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“Virus Africanus” ...
Springbok and Dassie
Bowhunting

*I was back in the Dark Continent – and back in
Namibia – thanks to the “Virus Africanus”.*

by Frank Berbuir



Bowhunting

This time I bowhunted during April down in the south of Namibia near the village of Maltahöhe close to the Swartrand escarpment, about 110 km west of Mariental in the Hardap Region. Mariental used to be a center for karakul sheep farming, but this branch of agriculture has been shrinking. After the end of the German colonial era in South West Africa the settlement became a small hub for tourism, serving as a gateway to popular destinations like Sossusvlei, Solitaire, Sesriem, and Duwisib Castle.

The hunting areas and farms in the south of Namibia are all very large – the one where I hunted was 20,000 hectares. Christian Otto, PH and owner of Kachauchab Farm, picked us up at the Windhoek airport and during the approximately 300 km drive southwards I enjoyed the diversified landscape as I settled in to be back in Africa again.

On this trip I was specifically after springbok, this medium-sized slender antelope with long legs and neck, which is mainly found in the dry areas in southern and southwestern Africa. Its common name comes from the Afrikaans words spring (jump) and bok (antelope or goat). It was first described by the German zoologist Eberhard August Wilhelm von Zimmermann in 1780. The scientific name, *Antidorcas marsupialis* is interesting: anti is Greek for “opposite”, and dorcias for “gazelle”

– stating that the animal is not a gazelle. *Marsupialis* comes from the Latin marsupium (pocket), which refers to a pocket-like skin flap that extends along the midline of the back from the tail. In fact, it is this physical feature that distinguishes the springbok from true gazelles.

Immediately after our arrival and welcome at Kachauchab we wanted to go out for the afternoon hunt.

I dressed into my Sniper Africa camouflage

I suddenly saw one of these little critters sitting in the shade of a rock.

and headed out in the old bakkie to the area of a fixed blind.

Due to the rough territory and open veld, stalking was not an opportunity on this species, so we decided to hunt from two available blinds that had been set up the year before.

We parked the car behind a bush and walked the last kilometre. After we settled in and enjoyed the warmth of the afternoon sun, some small warthogs and different birds visited us. Nothing else came, but we took pleasure in watching the amazing Namibian sunset. It did

not matter to me, because I was happy to be back again in Namibia.

We returned to the farm when it became dark and, especially for me, Christian had made for dinner a “lekker” (yummy) gemsbok roast with pumpkin and mashed potatoes which we washed down with a South African lager and with a Scottish single malt as a digestif. On top of everything we had this wonderful and magnificent view of the African sky with billions of stars, the Milky Way, Magellanic Clouds and the Southern Cross.

After a peaceful sleep, the next morning started early. The wake-up call at 3.30 got me up. A good hot coffee and a rusk was enough before we drove to our determined hunting ground for the morning. The previous days had showed many tracks of springbok that gathered frequently in that area near a natural water source. After our arrival and getting out of the car with our stuff, the walk to the blind was a bit tricky when one is a bit sleepy and has to walk in complete darkness. But excitement soon woke us up when we reached the blind and heard the snorting noises of some springbok that were close by. Unfortunately they heard us and moved slowly but surely away. At sunrise it got warm and more cosy in the blind. Early birds came to the waterhole, and guinea fowl clucked around.

All of a sudden, nine springbok appeared



Wide-open country in southern Namibia.

Bowhunting



Happy author with his springbok ram.



Frank and the dassie.



An awesome springbok trophy.

from nowhere and stood on a rocky outcrop to our right. Unfortunately, only ewes and young males or females, but it was delightful to see the youngsters bouncing around – pronking. Beside the enjoyment, it made also some good video footage. Because the wind was in our favour and we were dead quiet, they headed down to the waterhole, drank, and stayed there. Some of them felt so comfortable they

lay down about 50 metres from us.

“Buddy, keep your hair on, it is getting serious,” said Otto, when all at once a good springbok ram came over the hill approximately 180 metres away from us. Unconcerned, he trotted towards the water, ignoring the others. In slow motion I rose to my feet. After having sat for the last two hours, my legs felt like wobble pudding! At a snail’s



Rock hyrax or dassie.

pace I moved to the shooting slot to get in position when the ram was at 80 metres and still heading forward. I nocked in the Carbon Express CX Hunter 300 Advantage arrow equipped with the 125-grain G5 Tekkan II Mechanical Broadhead. The ram was still on his way, completely unperturbed. At 33 metres he reached his destination and lowered his head to sip. That was the time for me to draw back my bow. Within seconds I had the pin of the sight on his vital area. He stood slightly quartering towards me when I fired the arrow from the 80 lb Mathews LX bow, and I heard the arrow crashing through the shoulder and penetrating the lungs before it flew out of the springbok on the other side. Instantly the ram whirled round and away, and at about 40 metres in the direction he came from, he went down on his knees and expired within seconds. What an incredible experience. Only when the other remaining antelopes saw him falling did they get up and bound off. We waited for about 20 minutes until they all had left before we moved out of the blind and walked to the ram. He was a stunning trophy, and both of us were more than happy about this outcome, and we arranged him for some dignified photos. It was still early in this wonderful morning when we headed back to the farm for a good bacon-and-potato omelette breakfast. What a marvellous day.

After a visit and sightseeing of Maltahöhe and the Maltahöhe Hotel which was founded in 1907 and is the oldest country hotel in Namibia, and the town of Mariental and the nearby Hardap Dam, I wanted to try my luck on walking and stalking a special bowhunting challenge – a rock hyrax. These live in one of the two kloofs (canyons) on the farm.

The rock hyrax *Procavia capensis*, also called rock badger or Cape hyrax and sometimes rock rabbit, is commonly referred to as dassie in Afrikaans. Like all hyraxes, it is a medium-sized, approximately 4kg terrestrial mammal, superficially resembling a guinea pig, with short ears and tail. The closest living relatives to hyraxes are the modern-day elephants!

The rock hyrax is found across Africa and the Middle East in habitats with rock crevices into which it escapes from predators. Hyraxes typically live in groups. They have been reported to use sentries: one or more animals take up position on a vantage point and issue alarm calls on the approach of predators.

Once before I had tried to bowhunt them, but without success. These small animals have great eyesight. They can even look directly into the sun, and when they spot you and feel in danger, they directly hide in the many cracks and caves within the rocks. Now I was stalking in an area called Swartmodder along the banks of the Hudup River which runs through the premises of Kachauchab. Along the river bank there were some trees and bushes suitable for ambush. From time to time I glassed the rocks on the other side of the river. By the way, the river had plenty of water, and between the riverbank on my side and the rocks on the other side was a distance of 30 meters. Behind a tree I sat down and glassed again the rocks when I suddenly saw one of these little critters sitting in the shade of a rock. I took my video camera and zoomed him in for some nice footage. He still had not seen me, and I ranged him at 31 metres. Dead slow, I pulled up my bow and put my palm around the bird's eye maple Gripwerks grip of my Bowtech Tribute, and nocked in the Carbon Express Maxima Hunter arrow with the 125-grain G5 Tekan II Broadhead. The dassie was still sitting under the rock and now facing into my direction, but he seemed to be more curious than frightened. Not to spook him, I drew my bow very slowly and set the pin on his body under the head. My heart was pumping when I pulled the trigger of my Scott release and sent the arrow on its journey.

A second later I heard a high "queek" and the dassie (Klippschliefer in German) and the arrow was gone. Through the binos I could see blood on the stone and that he must have fallen down into a gap below. I packed my stuff and had to go along to find a place where it was possible to cross the river via a dam and get to the top of the rocks where I had to climb down to the place where the dassie could be.

Fortunately I was able to pull him up out of the gap by means of the shooting arrow which had penetrated him, and luckily he was still in perfect shape – horrido!

Besides the dassie and the magnificent springbok ram, I later harvested two springbok for the kitchen and a quail as well, but that is another story – and I still have Virus Africanus!

Take care and always good hunting – Alles van die beste. - Frank



Harsh south-Namibian countryside.

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 17 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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We would love to meet you - here's our convention schedule for 2018:

Dallas Safari Club "Adventure Convention & Sporting Expo"	Dallas, TX Jan 4-7, 2018
Wild Sheep Foundation "The Sheep Show"	Reno, NV Jan 18-20, 2018
Grand Slam Club/OVIS, Las Vegas, NV	Jan 24-27, 2018
Safari Club International	Las Vegas, NV Jan 31- Feb 3, 2018

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