintlala man who harvested a 13-point velvet buck – stood above the rest. The two photos were separated by only four votes, so Olivia Faulkner and Chad Stinson have been declared co-winners of this year's contest.

"We're so appreciative that so many people submitted photos in this year's contest, and the votes were being cast right up until the contest's final minutes," said ALBBAA Director Pam Swanner. "These two photos clearly resonated with voters, and we think it's appropriate to honor both entries. What's really special is both photos commemorate truly memorable hunts. For both hunters, Alabama's Black Belt definitely delivered a memorable experience."

Stinson and Faulkner will each receive a game camera valued at approximately \$175 courtesy of Central Alabama Farmers Cooperative in Selma.

Stinson said his big buck appeared on his game camera for the last three seasons, eventually showing up virtually every day at 6:30 a.m., and again at 5:45 p.m. On the first day of the season, he went to his deer stand on family land in Montgomery County around noon hoping to get his first bow kill.

"I sat there for five hours and 45 minutes, and he ran in there with a group of bachelor bucks. A six-point came out and then an 8-point. ... Right behind him, here he comes," Stinson said.

"They come right up to me and they are literally at 29 yards. That's what I've been practicing –

30 yards. That's all I need. So, I draw back and those two small bucks come out and that big buck, you see how they grow so big. They're smart. He stood behind that six-point that entire time."

The moment required Stinson to exercise patience, but it wasn't easy.

"It got so bad, I could feel my quiver hitting my cheek," he said. "I was shaking so bad. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the six-point bent down to eat and he stood straight up, and when he did, that was my only opportunity, and I let it go."

It was Stinson's first time to harvest a buck with a bow, and the fact that the 13-pointer was a velvet buck made it more memorable.

For Faulkner, she harvested her first buck on Thanksgiving Day on a hunt on leased land in Montgomery County. The buck arrived with several others, but she spooked it by accidentally dropping her headphones in the shooting house.

"We were both down in the dumps about it," said Morgan Faulkner, Olivia's father.

Things changed just a few minutes later.

"He came back from the woods," said Olivia, a second-grade student at Troy Elementary School. "I was really scared and shaking before I took the shot. It was my first buck, and I was really happy about that."

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**.

Here are the winning photos:



Chad Stinson harvested a 13-point velvet buck. It was his first harvested buck with a bow. (Photo Courtesy of Alabama Black Belt Adventures)



CUTLINE: Olivia Faulkner, a second-grade student at Troy Elementary School, harvested her first buck on Thanksgiving Day 2023. (Photo Courtesy of Alabama Black Belt Adventures)