

African Hunting Gazette

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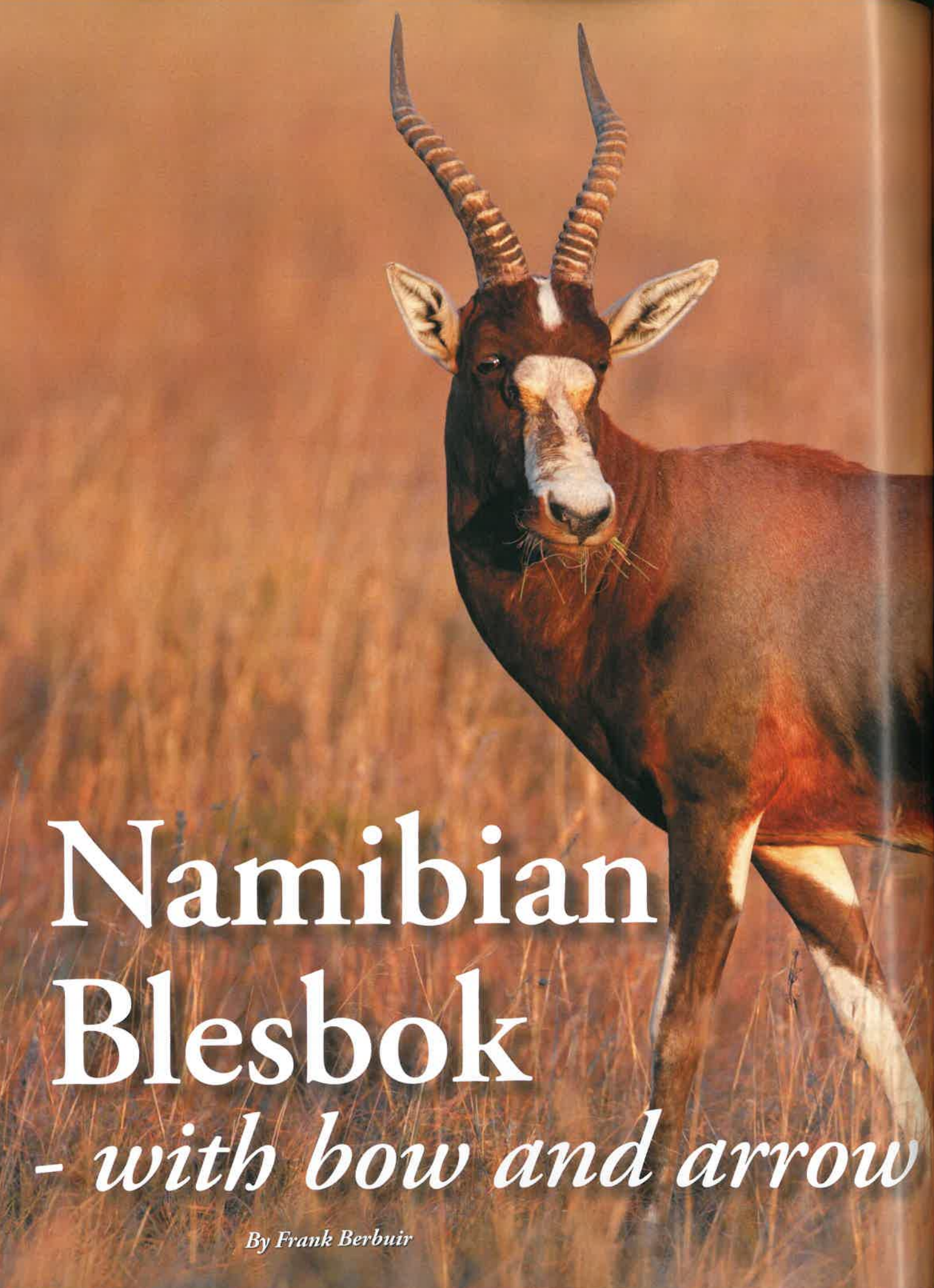
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Namibian Blesbok

- with bow and arrow

By Frank Berbuir



It was mid-afternoon on a wonderful sunny African day in November when I climbed up the tamboti tree to my tree seat. I watched all the action below - some ostriches strolling to the nearby waterhole, a group of young warthog that dropped by for a sip, as well as enjoying the birds in the branches around me. They seemed curious about the creature sitting there!

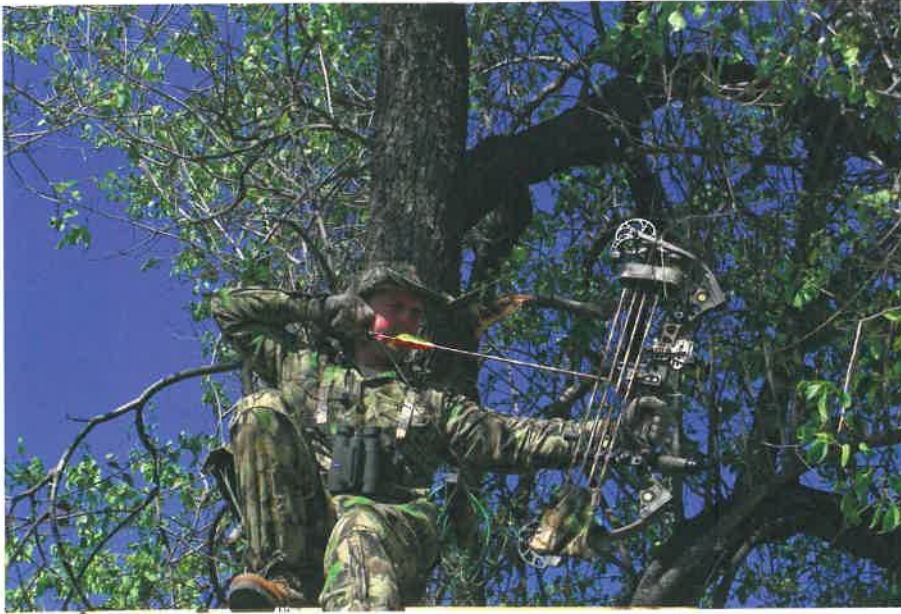
But I was not only on Omalanga Safaris in the north of Namibia, not far from the Etosha National Park, to savor the wonderful wildlife. I was on a bowhunting trip, and I was sitting high up there because we had seen from the tracks that many blesbok, *Damaliscus dorcas phillipsi*, appeared frequently at this waterhole.

So, I relished the sun and surroundings when I suddenly glassed two blesbok stepping out of the bush, heading to the water. They were about 200 metres away, but my blood pressure had already started to rise into a range a physician normally did not recommend.

OK, get ready and stay calm, I thought. They came closer and were approximately 100 metres away from the water when, through the binos, I saw that they were a ram and a really very old and capital doe with long and polished horns.

"Amazing old female and a nice trophy ram," I whispered to myself, and nocked in the Carbon Express Cx Hunter 300 Advantage arrow with the Silverflame 125-grain two-blade broadhead.

I was sitting nearly five metres above the ground in the tree, the wind blowing in my favor directly out of the direction the two blesbok were coming from. They were not aware of me, and headed side by side to the water. Once they were in a good shooting position it would be up to me to make it a successful story.



Self-made hunting tree seat.



The lapa – the place to meet and relive the experiences of an adventurous African safari day.



Glassing for game from the tree.



Southern Africa's beauty of nature.

They reached the water and started drinking when the female turned away from the ram and stood broadside. *That's your chance*, I thought. I drew my 80 lbs Mathews LX bow, sighted in on the vitals, and pulled the trigger on my release. The deadly arrow penetrated through the animal with a smacking noise, and the blesbok went galumphing off. About 50 metres she stopped and collapsed. I was overwhelmed, shivering and awestruck. I was lucky.

It was late in the afternoon and I called my PH Gustav on the radio and climbed down. When he arrived he congratulated me on my

fine trophy. We took some nice photos and he said he would take care of the rest, and that I should go back into my tree seat – he guessed that more blesbok would come to the water later.

Highly motivated, I climbed up again for another adventure. Believe it or not, one hour later two fine blesbok rams came to the pan. They galloped to the water as if in a hurry, and stood so close together that no shot was possible.

They drank quickly and turned immediately to leave the waterhole. Fortunately, they trotted very slowly and were now separate.

The sun was low, and a second chance would not come again that day, that was for sure, so I had to make a decision. I'd had a similar situation two years ago with Gustav when we were on a bowhunt and a warthog wanted to leave the waterhole urgently. I remembered that scenario quite well, so I blew a short whistle, hoping to make the blesbok pause. Luckily, they hesitated at 30 metres, slightly quartering away. I had been at full draw for about 10 seconds, aimed at the vitals of the larger buck, when he was stopped by the whistle.

Now or never – I pulled the trigger of my release and the string accelerated the arrow to the 280 fps. A second later the deadly missile smashed through both lungs. He jumped, ran several metres accompanied by the other buck, and disappeared behind a bush. The second blesbok ran on farther, out of sight into the bushes. Everything became dead quiet. About

“Amazing old female and a nice trophy ram,”
I whispered to myself



A “Grand Dame” – my very old blesbok doe.



Frank’s fine blesbok ram.

Blesbok can be easily differentiated from other antelopes by their distinctive face and forehead which inspired the name *bles*, the Afrikaans word for blaze, like that on the forehead of a horse. A horizontal brown strip divides this blaze above the eyes.

Physically, rams and ewes, are remarkably similar, up to 80 kg, with a shoulder height between 85 and 100 cm. Both sexes carry horns averaging about 38 cm and ringed almost to the tip, with female horns being slightly more slender. Blesbok can be found in open veld or plains of southern Africa. They were once one of the most abundant antelope species, but have become scarce since 1893 due to relentless hunting for their skins and meat. They have been protected since the late 19th century and today with their sufficiently numbers, they are not classed as endangered.



Beautiful landscapes of northern Namibia.

ten seconds later I heard a last bark from the shot buck. Happily for me it seemed that he died only 40 metres away.

The sunlight was more or less gone when I climbed down from my tree seat and, together with Gustav who I had called again by the walkie-talkie, found the ram behind the bush. It was a nice blesbok trophy ram and, as always, we took some nice photos. Back in camp that night, along with a couple of Windhoek Lagers, everybody had to listen several times to my great experiences of that day!

And, as a lifetime memory, the shoulder mounts in my trophy room always let me relive those awesome moments. Thanks to all who made these special moments memorable forever!

Always good hunting ° *waidmannsheil* and *alles van die beste*.

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting – which he has practiced for more than 16 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 supply chain risk manager in the automotive industry. 🏹

Equipment:

Bow:	Mathews LX 80 lbs (customized – one of 12 sets available for 80 lbs on the LX).
Sight:	HHA Optimizer Sight
Rest:	Trophy Ridge Drop Away Rest
Stabilizer:	Vibrachek Stabilizer
Quiver:	Mathews 5 arrow quiver
Release:	Scott Wildcat Release
Arrow:	Carbon Express CX Hunter 300 Advantage
Broadheads:	Silverflame 125 grain
Optics:	Zeiss Victory 10x40 and Leupold RX III Rangefinder
Camo:	Sniper Africa