

The

ATLATL

“Too long have I hunted mammoth alone!”

Rich McWhorter

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Atlatl Hog Hunt on the Alapaha River

Or

Another Solution to Affording the Atkins Diet

By Bob Berg

I hunkered low to keep my profile from being detected by a line of wild boar approaching my hastily constructed ground blind. I arranged my darts and atlatl so that when I stood up I would be able to get my dart into shooting position without clacking it against the spare darts a carried in my left hand. I knew that they would pass by on the trail about ten yards in front of me.



The day before, I had watched this area from the trail from just up the hill. My ground blind was in fact the same spot where two large wild boars had outwitted me yesterday. They had been in this thicket without me being able to see them for hours. When I got out of my blind yesterday I had spooked them out of theirs as I walked down the hill.

I chose this spot because with an atlatl you need to be close to your target to get a good shot. Atlatl hunting taxes your skills as a hunter to its limit because the weapon is most accurate at distances less than 15 yards. This blind was the closest cover to the trail. I knew the hogs would pass by to get down the hill in the morning to go to the edge of the field. Past

the field was the Alapaha River running with tea colored water. This was a good place to be, between the bedding area and the hogs access to food.

“What is good cover for the boar is good cover for the boar hunter”, I reasoned. So this morning I crawled into the greenbrier thicket and built a nest of weeds and rotted branches and small logs that would keep me out of sight until that critical quicksilver moment when I could broad side a boar. I could smell them now and hear them getting up as they cantered across the dry leafy ground. The giddy feeling of adrenaline entering my bloodstream was beginning to set me on that edge where performance is enhanced. The first hog passed me by within ten feet and never saw me.



The wind was right and I had a good chance at the next one coming up the trail. It was a 120-pound sow, which was just exactly what I was looking for. The trail split a few yards in front of my blind and she chose the one farthest away so I passed up the shot. I crouched and several more very small hogs went by. Then three larger but still immature sows went by. As the third one passed I stood up and cast. The dart went about 12 yards and imbedded itself in the right side of the pig.

The impaled hog ran with the dart bending back against the impact of brush and trees hitting it. I cupped my hands behind my ears and listened to the dart as it hit various obstacles in the woods until it went silent. The hog crossed the field and dove into the hedgerow on the other side of it. I waited about fifteen minutes then started out in the direction I heard the last noise searching for spatters of blood.

At the edge of the woods I found a leaf with a small smear of blood on it. I tore a bit of paper towel I carried in my pocket and dropped it at the blood smear. I wasn't able to find any blood in the field. I crossed to the hedge and found a hog trail like a tunnel burrowed down the center of the hedge. I walked along side the trail in the hedge going downhill toward the water.

I came upon the dart, now bent and bloody, with the tip missing. I checked the color of the blood. Light red and frothy meant a lung shot. I picked up the hog's blood trail at the dart dropping pieces of paper towel at each drop of blood I found marking the trail well so I could backtrack if necessary. At the spot where the hog had crossed the road I could make out good clean tracks in the sandy roadbed. They went over the tracks I had left earlier with my van. I broke off a small stick and measured the stride, the width between the hoof prints and the length and width of the hoof prints. I marked each of these measurements on the stick with my jack knife. I also noted that the front right hoof had an odd shape. They might come in handy if my quarry's tracks get mixed in with others along the way. I was a little worried that the animal might go into the stream and I would have a difficult time finding it.

Each hog has a unique set of measurements in the way they put down tracks. There have been times in the past I had to use every trick in the book to locate a wounded animal. The cane break at the edge of the dirt road created an obstacle I had to find my way around. As I cleared the other side of the stand of cane I found the hog piled up against some of it. Good luck; I wouldn't need my little measuring stick after all. This young sow would make some mighty fine table fare. I laid my atlatl and the darts down and began the field dressing process.

Back at camp my hunting buddies chided me for killing such a small hog. But I have been down this road before and I knew they would all be there for supper.



