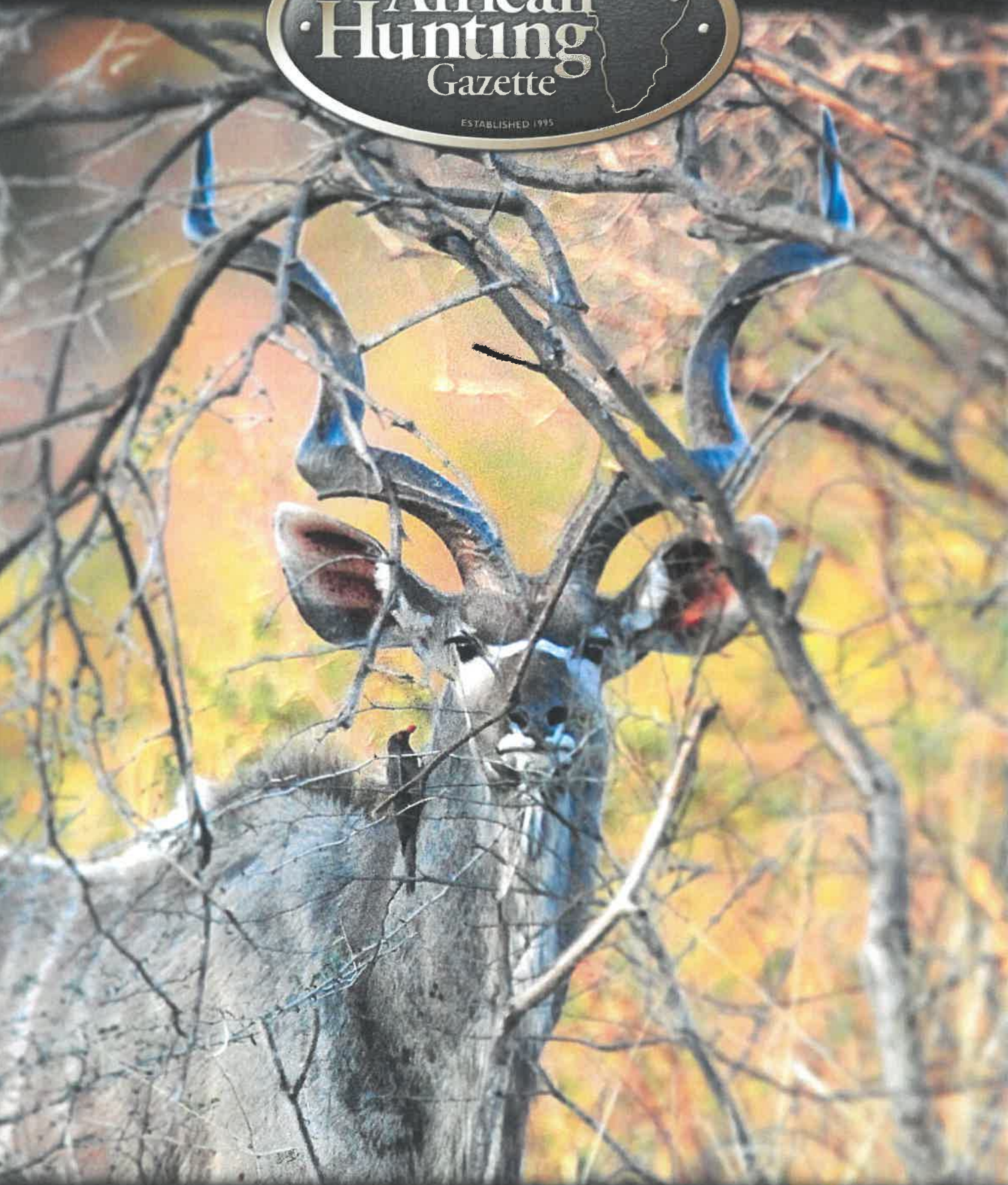


Vol 26.3

Spring issue 2021



HUNTING THE GREAT CONTINENT OF AFRICA



SUNI QUEST

with bow and arrow

By Frank Berbuir



Our 360-degree-view blind.

Hunting in Africa with bow and arrow or a rifle, or whatever weapon you legally choose, very easily becomes addictive. Seventeen years ago after my first African safari, that is what happened to me. In continuing my pursuit of the pygmy antelopes, and after several bowhunting adventures over a couple of years on six of the Tiny Ten, this year my bowhunting achievement list was another little antelope - the suni. Although it resembles the tiny musk deer, it is actually a species of dwarf antelope.

Once more with my PH and friend Izak Vos from Vos Safaris, I was on a farm in the Limpopo Province. It was middle of August, South African wintertime, and a little crisp in the morning, but at 7:00 it was already 20 degrees Celsius. By 8:00 we were sitting in our 360-degrees-view blind enjoying the awakening of the African wildlife. With our excellent view on the bush and waterhole, we recognized as usual the guinea fowls and francolins coming first. Then a troop of twelve mountain reedbuck invaded the water source. Not our object of desire, but it was very interesting to see their behavior and enjoying the youngsters bouncing around. After they left it became quiet. The farmer had told us that the suni usually came from the right-hand side of the bush, mainly interested in the salt lick to our right. So that is where we focused.



The fantastic suni, and a happy hunter and PH.

Quite some time passed when all of a sudden we saw through our binoculars slight movements in a bush. “Do you see it? It’s the suni, standing covered in the bush,” Izak said. It was scanning the area.

Frozen, I watched it through my binoculars.

“Wow, it is really small,” I murmured.

“Yes, it is, and get ready, but be slow and sure,” Izak

answered quietly. We had checked the path before and located with the rangefinder the salt lick at 22 meters. Silently, I grasped my bow and put the arrow on the rest. Slowly I moved myself into the best shooting position towards the salt lick and the shooting window in the blind.

“Wait until it stays calm at the salt lick, and stay calm as well!” Izak advised me. *Stay calm as well ...* easier said than done, because my blood pressure was rising like hell. Finally, the bokkie left his ambush and sneaked step by step forward, still watchful, and when he reached the salt lick, he was still nervously inspecting his surroundings.

“Wait until he starts nibbling the salt,” Izak whispered. When the suni lowered his head and starting nibbling on the salt lick, I slowly pulled my bow to full draw, the dot of my sight aimed on his vitals. Smoothly I pushed the trigger and released the arrow on its mission. Within a second it penetrated the body of the tiny antelope. It dropped dead.

Izak stood, took his hat off and shook my hand firmly. “Congrats, well done. You made it, your suni is in the salt!” I was more than happy and I could actually feel my relief and joy. We left the blind and went to where it lay, and I knelt down next to this gorgeous specimen of the tiny ten antelopes.

It was a wonderful hunt with bow and arrow, and finally I had taken this awesome suni. Moreover, it completed the diamond award for the pygmy antelopes at the SCI with bow and arrow. After we took some nice pictures, we returned to camp with our very special little antelope.

Once more, a tremendous hunt with unforgettable impressions and memories together with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris in South Africa. Shoot straight, take care, always good hunting, “*Waidmannsheil*” and “*Alles van die beste*”.



Waterhole view.

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting—especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 22 years. Although he's bowhunted in several countries, he's become addicted to hunting in Africa since his first safari in 2004. Frank is a mechanical engineer and risk manager in the automotive industry.

Though often overshadowed by the Big Five, with much attention focused on hunting the large and glamorous African species like kudu, gemsbok or wildebeest, hunting the tiny 10 species of pygmy antelope in Africa can be an extremely challenging and fulfilling experience. Tiny Ten species are Damara Dik-Dik, Blue Duiker, Common Duiker (also called Grey Duiker or Bush Duiker), Red Forest Duiker (also called Red Duiker, Natal Duiker or Natal Red Duiker), Cape Grysbok (also called Southern Grysbok), Sharp's Grysbok (also called Northern Grysbok), Klipspringer, Oribi, Steenbok (also known as Steinbuck or Steinbok), Suni. All of these antelope are extremely small, the largest specimen, a common duiker weighs less than 50 pounds and therefore it is very demanding to get close for a shot on such a small target. Luckily, over the last seven years I had successfully taken a common duiker in Namibia, a steenbok as well as a blue duiker, red duiker, klipspringer and grysbok on bowhunts in South Africa.

Description:

Suni *Neotragus moschatus*. Although it resembles tiny musk deer, is actually a species of dwarf antelope. It occurs in dense underbrush from central Kenya to KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Suni are around 12–17 inches (30–43 cm) high at the shoulder and weigh 10–12 pounds (4.5–5.4 kg). They are usually reddish brown, darker on their back than their sides and legs. The belly, chin, throat and insides of legs are white. The nostrils are a prominent red, and there are black rings around the eyes and above the hooves. The tiny antelope exudes a pungent odor secreted from glands in the head. They tend to keep hidden, so communicate with other suni mostly by means of smell, but can make faint barking and whistling sounds. Along with leaving their distinctive odor rubbed on tree branches and rocks, male suni leave piles of droppings. This is a warning to other male suni that this territory is taken. Males have horns of 3–5 inches (8–13 cm) length, ridged most of the length, curving backwards close to the head. Females do not have horns. Suni are a favorite meal of numerous predators, including lions, large snakes and birds of prey which hunt suni adults and calves. For protection they are well camouflaged in dry grass and keep very still. When a predator is almost on top of them they spring out and bound away into the underbrush.



Equipment:

Bow: Mathews Z7x @ 70 lbs
Arrow: Carbon Express
Maxima Hunter 350
Broadhead: German Kinetics
Silverflame 125 grain
Optics: Zeiss Victory
Binocular & Nikon
Rangefinder
Release: Scott
Camo: Sniper Africa