

African
Hunting
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Patience Rewarded

A waterbuck worth waiting for

by Frank Berbuir

I had had a tremendously good hunt with unforgettable impressions and memories of the past week in South Africa. On my second-last day of this trip with my PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris, we were close to Rooiberg on a huge farm in the Limpopo Province. We decided to sit out this time in a nicely constructed pit blind in an area of the farm where the owner said that bushbuck, waterbuck, kudu and warthog frequent a small water source.



Equipment:**Bow:** Elite GT 500 @ 90 lbs**Arrow:** Easton Full Metal Jacket 250 Dangerous Game with heavier inserts**Broadhead:** Muzzy Phantom SS 2-Blade @ 200 grain**Optics:** Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder**Release:** Scott **Camo:** Sniper Africa

The waterbuck *Kobus ellipsiprymnus* is a large antelope with a head-and-body length typically between 70-93 inches and an average height between 47 and 54 inches. Males are taller as well as heavier than females, and the long ringed horns that first curve backward and then forward with a length up to 39 inches are present only on males. It was first described by Irish naturalist William Ogilby in 1833. The thirteen subspecies are grouped under two varieties – the common or ellipsen waterbuck and the defassa waterbuck. The shaggy coat is reddish-brown to grey, and becomes progressively darker with age.

*Limpopo wintertime countryside.*

("Waffenkiebitz" in German), came within two metres of our blind, running around picking up seeds.

That was amusing... and the only activity until 11:30 that morning. But it was good we kept quiet and paid attention – suddenly two young kudu bulls stood immobile at fifty metres behind some bushes, gazing in our direction. The waterhole was almost dry, but their focus was probably the salt-lick block. They were about two years old, nothing we wanted to shoot or were looking for, but it was exciting and interesting to see their behaviour and reactions. As always, it was amazing how well those "grey ghosts of Africa" merge and camouflage into their natural habitat, although they are big animals. They stood there and did not move for about five

minutes before they walked slowly, checking all directions. It was close to noon when they finally came to the salt lick.

Often at this time hunters have gone back to camp for lunch, a break, a nap or whatever, but we were there to watch till they left shortly afterwards. An hour later another couple of kudu bulls visited us, together with the two from the earlier encounter. Interesting that they all sneaked in during lunchtime!

We had some good tasty wild boar salami from the pig I shot on the first day of this safari, and because it was really quiet, Izak and I took turns to nap. From time to time I took my binoculars and scanned through the bushes just in case some animals were standing somewhere or approaching our location. Finally, after seven hours in the blind, the hunting gods were in our

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View from the blind.

How the Waterbuck got its White Circle – An African Folk Tale

One dark, moonless night, a waterbuck mother and her young were grazing near some huts.

The owners of the huts had been busy painting them with whitewash, but had been too lazy to put the paint away for the night, and had left a bucket of whitewash outside.

The father woke up to hear the buck outside. Not knowing what it was, the man jumped out of bed and ran outside. Because it was dark he could not see what was happening, so he grabbed up the nearest thing he could find, and hurled the paint pot in the direction of the waterbuck.

The rim of the paint pot hit the mother's rump, leaving a white circle. This was very useful, as it showed up nicely in the dark, and the little ones were able to find her easily.

When waterbucks realized what a good idea it was to have a white ring on their bottoms, they decided to keep it permanently, and from that day to this, no self-respecting waterbuck has been without one.

favor when I spotted three young waterbuck, and whispered the information to Izak.

"Well spotted, Frank," he whispered back. They were quite far away at about hundred metres, and we hoped they would come closer and perhaps a good bull would be with the group – within a split second the tension was back.



Frank's waterbuck with PH Izak.

Slowly I took an arrow out of the quiver, put it on the arrow rest and silently nocked it in. With my left hand I grabbed the Gripwerk's quilted maple bowgrip and lifted the bow. I was standing left of the shooting window, concealed by the wall.

My release was nocked in and I was ready to move again back to the shooting window when Izak tapped my shoulder and mumbled: "Stay there, don't move – a big waterbuck bull is coming in and staring straight in our direction." Now the tension was more than just back, and I could feel my blood pressure increasing. I did not move, although my body and nerves were all on edge, and I still could not see the waterbuck bull. Then Izak whispered:

"Can you pull the bow now and hold it at full draw? I will slowly pull you over to the window." There was very little space to draw my 90 pound Elite GT 500 bow, but with that high adrenaline level I did not notice whether or not it was hard to do. I just pulled the string back.

Izak kept me at full draw for about ten

seconds, which felt like eternity, before he turned my upper body toward the shooting window in slow motion.

"The bull is facing us head up. He will probably not turn broadside once he notices you. Can you do a frontal shot? Aim exactly in the middle and on the centre of the chest!"

Normally a shot like that is not recommended with bow and arrow, but with my ninety pound and fast bow, along with the 800-grain arrow and a shooting distance of about twenty-five to thirty metres, I felt safe.

"Yes, I can do it!"

"Ok, then do this as soon as I pull you to the opening of the shooting window. I ranged him with the Nikon exactly at twenty-six metres," Izak whispered as I moved into my final position at full draw and with a clear shooting window.

The waterbuck was looking to our direction when I aimed on the centre point of his chest and sent the Easton Full Metal Jacket Dangerous Game arrow with the Muzzy Phantom SS Two-Blade broadhead on its deadly mission.

Not even a second elapsed between releasing the trigger, the impact of the arrow, and the jump up of the bull that bounded away like an express train.

“Did I miss him or did I hit him good?”

“Your shot was good my friend, just about a centimetre left of the centre, but the arrow went completely into the waterbuck. I saw the arrow dunking in,” said Izak. Wow, that was impressive!

After fifteen minutes we decided to climb out of the blind for the follow-up because it would soon start to get dark. On the spot of the impact we found some blood and deep tracks. Izak is a good and experienced tracker. We could precisely follow the buck's flight, and found him about 100 metres from the shooting point. My first waterbuck lay beside a bush – what a beautiful specimen of the ringed-horned antelopes of Africa. I was overwhelmed and more than happy with this awesome trophy, and we paused for a moment of respect. We took some trophy pictures, then got the car and loaded him on the pick-up.

Back in camp the skinners found the arrow.

After seven hours in the blind, the hunting gods were in our favour.



Afterwards, a sunset celebration.

That was amazing, too. Due to the power, mass and speed of the arrow, it went completely into the body and was just stopped by the right hip bone. Although it was an extreme sturdy and tough arrow, it was bent, and the stainless steel broadhead was broken in two pieces. Unbelievable what power a bow and arrow could have.

In the end, good things come to those who wait, and our patience paid off with a really nice waterbuck bull.

What an exciting day! Once more, thank you very much to Izak and his outstanding experience, company and organisation.

Shoot straight, always good hunting, 'Waidmannsheil' and 'alles van die beste'.

Frank

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 18 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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