

BRANDY FRYAR
14 YEARS OLD

2012 YOUTH HUNTER
MALE

It was a Monday morning, school was on break and my Uncle Alan had taken off of work so that we could go duck hunting. We had traveled from our little town of Olla to Boeuf Wildlife Management Area, just out of Columbia. We had just gotten set up with our decoys out and tied off to a tree waiting on daylight.

I was observing different star formations, such as Oriens Belt and the Big Dipper, when I heard a boat way down to our left paddling into a little hole in the willow trees. I couldn't hear a motor, but just a paddle hitting up against the side of their aluminum boat.

A few minutes went by, and then I didn't hear it anymore. My uncle and I then heard one of them shout something out, but we couldn't comprehend what he was shouting. My uncle looked at me and asked if I could understand any of the continuous shouting. I then told him, "I think that they are calling for help, Uncle Alan!" He said to untie the boat and we would go check it out. I grabbed out spotlight and shined in the direction of the yelling.

We hurried to the spot and found that one man was up in a tree and another man was clinging onto a branch, but was eyeball deep in the water struggling to hold his twelve year old son up. I looked down on the bow of the boat and saw ice on it from the splashing of the water on the ride there. It was twenty-eight degrees that morning, and the water where they were at was fifteen feet deep. We got up to the man in the water with his son first, but we got wedged between two trees just an arm's length from them. The boy did not want to let go of the tree in fear of sinking because his waders were full. He finally reached over and grabbed our boat, but couldn't pull himself in. I grabbed his arm and got the boy onto the side of the boat. He then proceeded to roll into the bottom of the boat. It took the help of my uncle to get the boy's father in the boat. We finally got unwedged and picked up the man in the tree.

They didn't exactly know the direction out because they had followed one of the mens' gps on his phone, which got wet and cut off. I shined around and pointed out a piece of flagging on a limb of a locust tree. We eased by it with caution of any thorns trying to get us. We finally found a way to the bank and found their four wheelers. They got out on the bank and took of their waders, barely escaping hypothermia.

We timed it back, and they were a half of a mile from the bank. After talking to them, we believe they overloaded their twelve foot boat and they didn't have any life vests. They were very unprepared for an accident. We found one of their blind bags, so I pulled it over in the boat (we later took it to the owner who lived in Columbia).

When we got back to our hole, it was 9 o'clock and ducks were leaving out of our decoys like there was no tomorrow. We did not shoot at any of them, because by the time we got shut down and tied off, it would have just wounded them and not likely killed them on the spot. We didn't kill very many ducks that day, but it was a hunt that I will never forget.

One thing that I learned from this hunt was not to always depend upon electronics for everything, such as navigation. You should bring a compass just in case. Another thing I learned was to always make sure you have accessible life vests and to always be prepared for things to go south even if it may not seem likely.