

Ashley Davis, Age 13
Lee Road Junior High School

Deer Stand Education

Walking towards the green box - the deer stand - on a bone chilling December Saturday morning, thoughts of long hours of sitting and boredom crept into my mind. Sometimes my Dad sits for hours and sees not a single deer. Since I tagged along with him this morning, I was hoping today would be different.

After the sun came up, I could see that the leaves were changing color. Some leaves were red, some yellow, and others orange. I said to my Dad, "Look at all the beautiful leaves."

After giving me a sign to lower my voice, he then asked me quietly, "Why are the leaves green during the summer and turn red or yellow during the fall?"

"I have no idea." I whispered back.

"You see, certain plant cells have parts that contain pigments of green, red, orange, and yellow. Do you remember in school when you studied photosynthesis and your teacher talked about chlorophyll?"

"Yes, I remember."

“Well, the green pigment, chlorophyll, is much more abundant than the other pigments. When the weather turns cold, the leaves no longer make the green pigment and the other pigments or colors are all that’s left.”

“That’s neat,” I said softly. “I never knew that. The reds and yellows were there all along, we just couldn’t see them. How did you know that?”

“It was one of those days when I was paying attention in school. I thought it was cool too, and never forgot it.”

A couple of hours had passed now and no sign of a deer. We had seen lots of birds and squirrels aggressively eating corn by the feeder, but no deer.

“Daddy, where are the deer?” I whispered.

“Don’t know.” He said.

Another half hour passed. No deer!

“Hey look!” Dad whispered.

I woke from a day dream and focused on the feeder. There were nine birds all in a line walking cautiously toward the feeder. “What are those?” I asked almost silently.

“That is a covey of quail,” he whispered.

“They sure are pretty.”

“We are lucky to see them.”

“Why?”

“They have had a tough time surviving around here in the last twenty years,” he whispered.

“Why?”

“Some think the fire ants get in their nest and destroy the eggs. Others think the changing habitat from farms to shopping centers and subdivisions have led to fewer numbers.”

“That’s sad. They are neat birds. I hope they make it.”

After the quail finally walked off, I found myself getting hungry. It was time to start talking Dad into giving it up for the morning. “Dad, I don’t think the deer are coming to eat this morning.” He gave me the look that said be quiet and patient.

Patience is another thing I learn while hunting. Patience is hard to learn for us kids these days. We are so use to instant communication, instant food, and instant everything.

Dad has told me many times that I will have to learn more patience as I grow older. He said many goals in life aren’t achieved overnight. Some, he said, take years.

I finally did meet my goal in talking Dad into giving it up on seeing deer that morning. However, the hunting trip that cold December morning was not a waste of time. I learned about the changing leaf colors, on the struggle of quail to survive, and to have patience with goals and dreams.

When I repeat these lessons to my kids one day and they ask where I learned these things, I will simply answer – The Deer Stand.