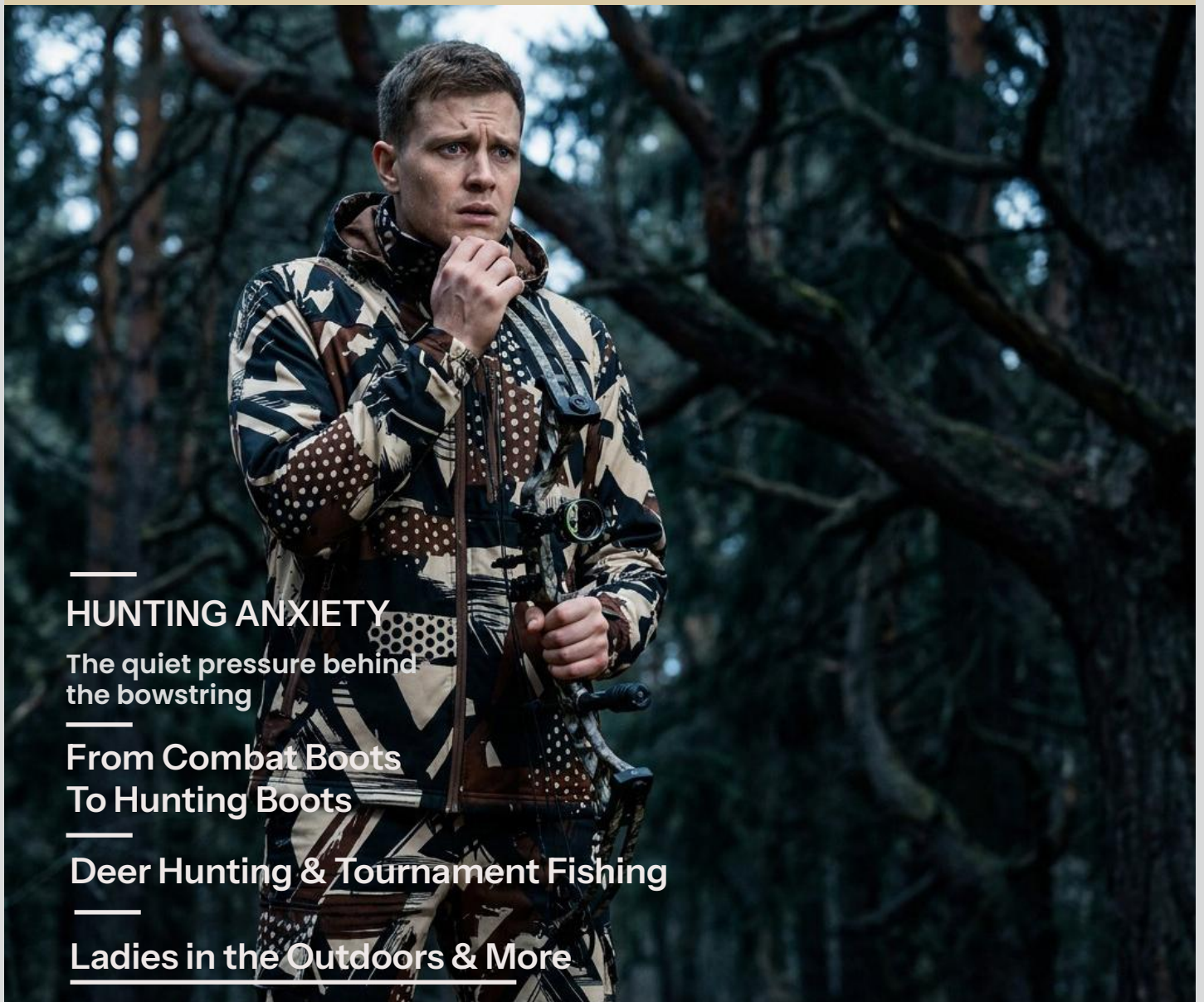




MAGAZINE

June, 2026

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HUNTING ANXIETY

The quiet pressure behind the bowstring

From Combat Boots To Hunting Boots

Deer Hunting & Tournament Fishing

Ladies in the Outdoors & More

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REAL STORIES**



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A man with short brown hair, wearing a camouflage jacket with a mix of black, white, and brown patterns, stands in a forest. He is holding a bow in his right hand and looking off to the side with a serious expression. The background is filled with dark, out-of-focus tree branches.

Hunting Anxiety

The Quiet Pressure Behind the Bowstring

Many archery hunters know the feeling: the woods are calm, the wind is right, the moment is perfect... and yet your heart is pounding for reasons that have nothing to do with the deer in front of you. Modern hunting culture has created a strange paradox — we go into the woods seeking peace, connection, and challenge, yet many hunters carry a heavy load of performance pressure, comparison, and fear of judgment.

Let's take a deeper look at why this anxiety happens, how it affects hunters, and how to reclaim the joy that drew us into the woods in the first place.

The Roots of Hunting Anxiety

Trophy Pressure

The modern hunting community — especially online — often glorifies only the biggest bucks. Social media feeds are filled with wide racks, perfect photos, and “score talk.” This creates an unspoken message: your deer only matters if it's big.

For many archery hunters, this pressure is intense. Bowhunting already demands patience, discipline, and skill. Adding the expectation of a record-book buck can turn a peaceful pastime into a performance sport.

Fear of Ridicule

Some hunters hesitate to post photos or even tell friends about a harvest because they worry someone will say:

“Should've let him go another year.” “That's a baby.” “You seriously shot that?”
(Continued next page)

*“ Nobody but
you gets to
define the value
of your deer
harvest.”*

This kind of commentary — often disguised as “just joking” — chips away at confidence and creates anxiety before the hunt even begins. I made that mistake as a youth. I allowed another hunter to take a deer we both shot at because I was embarrassed it was a broken one antler spike buck around 1978. It was my kill for sure based upon the shot. I think about that buck and the lack of respect I gave that deer.

Community Competition

Hunting should be personal, but it often becomes a scoreboard. Camps, clubs, and online groups sometimes foster comparison instead of camaraderie. Hunters start measuring themselves against others rather than focusing on their own goals, land, and ethics. What’s worse is that pressure sometimes gets passed to youth hunters.

Internal Expectations

Sometimes the pressure doesn’t come from others — it comes from within. Hunters may feel they must:

- Prove their skill
- Justify time spent away from family
- Validate the cost of gear, tags, and leases
- Live up to past seasons

This internal dialogue can be louder than any outside voice.

The Cost of Carrying That Pressure

Hunting anxiety doesn’t just affect the mind — it affects the hunt.

- Shaky shots from adrenaline and overthinking
- Rushed decisions because you fear “messing up”
- Avoiding hunts because the pressure outweighs the joy
- Losing connection to nature, tradition, and personal meaning

When anxiety takes over, the woods stop feeling like a refuge. I hear so many hunters beating themselves up after a hunt as they lose the enjoyment of why they were out there in the first place.

Reclaiming the Hunt: How to Let Go of Pressure

Define Your Own Success

Before the season, ask yourself:

- What do I want out of this hunt?
- What makes a harvest meaningful to me?
- What kind of hunter do I want to be?
- What kind of example do I want to set for youth and new hunters?

If your goal is meat, experience, or time outdoors, then a smaller buck or a doe is a perfect success. Stop letting others define what success should be for you!

Limit the Noise

Social media is a highlight reel, not reality. Consider:

- Posting less
- Following hunters who celebrate all legal harvests
- Muting groups that thrive on negativity

Your hunt is not a public performance, it’s a reflection of who you are as a hunter, the experience you gained, the comraderie you achieved with family or friends. Most of my

most memorable days afield had nothing to do with a harvest.

Celebrate Every Legal Harvest

A legal, ethical harvest is an accomplishment — period. It represents:

- Personal and quality time invested
- Application of outdoor skills
- Respect for wildlife
- Wild game on the table

Nobody but you gets to define the value of your deer!

Build a Supportive Circle

Surround yourself with hunters who:

- Congratulate, not criticize
- Share knowledge, not judgment
- Value the experience, not the inches

A good hunting buddy or mentor lifts you up, not tears you down.

Practice Mindful Hunting

When anxiety creeps in, try grounding yourself:

- Focus on your breathing
- Listen to the woods
- Feel your feet on the earth, the saddle platform, the treestand, wherever they are
- Remember why you're there and what gives you joy in the experience

The woods don't care about antler size — and neither should your peace of mind. If you are a trophy hunter, then that's great, just do not judge others for their harvests. Plenty of hunters focus on harvesting deer over a certain number of inches, and with some outfitters, that's required. Let's also not judge the trophy hunters, as their goals provide them motivation, drive, and satisfaction. We just need to keep in mind that not everyone has the same goals, and nobody should be judged or ridiculed for their harvest.

Final Thoughts: Hunt for You, Not for Them

Hunting is one of the oldest human traditions, and one to embrace and be proud of. It's about connection — to nature, to food, to ourselves. When we let outside opinions dictate our choices, we lose the heart of the experience.

If you're proud of your harvest, that's enough.

If the moment meant something to you, that's enough.

If the hunt brought you joy, that's enough.

The woods don't judge. The deer don't judge.



You don't owe anyone an explanation for what you choose to tag. Never apologize for your legal harvest. Let's all of us continue to build a more positive hunting community.

Tim Minnich

Principal & Founder, WhiteTail Forensics, creator of ALTRE® Camouflage

Hydrographic Processing Now Available

ALTRE Camo hydro dip film by WhiteTail Forensics, LLC is a science-driven camouflage pattern engineered around how deer actually see. Designed using research on deer vision, including red-green color blindness and limited 20/100 acuity, it breaks up your silhouette and creates visual confusion in any terrain.

I spent five years modeling the pattern in various terrains until I finally created the geometric ALTRE pattern. That was a long five years. ALTRE's silhouette disruption pattern adapts to any environment, giving hunters a true stealth advantage whether on the ground, in a tree stand, or in a saddle.

The film is available from TWN Industries. Click on the pattern in the upper right for more information and to find certified processors in your area.

- Brendon Minnich
Designer of ALTRE Camo Pattern



Deer Hunting & Tournament Fishing

Tournament fishing and deer hunting might seem like they belong to completely different worlds. One set on open water, the other deep in the woods, but at their core, they share a surprisingly similar rhythm of patience, preparation, and adrenaline.



****Preparation: The work Before the Moment****

Both pursuits begin long before the first cast or the first sighting. A tournament angler studies maps, water temperatures, seasonal patterns, and fish behavior. They fine-tune gear, organize tackle boxes, and plan strategies for different conditions. Deer hunters do much the same; scouting land, setting up trail cameras, learning deer movement patterns, and preparing blinds or tree stands. In both cases, success often hinges on how well you've prepared for variables you can't control.

There's also the mental aspect: anticipation mixed with uncertainty. You can do everything right and still come up empty. That reality humbles both anglers and hunters.

****The Waiting Game****

If you strip away the action shots and highlight reels, both tournament fishing and deer hunting involve long stretches of stillness. Hours can pass with little

to no activity. In fishing, you might cycle through lures, depths, and locations without a single bite. In deer hunting, you sit quietly, watching and listening, hoping for movement that may never come.

This waiting isn't wasted time, it sharpens awareness. You start noticing subtle changes: wind shifts, bird activity, ripples on the water, or a snapped twig in the woods. Over time, patience becomes a skill, not just a requirement.

There are so many variables when it comes to lure selection and retrieves. It's very much like subtle



wind shifts or swirling at unexpected times. One you're trying to entice a bite and the other you're hoping your scent doesn't get picked up. You can do everything right and the fish won't bite, just like the buck will hold stop just out of bow range. There is no real explanation other than their sixth sense kicked in and they live another day.

Kevin Stowell is an ALTRE Camouflage Pro Staffer and a Bass Tournament Fisherman. He resides in North Carolina.

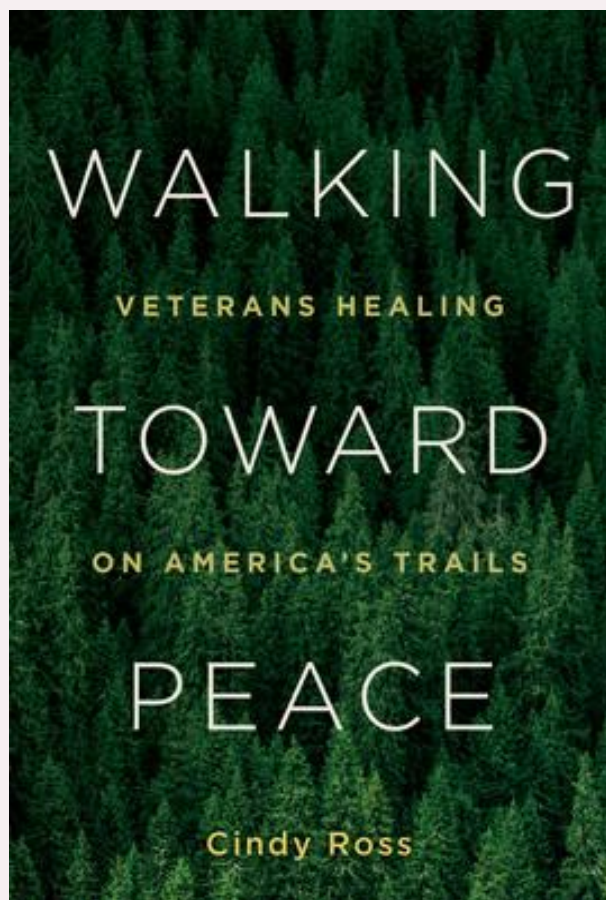
Veterans *Healing* in Nature

In this month's issue, we share a video of Travis Johnston's story. Travis is a Retired Special Forces Army Ranger and is highlighted in Cindy Ross' book, ***Walking Towards Peace: Veterans Healing on America's Trails***.

Please be aware this video recounts experiences as an Army Ranger that led Travis to a very dark place, and he describes his journey to healing through nature. This video also discusses suicide.

The video is for mature audiences as there is profanity and discussions of war trauma. If you are a veteran that struggles with PTSD, it will be at your discretion to watch the video. However, what is a positive is how Travis used nature to heal, and how he was led to that path through the suicide of a fellow Ranger.

– Tim Minnich, Board Member & Volunteer
River House, PA



From Combat Boots to Hunting Boots



From the Front Lines to the Forest: How the Outdoors Restored a Marine's Spirit

For many veterans, the return from the battlefield to the backyard is the hardest mission of all. Josh Larsen, an 8.5-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, knows this struggle intimately. After four deployments and a career that saw him rise from an ammunition technician to a designated marksman, Larsen found himself facing a new, invisible enemy upon his discharge: the loss of purpose.

The Difficulty of the "Homecoming"

As reported in local reflections and outdoor profiles, the transition was far from seamless. Larsen has been candid about the "angry" person he became during his initial return to civilian life. Like many who have served in high-stakes environments, the lack of a structured "re-entry" program left him feeling adrift. In those early days, he turned to drinking as a way to cope with a world that no longer seemed to speak his language.

Finding a Higher Ground

The turning point came when Larsen stepped away from the noise of modern life and into the silence of the wilderness. For Larsen, the outdoors wasn't just a hobby—it was a sanctuary. Whether he was bow hunting for whitetail deer or navigating the waters of Lake Erie for walleye, the natural world provided a sense of peace that civilian life could not.

He has often shared that these moments in the field did more than just clear his head; they brought him closer to God. Standing at 12,000 feet in the Colorado mountains or sitting in a quiet tree stand at dawn, the vastness of creation offered a perspective that softened the edges of his anger and replaced it with awe.



Paying It Forward: Primitive Patriot Outdoors

Larsen's personal healing grew into a mission to help others.

He founded Primitive Patriot Outdoors and organized events like the "Heroes Hunt" to ensure other veterans and first responders could find the same solace. Hunters for the Homeless is Larsen's vision to help the homeless community. By organizing events that bring hunters together, hunters donate venison and goods to give back to the community.

Larsen talked about one veteran he took to Colorado, "He left that mountain completely different, just like I did," Larsen noted after taking a fellow veteran with PTSD on an elk hunt. "There is a spot... where you can see for thousands of miles. It took my breath away. It took me out of reality."

(Continued page 12)

ALTRE Camo Ladies Outdoors

From Skeptic to SOLD!

Why I Trust ALTRE Camouflage

Back in 2024, I had the pleasure of meeting my now good friend, Zack Sexton. We met at Huntstock, stayed in touch, and last February he asked if I planned on attending the Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. At the time, I hadn't planned on going.

After talking with Zack and getting invited down to help sell camo for the week, I decided to make the drive to Pennsylvania and meet up with Zack at Tim Minnich's (Founder of WhiteTail Forensics) house before the show. Looking back, I guess I truly didn't even look into what we were going to be selling.

The first morning before the expo doors opened, they showed me the product we'd be selling all week: ALTRE Camo. I don't think I was bold enough to say it out loud, but internally my reaction was immediate: *"What the hell kind of camo is this? How am I supposed to sell this?"* I was floored.

Throughout the first day, I started talking with members of the ALTRE Pro Staff team as they came and went from the booth. These were serious outdoorsmen and women of all ages and experience levels, and every single one of them had stories to tell. They showed me harvest photos, encounter videos, and firsthand experiences using the pattern in the field. By the end of the week, I was intrigued. But I still wasn't sold.

I left Harrisburg with a suit of ALTRE Camo and one simple thought: *"What's the worst that can happen? I'll try it."*

That spring, I wore it turkey hunting but I didn't have much time to dedicate to the season and didn't have many close encounters. The real turning point came during deer season. On the second day of Massachusetts archery season, I climbed into one of my usual stands wearing my ALTRE setup. It was unseasonably warm, and honestly, I didn't expect to see much movement. Then two does came in and I was ready to fill that tag I had pulled that was sitting in my pocket.

They looked in my direction multiple times, but neither deer ever picked me out. One doe eventually came within eight yards, and because I'm a left-handed shooter, I actually had to spin around in the tree to make the shot. She never busted me. That stuck with me because in previous years, in that exact same stand, I'd been picked off by deer once they got that close. Later last fall during Vermont rifle season, I had another encounter. I was sitting on the ground against a tree with almost no cover, eating an Uncrustable when I looked up and spotted a doe standing roughly 15 yards away just staring in my direction. She knew something was there, but with the wind in my favor, she never picked me out, never blew, and never spooked. She simply wandered off.



(Continued on page 14)

Turkey Season

A Rewarding Journey

I have been so excited for Turkey Season to begin in Maine so that I could try out my ALTRE camo! I have been prepping for months, finding places to hunt and getting my blinds set up. I was all prepared to harvest a bird all by myself. But God had different plans for me.

I got a call from Ron from Moose Maine Kids. They are a non profit organization that fulfills terminally ill/disabled childrens dreams of going on a hunt or going fishing, anything to do with outdoor recreation. Ron asked me to film a couple of youth turkey hunts for him and of course I was on board. I felt pretty honored to be able to be a part of this program. I put my plans on hold without a second thought.



My first hunt was with an 11 year old boy named Reed. Reed has Spina Bifida and has to use crutches or his wheelchair to get around. We met up at 4am, it was cold, muddy and wet out and we had quite a little walk to get to the blind. Reed was using his crutches and he climbed up muddy hills and through part of the field with not one complaint, just a big smile on his face. Reed had 2 mentors who volunteer with the program there to help call in a bird for him, a brother and sister duo, both just teenagers themselves, Matthieu and Marissa. These two humans are some of the most impressive teens i have ever met. They worked together so well and so professionally! Matt called in 4 gobblers within minutes of daylight and

Reed took his shot and got one! His dad Kenny reloaded the gun for him in hopes he would fill both of his tags, but instead of shooting one of the other 3, Reed saw his turkey flop and he thought he was going to run away so he shot him again and the others ran away. We all got a chuckle out of it. Reed didnt care, he was so happy he had harvested his first animal! We tried to get him onto another bird that afternoon and the next day but the birds wouldnt cooperate with us. We had so many laughs in those two days, and the memories will stick with me forever. One of Reeds crutches broke in half while he was going into the garage and he gracefully fell, and immediately started laughing and we all joined in once we knew he was ok! Reed is going for his Maine Grand Slam, he got his turkey, next is his bear hunt and then he's off to get a Maine MOOSE!! Guess who gets to film all 3? Yup, THIS GIRL!!!



(Continued on page 12)

My next hunt was with a 16 year old boy named Gage. Gage's disability leaves him mostly non verbal and not much control over his body. He is completely dependent on his Mom Amanda to assist with all aspects of daily life, which is challenging for the both of them. As challenging as it may be, it did not stop them from going on his first hunt.

Our Guide who is also a volunteer to the program Jeremy Lamarre, aka Big Jay the Beast from the East, did amazing working with Gage. The only thing he wanted was to see him harvest his first animal and he worked hard to make it happen. The gun Gage used had a special device attached to the trigger so that could just push a button when given the signal to shoot. Now to you and I that may sound like a simple task, but for Gage it was an enormous one. Not only did he have to find the strength to do it once, the mechanism didn't work the first time he was given the signal to shoot, nor did it work the second time he was told to shoot, finally on the third time the gun went off and we watched the bird he shot at limp off to the woods and disappear.



Big Jay sprang into action and flipped the blind up over the top of himself and ran after the bird, but after a few minutes of looking for him, Ron had joined him in the woods but they couldn't find



him. While they was in the woods looking, the blind went from Gage, Amanda and I cheering to Gage realizing his bird was gone, to him getting so upset and crying. My heart broke right in two. We all got our emotions in check and Jeremy thought it might be a good idea to give it some time, go get some breakfast and come back and look in a bit. While we were at breakfast, Jeremy left the 4 of us at the diner and he went back to find Gage's bird, he was so determined to put that smile back on his face, and he did just that! He brought Gage's turkey right to the diner and brought him in a feather and said Buddy I found your turkey! The big smile that came across his face and the excitement he could not contain was just awesome and it flooded my heart with happiness. I understood at that moment why we do the things we do

no matter how much time it takes from our own lives or how much hard work goes into this, to be able to experience these kids having their dreams fulfilled is worth it all.

To Say that I am blessed to be a part of this program is an understatement. I am very honored to be a part of it all and I hope that I will continue to be for many years to come. For me, the best part is how humbled I have become. These kids are amazing, and the daily tasks that come easy for us, is stuff that we take for granted and it has changed my whole perspective on life to be honest. I made some lifelong friends the past week, and I look forward to more adventures with these two kids!

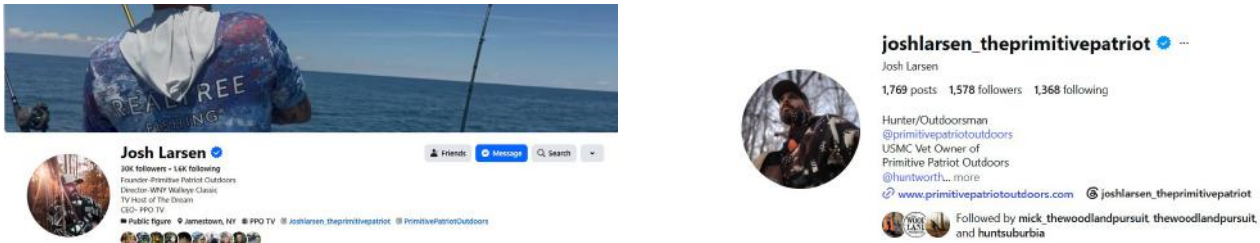
(Continued on page 13)

(From Combat Boots to Hunting Boots Continued from page 9)

A Legacy of Conservation and Faith

Today, through his work with Larsen Media Group and his seasoning brand, Primitive Kitchen, Larsen continues to promote the “primitive” lifestyle—one rooted in conservation, ethics, and the spiritual restoration found in the wild. His story serves as a testament to the idea that for those who have seen the worst of humanity, the stillness of God’s creation can be the ultimate bridge back to peace

Check out Josh Larsen on Facebook and Instagram here:



Larsen’s projects include: Primitive Patriot Outdoors, PPO TV, The Heroes Hunt, WNY Walleye Classic, Hunters for the Homeless, His tv show The Dream with Josh Larsen, and his new outdoor media company, Larsen Media Group. Larsen says that these projects help bring the outdoor community together.

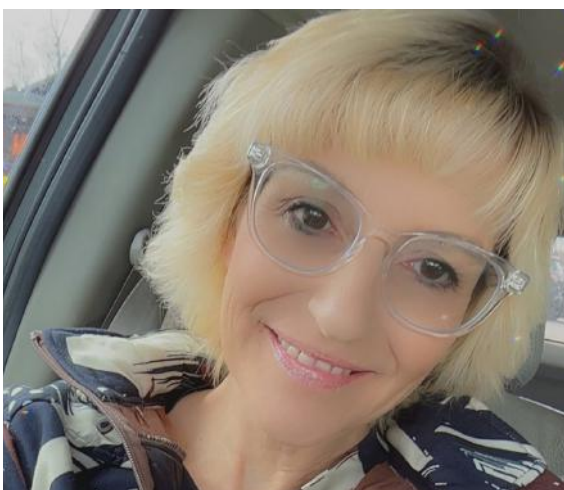
Josh Larsen resides in New York and is on the Pro Staff for ALTRE Camouflage.

Turkey Hunt Continued

Now, I did wear my ALTRE camo on all the hunts, and I got a lot of funny looks, and a lot of questions about it as well, until they saw me in the woods wearing it and they couldn’t believe how well it blends in with your surroundings. I am going on my turkey hunt this saturday, I will be alone, no blind, wearing my ALTRE, and I am feeling pretty confident that I will have a successful hunt, wish me luck, and I will keep you all posted in next months article!

Also, I got a text from Gage’s mom Amanda, thanking me for going on his hunt and to tell me that because of us, Gage has decided to give deer hunting a shot (pun intended)! We are going to try to purchase him some ALTRE camo before fall, since he cannot control his muscles, he can’t sit still and has to work really hard at being quiet, so we are going to need all the help we can get with making him invisible to a deer and I have no doubt ALTRE will do that for us!!

Good Luck to all the turkey hunters out there!



Judi Eugley Old Doe Outdoor Adventures
Alton, Maine

Judi is a Pro Staffer for ALTRE Camouflage

From Skeptic to Sold (Continued from page 10)

Then came turkey season in Missouri this year, my first hunt for turkey out of state. I showed up to a women's hunt wearing ALTRE and immediately caught some jokes about my camo.



Honestly, I expected it at that point – I have heard it before. The pattern stands out to people because it looks different than anything else on the market. But the birds didn't seem to mind.

One turkey came in to 11 yards. Another to 19. Neither bird – nor any of the others around them – ever picked me out.

In Massachusetts this spring I've hunted hard and had encounter after encounter with birds inside close range as well as a deer on one sit. Time after time, I continue to be amazed by how effective this pattern truly is.

That's the thing about ALTRE Camo – when people say it works, it's because it does. Tim and his son Brendon (designer of the pattern) have created something completely different. It sparks conversations. It turns heads. It makes people skeptical. I know because I was one of them.

Now, I tell people all the time that this is the last camo I'll ever wear. It wasn't designed to look good to us – it was designed for the animals we hunt. And if you had told me that the first time I saw it in Harrisburg, I probably would've laughed and called you crazy.

Instead, I've spent the last year eating my words alongside plates of venison and wild turkey harvested while wearing ALTRE Camo.

And honestly? I'm okay with that.



Sheryl Magdycz is an ALTRE Camo Pro Staffer and resides in Massachusetts

Sheryl is also co-host of the WILD WOMAN UNFILTERED Podcast. Click on the pic above to connect to the podcast.

Food Plot – Seasons in the Making

In 2018 I acquired the privilege of hunting a small urban area honey hole. It consists of agricultural land surrounding the area with patches of dense hard woods and open terrain and also some dense cover. It also has a creek that runs through the property. The property owner has walking trails mowed through dense brush and cover that they like to walk every now and then. Deer runs intersect those trails and also run along side the creek. When searching for what would be the spot I would put my stand I walked for days visualizing what could be. I came across a part of the



property where two main walking trails intersect and a few deer runs intersect that area. A perfect high traffic pinch point. It needed a lot of work to open up.

With little help and no access to heavy equipment to do the work I first opened up a very small section just as a transition area. This didn't seem to stop the deer and hold them long. Season after season I opened it up a bit more with my blind in the south east corner of the plot facing north west and a dominant southeast to north east wind this has become a hot spot. When I first started hunting this property it was over ran by

doe and yearlings and fawns. Some great bedding areas on this property. Bucks traveled less frequently. Growing this plot and habitat with opening deer runs up and creating bedding zones among the plot and transitions leading right to my plot it's become my favorite spot to hunt. I use Red Light Food Plot Seed CO., Food Chain deep woods mix. A no till seed mixture that works well in all soil conditions. It works perfect for me who has limited time and access to do food plot with heavy machinery. I do everything by weed wacker push mower and push till when I feel necessary. With the seed mixture I use being perennial I till every other or every third year. I will mow what regrows down after cast seeding and fertilize accordingly. The food plot itself is surrounded by dense brush cover.



Don't be intimidated to take on a food plot project. A lot of hard work, but well worth the effort!

Matthew Newsome is a Pro Staffer for ALTRE Camouflage and resides in Michigan

featured products

“

The zippered pocket behind the Kangaroo pocket on the hoodie is just what I needed as a hunter. A place to safely stow some gear were I cannot lose it.



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10 Trivia Questions on the History of Big Game Hunting in North America

1. Which large North American animal was nearly driven to extinction during the late 1800s due to commercial hunting and westward expansion?

Answer: The American bison (buffalo). Its population plummeted from an estimated 30–60 million animals to just a few hundred by the 1880s.

2. Who is often called the “Father of Wildlife Conservation” and was a famous big game hunter before becoming a leading conservation advocate?

Answer: Theodore Roosevelt. An avid hunter, Roosevelt later helped establish national forests, wildlife refuges, and national parks.

3. What famous outdoor organization, founded in 1887, was created by hunters and conservationists including Theodore Roosevelt?

Answer: The Boone and Crockett Club.

4. What North American big game species became one of the greatest conservation success stories after being reintroduced to areas where it had disappeared?

Answer: The Rocky Mountain elk, which was restored to many regions through relocation and conservation programs.

5. Which state is home to the largest recorded typical whitetail deer ever entered into the Boone and Crockett records?

Answer: Wisconsin. The famous Hanson Buck remains one of the largest typical whitetails on record.

6. In the late 19th century, what innovation greatly increased hunting effectiveness and changed big game hunting across North America?

Answer: The widespread use of repeating rifles and metallic cartridges.

7. What conservation funding system, established in 1937, directs excise taxes from firearms, ammunition, and hunting equipment toward wildlife management?

Answer: The Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act.

8. Which North American mountain animal is often considered one of the most challenging big game species to hunt because of its rugged habitat and keen eyesight?

Answer: The Dall sheep (along with other wild sheep species such as bighorn sheep).

9. What famous hunter and conservationist published *The Deer of North America* and helped popularize ethical, fair-chase hunting principles?

Answer: Theodore Roosevelt.

10. What phrase describes the ethical hunting principle that gives wild animals a reasonable chance to evade the hunter?

Answer: Fair Chase, a concept championed by the Boone and Crockett Club that remains a cornerstone of modern big game hunting ethics.

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Wild Tine is a group of young men that simply can't stop thinking about chasing wild game. They are based in Ohio. Click on the link above for their YouTube Channel and subscribe. Wild Tine are Pro Staff for ALTRE Camouflage.



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