

# African Hunting Gazette

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*The blue duiker is what the author was after.*

# A Blue Duiker Bowhunt

By Frank Berbuir

This time, my professional hunter Izak Vos from Vos Safaris and I took the challenge to go for a blue duiker with bow and arrow. When you get into a blue duiker hunt, you will be pursuing South Africa's smallest antelope. As we reached the hunting place and spoke with the farmer, he told us that there were about five of these pygmy antelope around and also where he usually sees them on his property. He stated that when he drives around and spots them they usually try to hide in dense bushes. It was up to us to accept the dare to find them.

We started early in the morning when it was still a bit brisk which is usual in August during South African wintertime. The farmer dropped us off close to the area where these duiker usually roam and we slowly began our stalk, pausing often to glass the bushes with our binoculars. It is not that easy to find such a small animal with its slate-grey to gray-brown coat, sometimes with a bluish sheen on the back that blends in perfectly in the dense bush.

We did not find any duiker the entire morning, only some springbok that we spooked when they saw us sneaking out of our ambush. Meanwhile it was also nicely warm and we hung our jackets on an acacia tree where we spent our lunch break in the shade. After a refreshing nap we slowly continued our endeavor. Time elapsed quickly when all of a sudden Izak spotted a blue duiker under a bush roughly 100 meters in front.

"My goodness they are small," I whispered when I finally also saw it through the binos.

"That's what I told you," he answered. "You can get the impression they are like a rat on steroids." However, we made a plan as to how we could approach this little critter without chasing him away. Slowly, and in bent-over position we moved backwards. We decided to take a bigger loop around him so that the wind was in our favor and he would not see us. We walked uphill and then back to sneak up from behind where he was not looking. I could feel that my



*A stalking challenge in rough bushveld.*

*I released the arrow...  
and hit a hanging  
twig.*

blood pressure was rising the more we closed the distance.

After what felt like an eternity we reached a spot where we could see him again through the binoculars. He was still standing under the bush in the shade and did not notice us. The distance was about 25 meters and the shooting window was small due to some twigs hanging down. Tiptoeing, I crept to the right to get into a quartering-away position. In slow motion I pulled the bow to full draw and settled the pin on his vitals. I released the arrow... and hit a hanging twig. The arrow deflected and flew upward out of the bush. "Damn," I muttered. The blue duiker was obviously surprised and started running out of his hide-out. When I saw him running, he honestly did look like a rat on steroids! Meantime, Izak was focused on watching where he was running.

"Calm down and relax, he is not going far," he said. Fortunately the duiker just ran about 30 meters to a bush where he hid again. After a five minutes break and some deep breaths we sneaked to the left and made our way behind some bushes to draw nearer to our quarry. The hunting gods were in our favor and with luck we could creep up to 27 meters distance. The little mammal was standing slightly quartering away and facing to the other side when I sent the arrow on its mission. This time it hit the spot. There was a slight sound then all was dead quiet. What an excitement!

"Congrats, well done my friend. You got a blue duiker!" said Izak shaking my hand firmly and giving me a pat on the back.

When we found the duiker I knelt down and examined this particularly gorgeous specimen of the pygmy antelopes. Again it was a wonderful and challenging experience with bow and arrow, and finally I was able to take this awesome tiny blue duiker. After some nice pictures we radioed the farmer to pick us up and we all enjoyed the success with a cold beer.

One more time 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".



*A happy hunter and his splendid blue duiker.*

**Equipment:**

**Bow:** Mathews Z7x @ 70 lbs

**Arrow:** Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350

**Broadhead:** G5 Dead Meat @ 125 grain

**Optics:** Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder

**Release:** Scott

**Camo:** Sniper Africa

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 20 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 I had bagged successfully a common duiker and a steenbok a couple of years ago on bowhunts in Namibia and South Africa.

**Description:**

The blue duiker (*Philantomba monticola*) is a small antelope found in western, southern and eastern Africa. It is the smallest duiker and the smallest antelope in South Africa. The species was first described by Swedish naturalist Carl Peter Thunberg in 1789 and 12 subspecies are identified. The blue duiker reaches 30 – 40 centimeters (12–16 inches) at the shoulder and weighs 3.5–5 kilograms (7.7–12 lb.). The females are slightly larger than the males. The short, spiky horns, about 5 cm (2.0 inches long) are hidden in hair tufts. Diurnal, secretive and cautious, the blue duiker confines itself to the forest fringes. Pairs of opposite sexes occupy territories, of nearly 0.4–0.8 hectares, marked by preorbital gland secretions. The blue duiker feeds on pieces of bark, fallen fruits, foliage and flowers from forest canopies. 🦌

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