

africa's bowhunter



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Three bow tests

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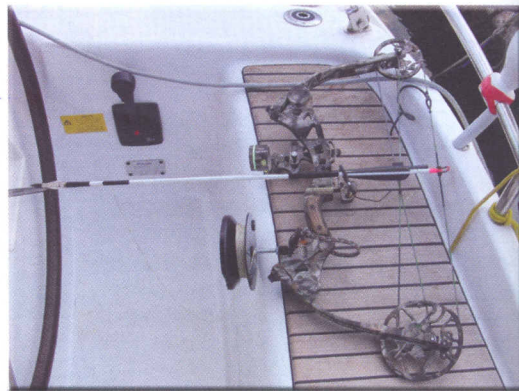
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(Left) It took a lot of trying before the author finally managed to spear a fish, but he will keep on bowfishing, he says.

(Below) The author's fishing bow – a TNT Archery Revolution.



Bowfishing

– a new and exciting experience

Frank Berbuir tells about his first-ever bowfishing trip, shooting fish from a yacht. It was not as easy as it looked, he says.

Spending a week on a sailing yacht cruising on the ocean can be very relaxing, as well as sportive – especially when your task, duty and position on the boat is that of grinder. What is the “grinding” for? The grinders are the muscles of the boat. The handles they turn create the energy that is used in the operations requiring human effort, mainly getting a sail – or a man – up the mast, or trimming the mainsail, the genoa (the sail at the forward part of the boat), or the spinnaker (the big ‘parachute’-type sail flown in front of the boat) from one side to the other.

Moreover, the excitement increased because I had the chance to carry with me in my luggage my bow for trying out bowfishing. It was my new, three-weeks-old, 22-inch axle-to-axle TNT Archery Revolution bow (www.tntarchery.com) which I had bought from Wildlife Marketing (www.wildlife-marketing.de) along with my bowfishing equipment.

The bow itself I equipped with a Ripcord drop-away rest, a Limbsaver S-Coil stabiliser and a Viper slider sight which I had sighted in up to 40 metres, although I did not use it for bowfishing.

This small bow is an incredible little single-cam cracker with an absolutely smooth draw that shoots just as well as its bigger brothers and sisters, and the big advantage is that it will fit in a suitcase or travelling bag so that a big

and sometimes bulky bowcase is not necessary. This helps when you are travelling by aircraft or as a foreign hunter or when space is limited – like on the boat. In future I will also have a speed-cam and bowfishing cam available. I had warned the six other guys that I wanted to have a go at bowfishing and after some teasing and smiling they were impressed with this alternative form of fishing.

All of a sudden they would shoot to the surface like a rocket, grab a piece of bread and be gone at the same speed

Every day when we determined on the sea charts where we wanted to take a break for lunch or for swimming or snorkelling in one of the many nice and sometimes uncrowded inlets and bays along the coastline of the island we circumnavigated, I hoped to have a chance to try out the bowfishing, by the way, it would be the first time for me. The first day, before we departed from our home port, I threw some bread from the boat to check what kind of fishes might show up. After about three to five minutes the first, very small ones, appeared, then bigger ones about the size of the palm of a hand. After an additional two or three minutes the big ones came nearer, but they stayed at about two or three metres depth, waiting until the bread sank down.



The catch. Though not large, it tasted good!



A major advantage of the Revolution bow is that it fits in a suitcase or travelling bag.

Very clever – they did not grow to the size of a human forearm by being careless. But all of a sudden they would shoot to the surface like a rocket, grab a piece of bread and be gone at the same speed. Interesting and amazing, but very difficult to shoot with bow and arrow, I thought.

When we made our first stop in a cosy bayou, my fellow passengers went swimming and snorkelling. When they came back they told me that there were “monster fishes”. I know there are no bigger liars than politicians, fishermen and hunters, but I took out my equipment and stood on the starboard side of the boat spreading tiny pieces of bread into the water. Fortunately fish came up and within seconds the water surface looked like a sizzling boiler – wow, many fishes in a circle of around five metres whizzing through the water, but all as small as an index finger. Within seconds the “bait” was gone. Hmm, new tactic: throw a whole slice of bread into the water to attract the bigger fish. Not twenty seconds passed before the first seagulls appeared and dug in. Get lost, damned birds! I shouted. Let’s change position to the port side of the boat. The seagulls were busy quarrelling among themselves over the bread, so they did not follow. Same procedure, and soon some big fish, roundabout 300 millimetres, actually approached.

Folks, that was exciting and the blood pressure rose like

when a 60-inch kudu bull appears.

I took the bow, nocked the fibreglass fish arrow with the Retract-O-Blade Garpoon fish point – like a mechanical broadhead with fold-out blades – checked that the fish line from the Bear screw-on fishing reel was exposed and drew the 74 pounds of the TNT Revolution. Three fishes were very close to the bread slice, which was floating around five metres from where I stood.

I aimed over the point and pulled the trigger. The arrow fired into the water like a torpedo. Wow, amazing to see the arrow dive that deep into the water. About ten metres of the line was unspooled when I wound it on the reel again, but... no fish!

This procedure took place several times and I got a little bit enervated. But practice makes perfect, or something like that, and so the day came when I stood on the quarterdeck or rear end of the boat and a swarm of white seabreams (*diplodus sargus*) swam in at five metres distance, chasing the slice of bread.

I drew the Revolution, aimed a hand’s breadth in front of the swimming fish... and was the lucky guy this time.!

Okay, it is not a big catch, but for me every shot or every animal I harvest counts. And by the way it tasted good although it was too small to be divvied up.

Bowfishing is a great experience and a lot of fun, although I just shot arrows into the water several times before I found out how to aim and how to compensate for the boat being in motion. The fish did not stop and invite me to shoot with the existing light refraction. But finally I got one, and I will carry on bowfishing whenever there is an opportunity.

My bow:

- TNT Archery Revolution bow (www.tntarchery.com)
- 22 inches axle-to-axle
- Revolution single cam
- Adjustable stop 24 to 31 inches draw length
- Same cam – no modules
- 35 to 100 pounds draw weight
- 80 per cent let-off
- 8¼ inch brace height
- Total weight 3,25 pounds

Equipment:

- Next Camo, 74 pounds (adjustable 65 to 80 pounds), 28-inch DL with a custom idler wheel
- Ripcord drop-away rest
- Viper Archery Predator Quickset 2500 sight (not used for fishing)
- Limbsaver S-Coil stabiliser (disassembled for fishing)
- Paradox bowsling
- Pro Hunter string peep (not used for bowfishing)
- Scott Wildcat release

For bowfishing I used:

- Bear Screw-On fishing reel and fibreglass arrow
- Retract-O-Blade Garpoon fish point

Take care and always good hunting – alles van die beste. And for the fishermen and sailors: “Petriheil” and a fair wind.