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Most people around the world are accustomed to the standard four seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter. Here in the Adirondack Mountains of New York state, however, we are not content with just four. For instance, there's leaf peeping season, when the trees are bursting with brilliant reds and oranges. Since the foliage always peaks by about mid-October, I like to get out in the woods as much as possible at this time of year. Mysterious animal tracks, herds of wild turkeys, amazing Tarzan-like vines seemingly draped in mid air, the towering canopy of old-growth trees -- these are just a few of the sights to marvel at during this time of year. Certainly one of the most impressive sights is the mountain vistas covered with all those earthy fall colors that fashion designers and interior decorators so love. Though I have to say that I far prefer to look at the colors on the hillsides than on a model or in a magazine spread about a living room.

Proper attire for a walk in the woods

But back to my walks in the woods. I have to admit that I'm still getting accustomed to rural life. And one thing I had forgotten to reckon with was yet another season... hunting season. Just yesterday, my friend Pat and I decided to hike to a wonderful little pond near the top of a nearby mountain. The trail is through dark woods along a deeply rutted dirt road that is closed to traffic. It was a beautiful crisp day, and I had dressed appropriately -- or so I thought -- in jeans and fleece and my favorite patchwork quilt jacket.

"Are you crazy?" Pat asked when she saw me. "You're *not* going to wear that, are you?" At first I thought she meant that I looked too fashionable for an Adirondack hike. But no, that wasn't the issue. She reminded me that, even though hunting season hadn't officially opened, there are people in these parts who like to jump the gun -- so to speak -- and bag a deer in advance. Oh, and I believe that I failed to mention that my jeans were brown, the fleece was beige and my jacket had a hunter green check pattern overall, a large evergreen tree on the front and a huge moose on the back. She told me that I looked like a sitting duck -- or more appropriately, a walking moose. "Nothing like wearing a target on your back!" she exclaimed with obvious amazement at how naive I was. "Not to mention,... there's a reason they call that color you have on HUNTER green."

"Oh, right," I said, slinking back inside to look for something with less animal-like colors. I don't own anything that's fluorescent orange (hate that color). And all my lime green outfits were decidedly too summery -- not to mention far too stylish for a stroll in the woods. But obviously the target-practice jacket would have to go back into the closet.

I settled on a vibrant pink fleece jacket and a bright yellow baseball cap. I figured that, unless the hunters were tracking parrots that day, I'd be safe. And since there is a real dearth of parrots in the Adirondacks (at any time of year), chances were that any hunters we'd encounter would recognize -- even from afar -- that we were human creatures and not some edible wild animal.

Unlike me, Pat had carefully planned her outfit in advance. It consisted of a wild assortment of colors: a shocking orange silk scarf knotted in a huge bow around her head, a bright lime green fleece vest,

flaming red pants and a backpack the color of a swimming pool floor. "Okay," I said to her. "That might be the sensible thing to wear during hunting season. But if you ever see me leaving my house in that kind of outlandish garb, please, just shoot me."