



ZEBRA bow hunt

By Frank Berbuir

In my travels and hunting safaris to southern Africa, I never hunted or shot a zebra. This time, end of August 2023 it was on my bucket list. I arrived at the beautiful farm of Carlo Engelbrecht Safaris near Paulpietersburg in the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa and was welcomed with a hot and strong South African coffee.



The next day we had interesting game drives and inspected the several elevated and pit bowhunting blinds. Carlo Engelbrecht Safaris is well prepared and equipped for bowhunters. That evening, we concealed ourselves in a tent blind nestled in a rock formation, to hunt a bushpig, another species on my bucket list, but that is another story. We heard them, but for some reason they did not come in. Probably it was the changing wind or the approaching rain and thunderstorm. Luckily, we decided to leave the blind once we heard the lightning storm close, because a couple of minutes later it poured.

The next morning, I took a stand in a spacious bricked pit blind with shooting windows to all four directions. Pending on the wind, you always had an option, as long as the other windows are closed. Often in the early morning blesbok, waterbuck, impala and zebra roamed from the valley or mountains to feed and drink there. An hour later, we saw through the binoculars the first waterbuck females and juveniles approaching, as well as springbok. Then two ostriches showed up. Finally, six zebras came down the hill. Wow, within another hour a bunch of animals strolled around the pit blind to feed. It was amazing, but

not easy to look for the right zebra with all this back-and-forth movement. Furthermore, we needed to be careful with our movements inside the blind, as well with the wind direction, not to open the wrong window.

We observed the zebras for at least half an hour to choose the best *Hippotigris* specimen, and once we had, it was quite exciting to wait and prepare for the right moment. When we thought it was time, suddenly an impala would move in or a blesbok would stand behind. About three times, I was at full draw when we would silently open the shooting window and wait.

Finally, we managed to figure out the



Zebras in the beautiful countryside.

right zebra and I put the sight on the vitals. I was about 30 seconds at full draw when I released the arrow on its mission. We could see and hear the impact, and the zebra jumped up like a brumby and sprinted away in the direction it came from. We could not see it anymore and waited half an hour before we climbed out of the blind. Once outside we could see it with the binoculars standing frozen under an acacia tree in the shade at about 150 meters distance. What a mess - it was not dead. We decided to stalk it from behind to get closer.

Happy hunter and PH with the zebra.



Carlo Engelbrecht Safaris.

Major problem was that other zebras were still around and would probably spot us. We kept our silhouettes very low, more crawling than walking. When we managed to shorten the

distance to about 50 meters, another zebra saw us and started walking away. The others accompanied him and the one I shot looked at them and started to move as well. What a mess again. We could see that it was bleeding and could not follow up to the herd. We let them go and observed them with binoculars. Once they stopped, we started our stalk again. Fortunately, the wind was in our favor. When we closed to 60 meters, I drew my bow again and tried to use this chance as the zebra was standing broadside, but in the moment I wanted release the arrow it started to walk again. This happened three times in the next two hours. Meanwhile, the remaining herd of zebra went on, and our zebra could not catch up. By now, it was 11.00 o'clock and quite warm. Luckily, the bushveld gave us some rocks as cover, and we could sneak in closer.

Finally, we hid behind a rock and I ranged the zebra, standing broadside, at 30 meters. Now or never. I drew my bow and slowly stood up. Fortunately, it was staring straight ahead and not in my direction, so I released the arrow and it hit him hard with a double lung shot. We could see the arrow passing through. There was an immense spray of blood, and after a last 50-meter run, it expired. What an excitement. I was more than relieved and happy we made it. When we arrived at my zebra, we saw that the first shot was a bit low and had not really hit the vital area, but in the end, we were lucky, enjoyed the moment and took some respectful pictures. What a challenge and experience.

I can only thank Carlo and his family for the great hospitality, accommodation and organization, his awesome experience and company, and all the nice people I had the opportunity to meet during this fantastic time and safari.

Always good hunting, shoot straight, *Waidmannsheil* and *"Alles van die beste"*.

Equipment:

Bow: Mathews VXR28 @ 74 lbs

Arrow: Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350

Broadhead: Annihilator XL 125 grain

Optics: Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder

Release: Scott

Camo: Sniper Africa Shadows

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 24 years. Although he has bow hunted in several countries, he has become addicted to hunting in Africa since his first safari in 2004. Frank is a mechanical engineer and quality manager in the automotive industry.

Zebra (*Hippotigris*) are African equines with distinctive black-and-white striped coats. There are three living species, the plains zebra (*Equus quagga*), and the mountain zebra (*Equus zebra*) and the Grévy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*).

The English name "zebra" derives from Italian, Spanish or Portuguese. Its origins may lie in the Latin *equiferus*, meaning "wild horse". *Equiferus* appears to have entered into Portuguese as ezebro or zebro, originally used for a legendary equine in the wilds of the Iberian Peninsula during the middle Ages. In 1591, Italian explorer Filippo Pigafetta recorded "zebra" being used to refer to the African animals by Portuguese visitors to the continent. The African zebra called *hippotigris* ("horse tiger") by the Greeks and Romans in ancient times.

Zebra stripes come in different patterns, unique to each individual. Several theories proposed for the function of these stripes, with most evidence supporting them as a deterrent for biting flies. Zebras inhabit eastern and southern Africa and you find them in a variety of habitats such as savannahs, grasslands, woodlands, shrublands, and mountainous areas.

Zebras are primarily grazers and can subsist on lower-quality vegetation. They are the mainly prey for lions, and typically flee when threatened but also bite and kick. Zebra species differ in social behavior, with plains and mountain zebra living in stable harems consisting of an adult male or stallion, several adult females or mares, and their young or foals.

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