

Diapers at Deer Camp
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by Scott Hyland

I have been fortunate enough to fulfill my lifelong dream of owning and managing my own hunting property. After years of extra shifts in the city, I put together a hundred acre spread in the hills and backwoods of beautiful Adams County, Ohio. Those who have visited know the property as Hyland Haven.

The property encompasses a wide variety of terrain and cover and is dotted with wildlife plantings. Whether hunting, four wheeling, or hiking, the property is visually stunning and abundant with wildlife. And included in the list of game that makes Hyland Haven home is the whitetail deer.

Since my mid-teens, I have been a dedicated bow hunter. It was my passion for bow hunting that fueled my efforts to acquire and manage my own wildlife retreat. Now with the dream realized, Hyland Haven has become the location of yearly-hunting excursions with friends and family. And with the background laid, I now turn to the actual subject of this writing...Deer camp! The November tradition where the men arrive at Hyland Haven for a week of bow hunting. The annual get-together quickly puts life back into perspective, allowing problems and stressors to go away. From the moment I make the turn off the paved road onto the gravel lane leading to camp, stress and worry depart my being. It is here that I enter the special world of the deer hunter where life's simplest pleasures abound.

The crisp bite of the November air filling my lungs is exhilarating as I step out to check the morning thermometer before the first hunt. I am awed by a star-filled moonless sky as I think about what the day's hunt might bring. I return into the warmth of the cabin to awaken my comrades with the aroma of freshly brewed coffee. An off key chorus from a country song may be necessary to wake the more sound sleepers.

The anticipation grows as we dress and reconfirm our hunting stand destinations as determined the evening before by the campfire. The quiet rumble of the ATVs follows as we head for our stands. I can only compare the feeling that comes over me with the excitement of a child's Christmas morning – anxious anticipation!

Next, I take in the complete still of the dawn transition from night to day after ascending to my tree stand. The experience of absolutely no sound while in the open woods amazes me every time I experience it. Every hunter that has witnessed the sunrise in breezeless woods can relate to the total calm I speak of.

And then the exhilaration of the action: The slow visual search of the forest looking for the barely noticeable flicker of an ear or tail; The steady crunch of frost covered leaves as the hunter attempts to distinguish between deer or squirrel; The heart-pounding anticipation as a shooter buck edges within bow range; The draw complicated by uncooperative muscles and nerves; And finally, the release, that hopefully only occurs during a burst of overwhelming confidence that the archer is on mark.

You probably find yourself wondering what is different about this writing than others you have perused in your favorite outdoor periodicals. The same experiences, emotions, and feelings have been explored a thousand times over. Why is this one any different? Well, it's the diapers. It's the diapers at deer camp.

You see, normally, my thoughts generally never stray outside of the usual activities of deer camp. All waking hours are consumed by hunting or camp related topics and activities. However, the 2006 edition of Hyland Haven bow camp was different. You see, October 2005 brought an incredible blessing into my life when my wife delivered our first child, a son named Colton Charles. I was unaware that my little pride and joy would have an emotional and mental effect on me at deer camp.

It started the morning of the first hunt as I finished slipping on my boots. I immediately noticed there was a

foreign object in my right boot that could only be described as “gooshy.” My first thought was that a mouse had managed to find its way into my boot and expired during the off-season. But upon removing the boot, I immediately noticed the aroma of banana. As I scooped the soft smashed fruit from the toe of my boot, I had no difficulty determining the guilty party. Dumping shoes prior to putting them on has become standard practice around my house ever since “little man” started toddling. After the initial amusement of the moment, I began to worry if the banana scent would have an adverse impact on my hunt. Oh well!

Then it was the diapers. Every time I turned around I was finding a stash of his diapers strewn about the cabin. I would immediately become distracted by thoughts of him. I would wonder what he and his mother were doing. I would reminisce about the past fall days when he would bounce endlessly on the cabin’s front porch in his Johnny Jump Up. Or, I would begin to fantasize about him being old enough to enjoy all the treasures that the Haven had to offer.

The distraction of those diapers caused me to burn pancakes and misplace beverages. They caused me to miss punch lines of what were apparently some pretty funny jokes as the roaring laughter that would bring me back. They even caused me to fold an open ended straight with three cards still left to be dealt.

One evening, as we warmed ourselves from the chill of the evening hunt with a taste of spirits by the fire, we were regaled by one companion’s tale of his encounter with the monster 12-point drop-tine buck that roamed my property. We all listened intently, living the moment for ourselves as he described how the buck slowly approached within bow range of his stand. My excitement grew as he described his draw as the buck passed behind one last stand of thicket before offering the perfect shot opportunity. And just as he culminated his story, once again, I became distracted by a small white and blue trimmed diaper laying on the end table and my thoughts turned to my son.

Upon realizing yet another mental interruption and missing the ending of one of those special memory hunts, I had a brief selfish notion shoot quickly across my mind: “Dag-gone those diapers at deer camp anyway!” But that fleeting thought was immediately replaced with another thought and prayer: “No, thank you God, for those diapers at deer camp, for he is truly the most wondrous magic of my life.” And I can hardly wait for the first time my “little man” sits next to me in the tree blind as the deer begin to fill the field at dusk down at Hyland Haven. And while I have that to look forward to, I also recognize that the day will come when I will miss those diapers at deer camp. ### Scott Hyland, 2170 Yuma Drive, London, OH, 43140.