

# African Hunting Gazette

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# LECHWE

## with Bow and Arrow

*By Frank Berbuir*

*It was the first week of August 2019, and I was back in South Africa with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. Once more I was hunting with bow and arrow, this time for a red lechwe which was on my bucket list.*

We were in the Northern Free State on a nice property consisting mainly of several lakes or large ponds, marshland, sedge grass and swamps – habitats that lechwe like, but that makes it difficult to stalk them. We started early at sunrise. It was a bit chilly, but we warmed up quite quickly while stalking. First challenge was to find tracks or, even better, a lechwe. For quite some time we glassed the area when Izak spotted a lechwe buck just lying in front of the sedge grass near a lake. It was about 400 – 500 meters away, and we made a plan on how to get closer. Slowly we moved in zigzag directions, forward and sideways, using the sparse bushes as cover, continuously checking with the binoculars.

It took time to maneuver and sometimes we even needed to leopard crawl to keep our silhouettes as low as possible, but after a couple of hours tense stalking we got close and remained hidden behind a bush. There were just 30 meters between us and the antelope. However, I had to get around the bush for a clear shot. But as I began to move

outside of it, the lechwe stood up, facing us. Probably it got our wind, which was bad luck because as soon as I tried to draw the bow it ran off. That is hunting!

We followed him with the binoculars and focused on where he had disappeared in the high grass before we started to follow him. When we arrived at the spot where the buck went into the grass, we could not see any tracks or hear anything. What to do? We decided that Izak should move slowly into the high grass while I stayed ready at the edge in case the buck came out again. And indeed, a couple of minutes later the lechwe appeared but immediately sprinted away. Izak returned a minute later and once again we followed the running animal with the binoculars.

It was now midday and we decided to give him and us a break, not to scare him off totally. We sat down in the shade of a bush and enjoyed our lunch-hour sandwich and water before we took up the chase once more. We glassed the area where we last saw him and luckily for us we found that he had also taken a rest. He was lying in front of the high grass. Now we needed to work out how to get there without spooking him again. To the right of the animal was a bush as tall as a man that would give us a position to ambush from, but how to arrive there



was the question. We could walk back into the high grass, make a bigger loop around the swamp to get behind him and move slowly through the grass towards him to get to the bush cover. In addition, the wind would be in our favor.

But walking slowly and quietly through two-meter-high swampy grass was challenging. You never know what you might run into, and meanwhile it was hot, too. Our stalk took us about two hours, but we made it and were to get behind the tall bush. We knelt down and cautiously looking around the bush we found the hunting gods were in our favor – the lechwe was still there. It was standing and facing away from us. We ranged it at 37 meters.

"Frank, it's now or never. We will not get closer," Izak whispered. "The lechwe has not seen us. Get ready."

I already pulled an arrow from the quiver and nocked it in silently, adjusting the sliding sight. My blood pressure rose, my heartbeat quickened. *Frank, now is the time*, I said to myself. Cautiously I stood up and pulled my bow to full draw. Quietly and slowly I moved two steps to the right to have a clear view and shooting window. I aimed on the vitals and let loose the



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arrow. A second later, it passed through the antelope's body. The buck jumped forward and started running. After about 50 meters, he slowed down, then fell. He was dead in seconds.

"Great, Frank, you made it," Izak shouted, patting my shoulder. What a fantastic moment. After some nice trophy pictures and getting the bakkie to load the lechwe, we celebrated with an ice-cold beer. *Memories for a lifetime.*

One more time I can only thank Izak for the great organization, his experience and company and all the nice people I had the opportunity to meet during this fantastic time and safari.

Unfortunately, that was the last time in Africa before the corona pandemic blocked all travels until the beginning of 2022. We had already made plans for 2022 for our next hunting adventure when I got the saddest and shattering message from his wife that Izak, at age 39, passed away tragically in a quad accident. An unbelievable loss of a great person, loving husband and father, exceptional professional hunter and truly honest friend. Rest in peace my friend.

Always good hunting, shoot straight, Waidmannsheil and

*"Alles van die Beste". Frank Berbuir*



*Happy hunter and PH with the lechwe.*

**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

*German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 23 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. 🦋*

**Lechwe**, (genus *Kobus*), an antelope species of the genus *Kobus*. The lechwe, a member of the waterbuck and kob tribe (Reduncini), ranks second only to the nyala among the most aquatic African antelopes. The lechwe is one of only three antelopes (including the closely related kob and the topi) known to form breeding arenas, or leks, with a high population density. There are two species of lechwes. The common lechwe (*Kobus leche*) and the Nile lechwe (*K. megaceros*). The three subspecies of the common lechwe, the red lechwe (*K. leche leche*), the Kafue lechwe (*K. leche kafuensis*), and the black lechwe (*K. leche smithemani*), inhabit floodplains bordering marshes and swamps of the

southern savanna, from southeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through Zambia and northern Botswana to Angola. The Nile lechwe lives on the Nile floodplain bordering the Al-Sudd swamp in South Sudan. In South Africa, they are introduced. Lechwes are s long-horned antelopes (males only), with a sturdy build. Hindquarters are higher and more massive than forequarters, the neck is long, and the muzzle is short and rather blunt. Their shoulder height is 85–105 cm or 33–41 inches, and their weight is 60–130 kg or 130–290 pounds. Males are 20 percent larger than females. Their lyre-shaped, heavily ridged horns are 45–90 cm or 18–35 inches long. The coat is greasy

and water-repellent. Females have tawny to chestnut coats and look much alike, apart from minor differences in markings. Red lechwe females are the most colorful. They are bright chestnut with white underparts, throat patch, facial markings, and undertail and with black stripes down the front of their legs. The presence of mature males is advertised not only by the sweeping long horns and by head-high proud posture but by darker coats and markings, which are most pronounced in the black lechwe of Zambia's Lake Bangweulu. However, the most extreme contrast is seen in Nile lechwe rams, which are dark chocolate brown with whitish markings that include a large patch on the neck and shoulders.