

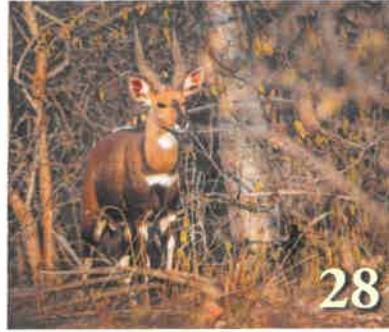
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Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

Richard Lendrum
richard@africanhuntinggazette.com

Managing Editor

Esther Sibanda
esther@africanhuntinggazette.com

Design & Layout

Heinz Bawa

Advertising Enquiries:

Richard Lendrum
richard@africanhuntinggazette.com

Subscriptions

www.africanhuntinggazette.com

North America

Tel: +1 406-988-0725
africanoasis.info@gmail.com

Africa

Esther Sibanda
esther@africanhuntinggazette.com

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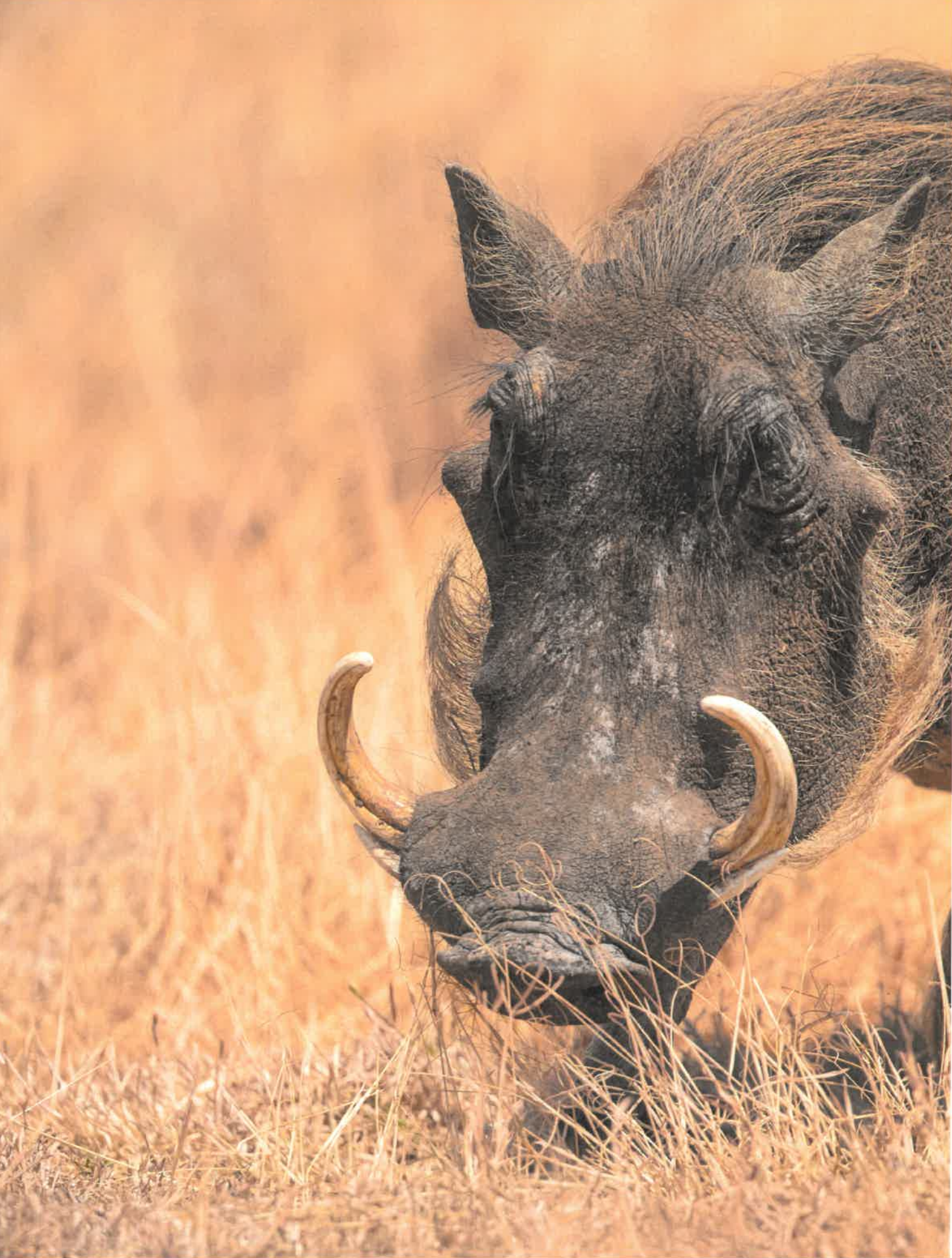
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A close-up, rear view of a warthog's back and tail in a dry, grassy field. The warthog's dark, coarse hair is the central focus, with its tail extending towards the right. The background is a soft-focus, golden-brown landscape.

PASSION for WARTHOGS

— three pigs and three bows

By Frank Berbuir

I do not know a hunter that does not like to hunt pigs regardless of the species, whether it is a wild boar, feral hog, javelina, bushpig, peccary or warthog – whenever, wherever and whichever.



The same passion caught me in 2004 in northern Namibia when I got acquainted the first time with those warlike critters called warthog. They are fascinating to see, with two pairs of huge tusks protruding from the mouth and curving upwards, their bristly mane down the spine to the middle of the back, and their wart-like protrusions on the large head which serve as a fat reserve. The razor-sharp tusks are used for defense when males fight. Warthogs look particularly comical when they trot off with their tails standing straight up like an antenna – Radio Africa! That time in Namibia, on a beautiful farm in the north, I had the great opportunity to take a fantastic gemsbok some days before with bow and arrow. After having been for a trip into the famous Etosha National Park my PH Gustav and I went out very early one morning to a pit blind to wait for kudu or warthog. After setting up our stuff in the blind we watched a wonderful sunrise.

Though we both were still a little tired we suddenly became wide awake when unexpectedly a big warthog strolled out of the bush to the natural waterhole.

“Frank, there is your boar,” Gustav whispered in my ear. What a monstrous creature, I thought when I saw him approach the water. He was impressive with big tusks, not at all wary. Now I had to move quickly because warthogs normally just come to scoop up some water and go. I grabbed my bow, nocked an arrow and was ready while Gustav switched on the video camera. After it drank, the boar began to strut back towards the bush, so we blew a short whistle, hoping the pig would stop.

Fortunately the warthog was curious and stopped for a deadly second, and I was able to place a quartering away shot from 28 yards with a 125-grain Wasp Jackhammer mechanical Broadhead-equipped Beman arrow from my 65 pounds Mathews SQ2 bow. The “vlakvark” (Afrikaans for “pig of the plains”) flinched and rushed away like a sprinter from a starting block into the bushes to the right. For a few seconds we heard branches cracking, and then heard a loud grunt before all was quiet.

“The warthog is down Frank. Let us wait a few minutes and then go and find him. He is not far,” said Gustav. We waited a

quarter of an hour and then followed the tracks from where I shot it. The blood track was sparse but the footprints were visible in the reddish-brown sand, and Gustav was an expert in reading them. Just 70 yards from where I had shot the pig, we could see something lying in a bush. It was my warthog, and it was a fine specimen of *Phacochoerus africanus*. We both were extremely happy about this great morning and the awesome result.

Although the animal had string-jumped a little, the broadhead had hit the upper lungs and cut the aorta as we found out later during the slaughtering. From that time I became addicted to hunting these bruisers, and in the following years I always visited and hunted in Namibia. There is nothing better than traveling to Africa when in your hometown wintertime is starting and the weather is cold, grey and rainy. In November 2007, I went for the second time deep into the south of Namibia close to the Kalahari Desert where the countryside and scenery is different from the northern part of this beautiful African country. Because of the rough territory and more or less



totally open grassland with very sparse cover, stalking was not a preferred option so we decided to hunt from a stone-blind.

The first afternoon hunt started at 3 p.m. when we headed to the blind and regrettably flushed a good old warthog out of his bed under a thorny bush. Damn, why didn't we see it, I thought. I hope I will have the luck to meet this buster again.

The next morning pulled me out of my bed at 4:30 a.m. and after a quick coffee and a snack we were out on the Land Rover and headed back to the blind. On the way I had the fortune to get a fine male ostrich with bow and arrow. After we had taken trophy pics of the big bird and loaded him on the bakkie, we decided to walk and stalk for the warthog we had spooked the afternoon before. Cautiously, alert for any sounds or action, my PH Christian and I sneaked from bush to bush for about a mile.

Then just at the moment when we were on the go and without any cover, the boar from the afternoon before charged out of his cover approximately 25 yards in front of us. Holy smoke! Now Christian and I were spooked! Fortunately, the warthog did



not take flight. It was too curious. After a short sprint it stopped and stood exposed, like us, and seemed to wait to see what we would do.

What a scene – two guys and a wild pig rooted to the spot under the African sun in this wonderful landscape, waiting for the next move.

Christian ranged it on 45 yards standing left broadside. I stood slightly behind him and slowly lifted up my Bowtech Tribute, my hand around the Gripwerks birds-eye maple grip. Dead slow, I nocked in the Carbon Express Maxima Hunter arrow with the 125-grain G5 Tekan II Broadhead. In slow motion I drew my 71-lb bow and settled the sight pin on the spot of his vitals.

I released the arrow, and within a split second it passed through the hog. The boar cut a 90° hook to the right and ran up the hill out of sight. Ten yards behind the spot where he had stood we found the arrow and the blood trail. After a hard tracking under the bright African sun on a scanty blood trail, we found the boar dead under a bush. The entry hole of the broadhead showed that the shot was a little to the rear,



Happy hunter with South African tusker.

but fortunately cut the lungs. Exhausted but happy about this southern Namibian tusker, we took some pictures before going back to the car to fetch the warthog, and enjoyed a hard-earned Windhoek Lager back in camp.

During my hunt with Izak Vos and Vos Safaris in early August 2014 my main intention and hunting ambitions were not to shoot a warthog – but you never know or can tell what can happen.

In six days of this hunting trip we had some very memorable events with the wildlife in the beautiful Limpopo area in northern South Africa. We walked and stalked or glassed and stalked and bagged some great trophies as well. A massive eland bull was the quarry I was focused on and therefore had my reliable 90 pounds Elite

GT 500 bow equipped with the 800-grain Easton Full Metal Jacket arrows and Muzzy 200 grain two-blade Broadheads.

We found several tracks of a group of eland at two different waterholes and also tried to get close to them, but they always spied us early and escaped. So we decided to sit in a blind for an afternoon. Izak and I were joined by Anton the landowner who also likes to hunt with bow and arrow, and just wanted to follow the action. It would be fairly crowded with three people in the small blind that was concealed nicely in the surrounding area under an old acacia tree. At about two o'clock in the afternoon we started to sit there and although it was August and South African wintertime, it was fairly hot. For about an hour, nothing happened. Then a squad of about 25 banded

mongooses came running fast to the waterhole to drink. What a funny picture to see this troop of tiny but very lively carnivores running around for about five minutes before it became calm again. Then a breeze sprang up, and unfortunately it swirled around

which would not be good for our situation. We knew from past experience of the wind and were prepared for this, and had brought some dry rhino scar with us. We lit it. It worked well, because when all of a sudden some kudus approached the waterhole they were not disturbed at all by this special mixture of smell which disguised any human scent. Only we were affected because after a while it smoked like a chimney inside, and we felt like cured meat. With the smoke getting into our eyes we were all close to crying, and Anton had to cover his eyes with a handkerchief. We desperately tried not to laugh about the situation, especially when suddenly a big vlakvark came out of the bush and approached the waterhole from the right side.

Holy smoke, that's a bruiser I thought.


"Do you want to shoot it?" asked Izak. What a question!

"Sure, let's go for it, this is a whopper." Generally warthog have a clear way of approaching a waterhole. Their procedure is to go straight to the water, kneel down, head bent, scoop up some water, turn around and go back the way they came in, and disappear. Normally that happens fairly quickly. This old warrior behaved just like that. Izak looked through my rangefinder when the big boar arrived at the water, and indicated that it was standing at 44 yards - left hand, four fingers, followed by a clenched fist and another four fingers.

I was sitting on a small plastic chair and had my bow ready with a dead-quiet nocked-in arrow in my left hand. Nicely broadside, the warthog was standing now with its head bent down to drink. My heart rate and blood pressure peaked when I drew my bow in slow motion and settled the 40 yards sight pin slightly higher above the spot of his vitals.

I gently pushed the trigger of my release and a second later the arrow nailed deeply into the hog's chest. We could clearly see the impact. The boar turned to the right and ran up the way it came. After about 30 yards it staggered, and after further 25 yards we saw it falling to the left side, lying on the ground.

Such excitement! The shot placement seemed to look good and Izak and Anton held their thumbs up. "Die vark is plat," they whispered. ("The warthog is dead."). But we did not celebrate because some kudu were still there and we did not want to spook them, and maybe eland would show up later as well. So we kept quiet for another hour until sunset and it soon became dark. We left the hide although



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Highly strung

there were still three kudu females around, but now it was dark and with the noise we made by leaving through the back of the hide they jumped off without realizing what had really spooked them.

We walked to the waterhole and about five yards behind the spot where the warthog had been we found the arrow full of blood. There was a good blood trail as well and we followed it up to the point where we had seen the warthog falling down. But to our astonishment the warthog was not lying there. We could see it had made it back on its feet somehow, and we followed the tracks and blood trail before also these disappeared. Because it was late and dark Anton phoned one of his trackers to bring one of his hunting dogs. I was a bit concerned and nervous, but Anton and Izak assured me that, "With that shot the boar is dead we will find it, don't worry."

When the tracker arrived together with the dog named "Danger" we started at the point of the last tracks and blood spots. With flashlights we tried to illuminate the surrounding area that mainly consisted of knee-high grass, some bushes and acacia trees. Now it was nine o'clock at night, totally dark and Danger was not really motivated or convincing. She looked at us with an expression like: "Guys it is late, I am off work now and want to lie beside the campfire." After an hour of intensive searching we stopped and drove back to camp. For me this was a more or less sleepless night, and early in the morning we all gathered again at the point of the last tracks and blood spots. Now Danger seemed to be awake and dedicated, and picked up the spoor. After about 150 yards we heard her barking.

Quickly we went to where she was and could see the vark lying dead under a dark thorny thicket where it had slipped in and died. It was really hard to see it lying there. After a hard tracking last night we had finally made it in the morning under the clear African sky. My feeling of relief was huge and I could not resist cuddling the brave dog that had found my, "next morning warthog". Later in camp, she got some of our delicious boerewors, (Afrikaans for "farmer's sausage"). The placement of the shot and the broadhead hole showed that the shot was good and cut both lungs, but these critters are tough as we realized once again.

Exhausted but happy about getting this South African tusk, we took our pictures before we collected the warthog and enjoyed a hard-earned cold Castle Lager even that early in the morning!

Once more thank you very much to Izak for the great organization, experience and company and all the nice people I had the opportunity to meet during this fantastic time. As always in Namibia or South Africa I had hearty hospitality and enjoyed my time in these wonderful African countries with lovely people.

Take care, always good hunting, *Waidmannsheil. Baie Dankie and Alles van die Beste.*

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.

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