

**MR.**  
ADVENTURE

# Survives the

# WILDERNESS



By  
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**Mr. Adventure journeys around the globe in search of thrills, danger and daredevil excitement. Each month, he reports on his missions in the pages of D.A. Keep reading—and adventure on!**

American Indian. As a boy, he became friends with a friend's grandfather, an Apache Indian named Stalking Wolf. For years, Tom practically lived in the woods as Stalking Wolf taught him about survival and nature awareness.

Then Stalking Wolf showed

The deep, dark, creepy woods are full of danger, right? Not if you know the tricks of a secret Apache Indian society, which I learned from master tracker and survivalist Tom Brown. Forget your fear—you can survive *anything*.

**"I'm gonna trash you,"** says Tom Brown.

This huge, stern man—my new teacher—is talking to me. And he's scaring me. But the guy does have my attention.

Tom grew up like an

Apache scout. Apache scouts trained for at least 10 years, starting with basic survival and awareness skills. As a scout, you became the eyes and ears of your clan, helping it avoid enemies and find animals to hunt. Scouts were also masters of awareness, stalking, tracking, and sneaking up on enemies. They could travel many miles on foot through any type of terrain or weather. And best of all, scouts were a secret society. "It was so secret," Tom says, "that no one outside the society knew who were its members."

Tom grew up to become a master tracker, and over the years, he's rescued dozens of lost people.

Today, he also writes and teaches the way of the scout at his school in New Jersey. That's where I headed, to spend a week learning the secrets of survival.



**NATURE BOY:** "You have to respect nature," says Tom. "She'll eat you alive if you don't."

A person is shown from the waist up, completely covered in thick, dark mud. They are standing in a dense forest with many thin, vertical tree trunks and branches. The lighting is dappled, with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a mix of bright and dark areas. The person's face and hands are also covered in mud, and they appear to be looking towards the camera. The overall scene is one of a survival or camouflage exercise in a natural setting.

**MUD  
MADNESS:**

Want a dirt-cheap survival tool? Try mud! It's great camouflage, allowing me to blend right in with the background.



**COOL FORT:** Anyone can build a debris hut like this in a few hours. We leaned a long fallen tree against a stump, then leaned smaller sticks against each side of the tree. Then we just piled on a thick layer of leaves, grass and other debris and—*presto*—we had a home in the woods.

**S**ay you're lost in the woods. You have nothing but the clothes on your back—no sleeping bag, no food, no matches. You may be here awhile, because you're miles from civilization.

What do you do?

First, you must try to relax. Sit down and keep your cool. It's the only way to think straight. And you *must* think straight, or you'll die.

Here, in order, is what you need to concern yourself with, according to Tom:

**1. Shelter:** This comes first because cold and damp can kill you in a few hours. "In my rescue cases," Tom says, "exposure to extreme cold and extreme heat kills more people than thirst."

### FOX TAIL FOOD:

This is a plant called fox tail reed. Tom showed me how to strip off the seeds, which can be munched or pounded into a flour. But I wouldn't do this on my own without learning more about plants. Many of them look alike, and plenty are poisonous and deadly.

My class built a debris hut out of sticks, leaves and other stuff found on the forest floor. It looked like a nifty fort and was a toasty-warm shelter. One lucky member of my class even got to sleep in the hut that night and loved it.

## Elements of SURVIVAL

**2. Water:** You can survive up to four days without it if you must. But where do you find water? "Nature provides," Tom says. "You just have to know where to look." For instance,

you can find dew early in the morning on leaves and grasses. And don't forget lakes and streams, of course, but be careful: Unpurified water from these sources can contain deadly bacteria. You should boil all water before drinking it.

**3. Fire:** You need it to cook food, boil



water, craft tools, and provide light and warmth. But how do you get it? Tom showed us one way to make fire by rubbing sticks together. It was exhausting work involving plenty of muscle and even more patience. When I finally got my first fire going, I couldn't believe my eyes. Those simple pieces of wood seemed like magic wands, and they had my newfound respect.

**Food:** Are you surprised that this is the last survival element you need to think about? Most people are. But you can stay alive a long time without food—some people have lived for a month without eating. In my class, we learned a few simple animal traps and snares, but better yet, we went foraging. That means Tom identified some plants that are safe to eat, and the class went into the fields to gather them for our evening meal.

I foraged for garlic and a big plant called burdock, while others looked for natural foods like pine nuts, plantain and watercress. "Every plant has a use," Tom says. And our meal was fabulous. Who needs a grocery store?



## FIRE BY FRICTION:

There are dozens of ways to make fire without matches.

To use the bow-drill method, you first carve some wood into two flat pieces

and a short cylinder. Then you make a bow by tying some cord to each end of a stick, and you fit all the pieces together in a certain way. Like playing a violin, you use the bow to make the other pieces of wood rub against each other hard and fast, creating friction. If done

properly, you get a hot coal out of the little bits of wood that flake off as you play your violin. The wood makes a funny squeaking sound, but

when you see smoke, you know you're close. You still have to place your coal in a little tinder pile of thin, dry grass. Blow on it carefully, and it'll burst into flames.





**MUD HEAD:**  
Harmless clump of  
vegetation or Mr.  
Adventure in  
survival mode? It's  
Mr. A. mudded up  
as a duck island.  
The muck allows  
you to sneak up  
on ducks in the  
water for hunting  
or up-close  
observation.

# DIRT Time

**S**urvival skills mean nothing until you get out in the wilderness and practice. That's what Tom calls dirt time. "Your real education begins when you enter the woods on your own," says Tom. So the next time you go outside, don't just sit there. Build a debris hut!

You can also work on the No. 1 survival skill: awareness. "This is the most important tool of the scout," Tom says. He feels that modern times have made people lazy. We live in houses, and stores provide all we need. Not having to hunt for food or worry about shelter has dulled our senses. So we miss out on

a lot of experiences.

"Nothing should be the same old, same old," insists Tom. "Even a robin can be fascinating. Make *everything* new and fresh every day by looking at it differently."

To sharpen your awareness, walk softly and *slooooooowly* wherever you go. And try the following ideas from Tom. You'll be amazed at what you sense:

■ **Sound:** Listen to the wind rustle through trees. "Each tree sings a different song," says Tom. Pick a sound—a babbling brook, a squawking bird—and focus on it alone. Or when you play a record, try to pick out just one instrument and listen to it the whole way through the song.

■ **Touch:** Lift your face up to the rain and let the drops hit it. Don't flick that ant off your arm—feel it crawling on your body. Sense the sun, the shade, and your clothes against your skin.

■ **Taste and smell:** Drink water slowly. Don't gulp—swish it around and let the taste linger. Try focusing on just one of

## You Gotta Love Mud!

Here are **10** reasons to treasure the slimy stuff.

**1.** Mud keeps you cool in hot weather.

**2.** Mud hides your scent. No animal can sniff you out.

**3.** Mud makes you

invisible to animals. If you stay still, they may come right up to you.

**4.** Mud makes you invisible to people. All the better to hide. (To check this out, find a park. Get muddied up, and sit just off the trail. Don't move, and watch hikers go by. You'll see how unaware most people are.)

**5.** Mud prevents sunburn.

**6.** Mud feels terrific.

**7.** Mud can't get dirty. You're already as filthy as it gets.

**8.** You can finger-paint—or finger-mud—on yourself.

**9.** Mud keeps insects away from you.

**10.** Mud allows you to become a duck island.

the many smells in your kitchen.

■ **Sight:** Watch how a rabbit hops or a cat walks. Count the spots on a robin.

There are additional ways to increase your awareness. **Concentric rings** are one example. You know that a stone thrown into a pond creates ripples that move far from the splash, all the way to the shore. Nature is the same way. Any movement in nature sets in motion a series of chain reactions.

For example, a fox moving through some brush makes a noise. The sound alarms nearby birds, who squawk and fly off. The birds fly past other animals, who in turn sound their own alarms and scatter, too.

"A trained scout knows these rings, which are like voices of nature," Tom says. "He knows when something is moving—even if he cannot see or hear it directly."

Awareness also means keeping your eyes wide open. Look toward the horizon and relax. Focus on nothing, and take in as wide a view as possible. Your eyes will become much more sensitive to movement. Tom calls this method **wide-angle vision**. Animals use it to spot danger. Scouts used it to detect animals for a hunt.

To practice wide-angle

vision, try this: Spread your arms out to your sides and behind you. Gazing ahead softly, slowly bring your arms forward while wiggling your fingers. When you can see them wiggling out of the corner of your eyes, stop. See? You can detect much more than what's directly in front of you.

We also learned the **universal stalking step**. This is a superslow method of walking or crawling that lets you sneak right up on people or animals. Cats stalk when they're on the prowl.

They stare at their prey, stay low, and slink ahead slowly. It looks like they're barely moving. Apache scouts practiced stalking by trying to touch deer. "The mark of a good hunter was how close he could get," says Tom.

A good stalking step lasts more than

a minute. Take a short stride, and place the outside of your foot on the ground first. Then roll to the inside. "Your toes are pointed straight ahead," says Tom. "Don't shift your weight forward until you know what you're stepping on. You have eyes in your feet and no longer have to look at the ground."

In my dirt time, I once stalked to within five feet of a deer before it saw me and bolted. I'm still trying to get close enough to touch one.



**A CLOSER LOOK:**  
As part of an awareness exercise, I picked a square foot of ground to examine up close. I sifted through the thick grass and dug into the ground. There I saw a whole world—tiny centipedes, a worm, chewed grass, mouse paths, small roots, dead ladybugs, and insects I'd never seen before.

A photograph showing four people sitting in a line on a grassy lawn in a wooded area. From left to right: a woman with long blonde hair wearing a black tank top and white shorts; a man in a grey t-shirt and white shorts; a man in a blue polo shirt and blue shorts; and a man in a black t-shirt with a white graphic and white shorts. They are all looking towards the left. In the background, a man covered in mud is standing and watching them. The scene is lit with natural light, possibly late afternoon or early morning.

**STALKING:** Here we're practicing the universal stalking step. There's no rush—each step takes at least 70 seconds. The mud-covered man watching us carefully is Tom.



# Animal TRACKING



The most oohs and aahs from my class came when Tom talked about the ultimate in awareness: **tracking**. By looking at faint traces in the ground, Tom can not only tell you what animal walked there, but he'll tell you when it passed through, how much it weighed,

which direction it looked and when it ate its last meal.

Every paw print and footprint is like a miniature Grand Canyon, full of tiny peaks and valleys and distortions in the dirt. These are clues that reveal everything you could ever want to know about the person or animal who made the track.

Try this: Have a friend stand in a sandbox, where she'll make clear footprints. Have her make several sets of prints: one while standing straight, another as she looks to her right, and yet another while she bends over to touch the ground. Examine all three sets closely, and you'll see slightly different impressions in the sand!

Tom showed me fox tracks in grass. He showed me a raccoon print on a fallen leaf. He even pointed out miniature beetle marks in some soft dirt near the barn. Suddenly the earth had messages all over it, and I knew then I'd never again look at the ground the way I used to.

## A TRACK FOR EVERY STEP

Few trackers possess the scientific know-how that's enabled Tom Brown to find dozens of lost people and track criminals running from the police. "Learning to track takes time," he says, "like learning to read." First lesson: All marks in the ground are tracks, whether they look like it or not. Rarely can you find many clear tracks like these, but if you do, they're easy to identify.



White-Tailed  
Deer



Grizzly  
Bear



### LEARNING TO CRAWL:

Tom had us crawl on the ground like, well, animals. Why? To think like one. It helps when you want to track an animal. This funny exercise demonstrates how different

animals walk in one of four different styles: bounding, galloping, pacing or walking diagonally. For example, watch a cat walk. See how its rear paws go exactly into the spots its front paws were just in? Or check out a rabbit. When it hops, its back legs land in front of its front paws. Want to track? You've got to be aware.

Raccoon



Coyote



Mountain  
Lion

Fox Squirrel

