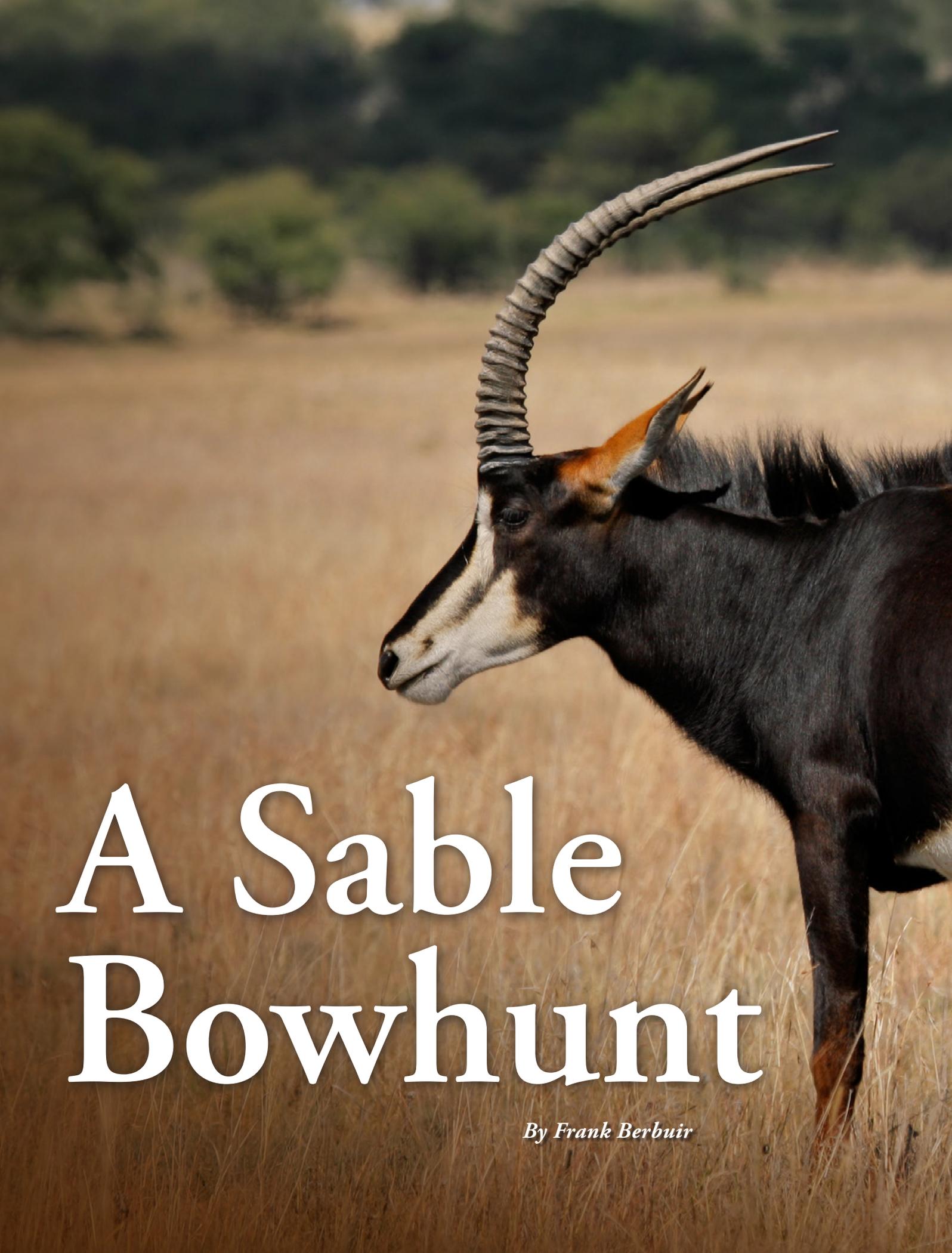


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A Sable Bowhunt

By Frank Berbuir



I was on the overnight flight to Johannesburg, back to beautiful South Africa to bowhunt again with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. Formalities were quick – with bow and arrow equipment as a sporting device, you normally do not have any issues with customs, so I was out promptly, happy to see Izak again who met me at the airport.

After two years we had a lot to catch up during the drive up north to the Limpopo Province to our hunting grounds where we wanted to hunt two magnificent and beautiful antelope – a sable, a member of the ringed-horn antelopes, and a nyala, a spiral-horned antelope.

After we reached our hunting destination and met the landowner we settled in and enjoyed a nice braai that evening, and planned the next day. It was to scout the area. The landowner had told us that there was an old sable bull, a real warrior and fighter, which was roaming around alone.

The next day we started with a game drive, glassing the area. We saw some nice kudu, blesbok, warthogs, nyala, and a small group of sable antelope with some young males – but not the one we were looking for. But In the afternoon we finally saw him, a lonely roaming bull with tremendous horns, strutting through the bush. That must be the one! As we were told, he was rambling alone and looked a real warrior because we could see several scars on him. His body was huge, his mane was thick, and the horns looked enormous. It was a bit too far and late to start a stalk, and if we drove closer he could have been scared off. So we left him for that day, hoping he would go to a nearby small waterhole the next morning, where there was also a salt lick that might tempt him. That evening at the campfire we relived the scenes we had observed that day, and my sleep that night was fitful, as pictures of that sable played in my mind.

At sunrise the next morning we were back to the spot where we saw him the day before, and made our walk and stalk near to the waterhole



Relaxing sable in the warming winter sun.



Fantastic landscape of the Limpopo.



Lucky author and PH with a fantastic sable.

Equipment:

Bow: Mathews Z7x @ 70 lbs

Arrow: Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350

Broadhead: Silverflame XL 2-Blade @ 125 grain

Optics: Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder

Release: Scott

Camo: Sniper Africa

and salt lick. We concealed ourselves behind some covering bushes where we could observe the spot up close and personal. The rising sun slowly warmed us up on that South African winter morning. The guinea fowls and francolins, with their raucous cackling were, as always, the first creatures to show up. We did not realize how much time had elapsed since we were there, when suddenly we heard something to our right.

Luckily, the wind was perfect, blowing towards us, so we would not spook whatever was approaching. Slowly but surely we heard it coming closer. Our nerves were all on edge when, between the last two bushes, this magnificent ringed-horned antelope stepped out. A beautiful animal was standing there, checking the spot. His symmetrical, long, thick, curved horns swept over his black coat. Together with his long mane and face mask – a stunning sable bull.

These antelope are not as shy as kudu or nyala. He was standing there like a rock, with his upraised head. After a couple of minutes he went straight to the salt lick. Izak indicated that I should stay calm and do nothing. I had nocked in an arrow on the string and put it on the rest when we arrived at our ambush, and my release was snapped in the loop. There was a small clear shooting window on the salt lick, and I was focused like a lion on its prey.

“Wait until he is at the salt lick, relaxed and standing broadside,” Izak whispered. I don’t know how much time went by when the moment of truth was there and he bent down his head to the salt, his left leg a bit forward showing his broadside. He was at 26 metres when I pulled my bow to full draw, quietly and slowly. With the sight pin on his vitals I released the arrow which hammered into the animal’s chest and penetrated fully through its body. He jumped with a slight right turn, and swiftly bounded off. My pumping heart and shaking hands betrayed my excitement.

Izak smiled at me. “Great shot my friend. Let’s wait a bit and give him time.” About forty minutes later, which felt like an eternity, we followed his flight trail. Roughly ten yards from the shooting spot we found the arrow

full of blood and still in perfect shape. The blood trail was sparse, but by his deep tracks we could follow him. Then we saw him, beside a bush about 110 metres from the shooting spot. Even in death, what a beautiful specimen of a ringed-horned antelopes lay there. I was overwhelmed, and we more than happy with this awesome animal and trophy. We phoned the landowner to join us with the bakkie, and after some good, respectful trophy pictures, we loaded him on the pick-up. Back in camp the butchering gave 120 kilogram of first-class venison, and the sirloins tasted excellent a couple of days later.

What an extraordinary performance again of bow and arrow.

Together with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris I had a tremendously good hunt again, with unforgettable impressions and memories of that week

The sable antelope *Hippotragus niger* or *Swartwitpens* in Afrikaans, is a beautiful, majestic antelope

with a compact, robust body, and a thick, arched neck. Often it has a short, stiff mane, and a wispy beard on the throat. Its general coloration is rich chestnut to black. Females and juveniles are chestnut to dark brown, while males begin darkening and turn black after three years.

Because of the contrasting white underparts they have the Afrikaans name *Swartwitpens* which means "black with a white belly." Long, white hairs are present below the eyes, and a wide, black stripe runs over the nose. The tail is long, with a tuft at the end.

Both sexes have ringed horns which arch backward. Females horns can reach up 39 inches, males horns range between 32-65 inches long.

Sable inhabit East Africa, south of Kenya, and in Southern Africa in savanna woodlands and grasslands during the dry season, where they eat mid-length grasses and leaves. They visit salt licks and have been known to chew bones to absorb minerals. They are diurnal, but are less active during the heat of the day. They form herds of 10 to 30 females and calves led by a single bull. Males fight among themselves – they drop to their knees and use their horns. When threatened by predators, including lions, sable defend themselves using their scimitar-shaped horns. Many big cats are killed during such fights.



Silverflame XL – an excellent broadhead.



Pure sable venison- 120 Kg excellent sable meat.

in South Africa. What an exciting safari, where we also bagged an extraordinary nyala bull – but that is a different story. Once more thank you very much to Izak and his outstanding experience, company and organization.

Shoot straight, always good hunting, *Waidmannsheil* and *Alles van die beste*.

Frank

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 17 years. Although he has bowhunted in several countries, he has become addicted to hunting in Africa since his first safari in 2004. Frank is a mechanical engineer and risk manager in the automotive industry.

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