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JULY 2009

VOL 10 - ISSUE 07

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Hunting black wildebeest in northern Namibia



The author in his tree stand in the tamboti tree.

Frank Berbuir describes a hunting trip in the north of Namibia, during which he brought down a magnificent black wildebeest.

Special moments last forever. And so do mine of my last bowhunting adventure, hunting black wildebeest in Namibia. The hunt took place in November 2006 in the south of Namibia, at the edge of the Kalahari desert, and at Omalanga Safaris in the north of Namibia near the Etosha National Park. Once again I was bowhunting with my friend, PH and farmer Gustav Bauer of Otavi, Namibia. It was a successful hunt – excellent, awesome. I walked-and-stalked, sat in a blind, directly in a camel-thorn tree, or in a tree stand in a tamboti tree. Accommodation, meals and drinks were light and sweet, delicious and tasty.

Weatherwise I experienced extremes from 40°C in the Kalahari at about noon down to 9°C at half past five in the morning. It was really cold in the desert, although it was summer in Namibia. We also had heavy rain – fortunately only twice for a couple of hours. That is Africa. Because of the copious rain that year Namibia was very green, and during the walk-and-stalks I experienced the beauty of the fauna and flora at every corner. At the edge of the Kalahari, in the south of Namibia, we hunted springbuck. Gustav, though an avid bowhunter, was hunting with the rifle this time and I with my 80-pound Mathews LX. Stalking springbuck on a property of 25 000 hectares posed a special challenge. Nevertheless I approached up to 38 yards of one good ram. Then I messed it up. In future I will shoot first and then take a picture or film the scene.

I was hunting on my own and after getting the scenery on tape and nocking the arrow on the string, the buck realised what

would happen next and all I saw was his funny bumping-away.

Nice to see, but “idiot”, I thought. My own fault.

Some hours later my first African rabbit did not have such a lucky day. I shot him from 24 yards.

After three days near the desert we headed to Mopane camp at Omalanga Safaris, where my priority was to bowhunt black wildebeest. The next day we glassed a group of twelve beasts, with two good bulls. Walk-and-stalk would have been a great challenge, but because of the open terrain it was tricky and within the black wildebeest herd the twelve pairs of eyes, ears and noses detected more or less everything around them.

After spooking the herd, I set up a tree stand near a waterhole the gnus frequently visited. So now I was sitting in a tamboti tree at four-and-a-half metres height, about 22 metres away from the waterhole. Nice spot, especially in the early morning hours when I watched the wonderful sunrise directly in front of me. But it was also a little bit annoying in the late afternoon and evening hours with all the *culicidaes* – better known as “bloody hell” mosquitoes.

Nevertheless I had nice views of some young warthogs, some ostriches, kudu cows with young, and a couple of red hartebeest.

But the black wildebeest did not come – not at all.

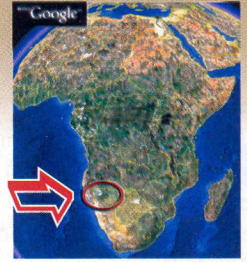
New day, new game

It was early and still dark that morning at five o'clock when I entered the tree stand. I fixed my stuff, drew the bow as exercise and to get familiar with several shooting positions, and watched again the awakening of the African bush. Several helmeted guinea-fowl were on the run to the waterhole. A few tiny birds and some cape pigeons also put in an appearance. Interestingly also, some birds landed near to me in the tamboti tree and were visibly surprised, and sometimes annoyed, about this Sniper Africa-camouflaged creature. Especially the grey loeries. With their devilish “go away” croaking, they are my favourite feathered friends. Just joking, they are really funny – as are the red or yellow-beaked tokus.

But I did not want to talk only about the rich and fascinating world of South African birds. I was looking for wildebeest. But this morning all I got was nice sequences on my videotape and digital camera.

By three-thirty p.m. I found myself back in the tree. Because nothing happened, I browsed through an ABH magazine. But at 4:30 the action started.

With my binos I saw that around 200 metres away a black wildebeest herd started moving to the water. It was do or die



now. As the gnus came nearer and nearer, my blood pulsed through my veins as though powered by a high-speed pump. At the same time some blesbuck came to the water from the other side. Oh, not good, not good, I thought, because the blesbuck would get my wind if they got behind me. The black wildebeest came nearer to the water with their kittenish and sometimes crazy-looking behaviour. When they were at 50 metres, the big bull in front went to the right (from my point of view) and made some snorting noises and shook his head up and down and to the left and right to show the blesbuck that he and his buddies were the bosses in the boxing ring. It worked – the blesbuck buzzed off.

The big bull still stood there, about 45 metres away, facing me – so no shooting possibility. Will he go to the left, to the water, or will he come nearer and go around the tree I am sitting in? And am I in the awkward position that he will get my wind? The bull went forward and then to the right – damn. Wrong direction – he will get my wind when he gets behind me. Suddenly, at 27 metres, he stood still, broadside, for some seconds.

“This is your chance, Frank” I whispered to myself. I drew quickly, sighted in on the vitals, and released. The 125-grain Silverflame penetrated, and the bull jumped like a brumby that did not want to be ridden by a human before he stomped off like a runaway train into the nearby bushes.

I started shaking in my tree stand and needed some minutes to calm down.

The sun was low when half an hour later I descended from

the stand. Gustav had arrived in the meantime with his German hunting terrier, and together we found the bull about 300 metres from where I had shot him.

What an exciting bowhunt and what an amazing trophy. I was impressed when I saw this interesting and unique animal lying in front of me, struck down by bow and arrow.

The trophy ranked in the Gold Medal range according to SCI measuring.

I also successfully hunted two blesbuck, a very nice duiker ram and another rabbit. But that is a different story.

Thanks to all those who made these special moments memorable forever!



The trophy ranked in the gold medal range according to SCI standards.

Equipment:	
Bow:	Mathews LX 80 pounds (customised - one of twelve sets available as 80 pounds on the LX).
Grip:	Gripwerks Birdseye Maple custom grip
Sight:	HHA Optimizer
Rest:	Trophy Ridge drop-away
Stabiliser:	Vibracheck
Quiver:	Mathews five-arrow
Release:	Scott Wildcat
Arrow:	Carbon Express CX Hunter 300 Advantage
Broadheads:	Silverflame 125-grain
Optics:	Zeiss Victory 10 x 40 and Leupold RX III rangefinder
Camo:	Sniper Africa

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additional pics
from the author



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