

African Hunting Gazette

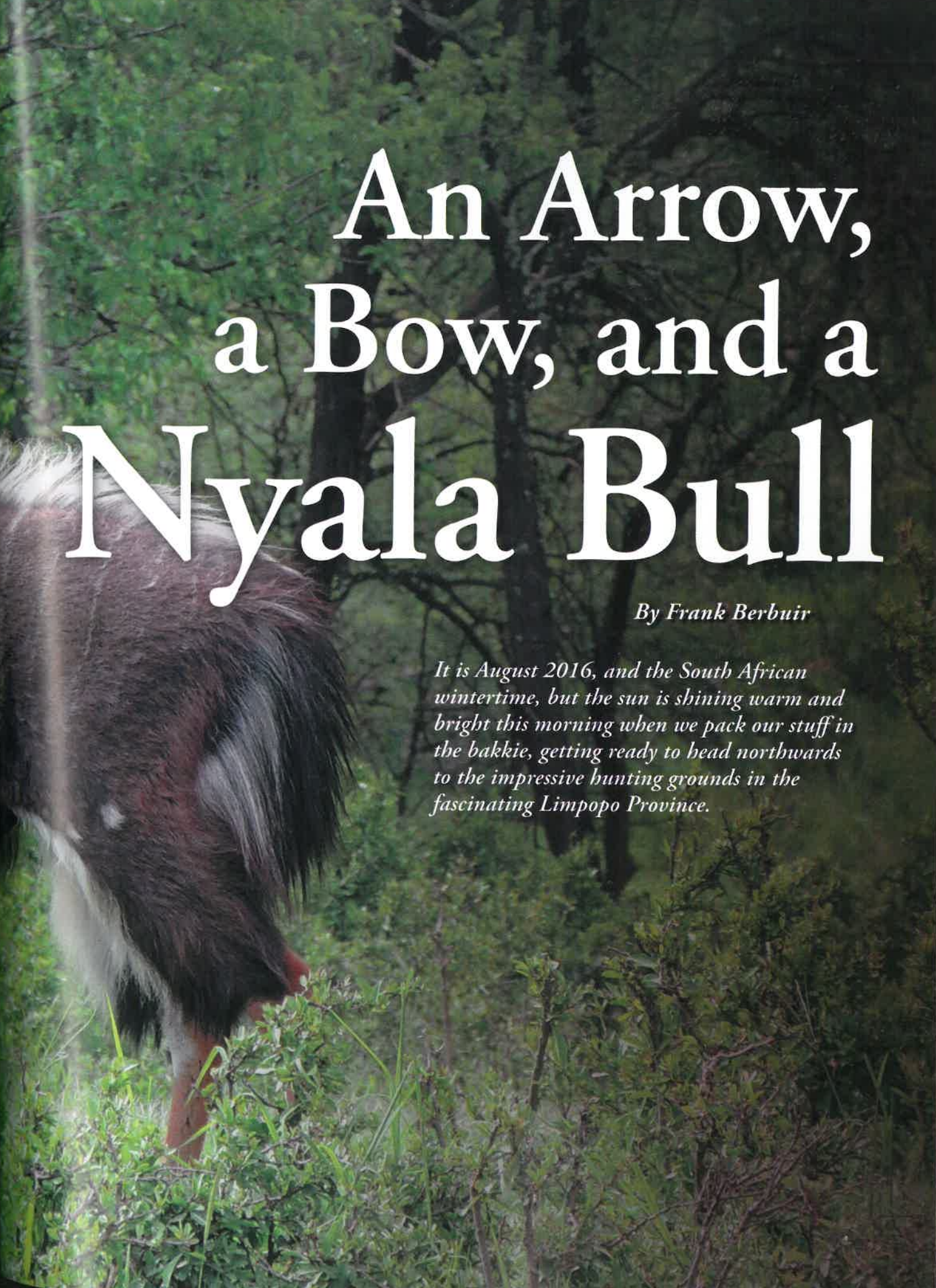
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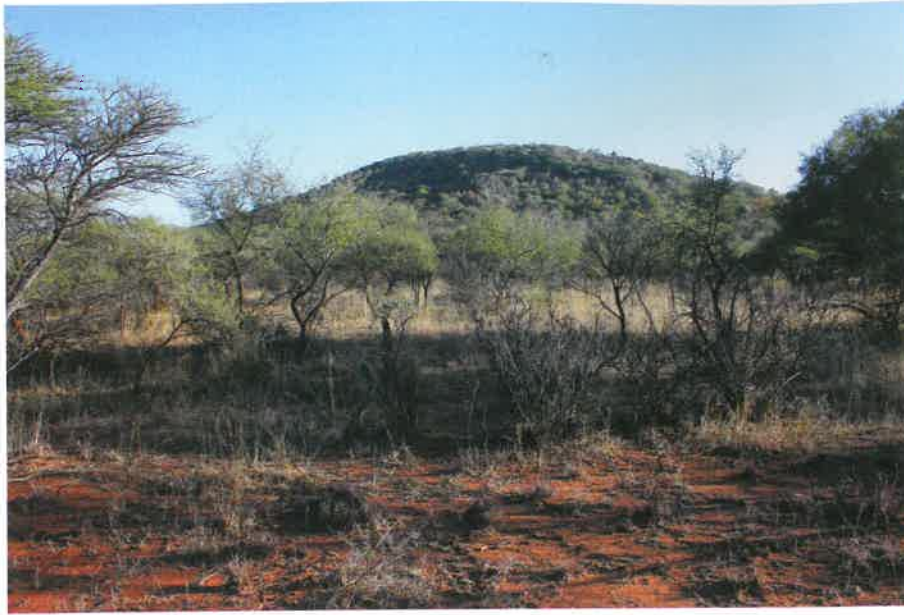




An Arrow, a Bow, and a Nyala Bull

By Frank Berbuir

It is August 2016, and the South African wintertime, but the sun is shining warm and bright this morning when we pack our stuff in the bakkie, getting ready to head northwards to the impressive hunting grounds in the fascinating Limpopo Province.



Our hunting area.

I had returned again to beautiful South Africa to meet my friend and professional hunter Izak Vos from Vos Safaris, to hunt again with bow and arrow. On this safari, my most sought-after species was the common nyala bull – that graceful and beautiful middle-sized antelope, like a cross between a bushbuck and a kudu. Two days before, in a different location of Limpopo, we were very lucky to get a magnificent sable which was also on the bucket list. Now we wanted to go for a nyala bull.

I remember quite well my first encounter with a common nyala a couple of years ago. During our stalk on buffalo we suddenly spotted this gorgeous *wildsbokke* (antelope in Afrikaans). They are shy and wary animals. Nyala are native to southern Africa, including Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. It has been introduced to Botswana and Namibia, and reintroduced to Swaziland, where it had been extinct. Nyala (*Tragelaphus angasi*) is the Swahili name for this handsome antelope. It is also called *inyala* in Zulu, or *njala* in Afrikaans. A male nyala is dark brown or slate grey, often tinged with white vertical stripes, a ridge of tufted hair running all along the spine, yellow-stockinged legs, and a white chevron mark between the eyes. They are most easily recognized by their distinctive spiral horns.

Because they are active mainly in the early morning and late afternoon, the first day of our hunt started at sunrise, scouting the area to find sign of nyala. The spoor is similar to that of the bushbuck, but larger. We spotted some nice kudu, blesbok and warthogs, as well



A relaxing break.

as Cape buffalo, giraffe and ... nyala! We tried our luck with several stalking attempts, but were unsuccessful because the bush was very dense, and each time we came in close range, one animal in an alert group sensed or spotted us, sniffed or barked, and they all bounded off. But to compensate for all our efforts, we had an excellent *braai* of tasty homemade blesbok burgers in our lunch break in the bush. After a short nap we continued looking for nyala, but could not get sufficiently close to them, and we

drove back to camp in the glow of a stunning sunset.

The next two days were pretty much the same – spotting, stalking, detected by the animals – that's hunting. So we decided to try our luck in a blind at a waterhole the next day. Early the next morning we sat in a nicely constructed pit blind near a waterhole waiting for what the day would bring. After we had fixed our stuff and I had drawn my bow to familiarize myself with several different shooting positions, we sat stock-still, quite chilly in the mid-August early morning. However, the rising sun warmed the awakening African bush (including us in the blind!), as I listened to all the chirps, tweets and singing of the birds.

A couple of small warthogs came, followed by vervet monkeys. Later some nyala females with young trotted to the waterhole to drink. A handsome bushbuck showed up and stood perfectly at 25 yards, and behind our blind we could also hear a giraffe feeding on leaves from the treetops. All very exciting, and then things quietened down. At about three o'clock in the afternoon a nyala female approached the waterhole, but no bulls, and nothing else happened. After sunset around the campfire that night, with excellent sable schnitzel (escalopes) and some smooth Castle Lager, we decided to stalk again the next morning.

Shortly after sunrise we were at the place where we last saw the nyala.

We spotted. We walked.

We spotted, we walked.

Finally, in the afternoon at about three o'clock it seemed that our hunting luck was turning when we found fresh tracks, scat, and saw with the binoculars a small group of three nyala. They were two females and a nice bull standing in the shadow of an acacia tree. An impressive bull – and I felt the adrenalin rush just by observing him.

"That's a big bull – let's go for him," Izak murmured.

Slowly but surely we stalked our way towards them, which took us about one and a half hours. As we got closer to them, the tension rose as we focused on them. The cows and bull were standing relaxed beneath the tree. One female was left of the tree, the other was behind the bull on the right side. We were hiding behind a thicker observing them through the bush. Izak gave me a sign to get ready.

"Look at the bull. It is a monster." For a shot I had to move one step aside to have a clear shooting lane. The arrow with the Silverflame XL broadhead nocked in quietly and lay on the rest. Silently I engaged my release to the loop on the string and simultaneously pulled my bow to full draw.

"Thirty-two yards broadside," Izak





*“That’s a big bull –
let’s go for him,”*

whispered. “Shoot when the female is not standing behind him.” I was at full draw when I moved one step to the right beside the thicker, aiming at the bull’s chest. For about 20 seconds I stood like that, and luckily they were still unaware of me. When the female behind the bull stepped forward, she cleared the way for a clean shot so I would not shoot her as well, in case of a pass through. By slightly pushing the release trigger, the carbon arrow took flight on its mission and penetrated fully through the vital area of the animal. The nyala bull flinched before he jumped to the right, and sprinted forward with both females following him in his tracks. We were both quiet, following the crashing sounds he made through the bush before there was silence.

Izak raised his thumb to indicate a good shot. I felt that the shot placement was good, and was a bit giddy with excitement. Izak tapped me on the shoulder, smiled and winked.

“Let’s give him a bit of time before we



Happy author and PH with a magnificent nyala.

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60 kilogram (132 pounds) of fine nyala venison.

EQUIPMENT:

Bow: Mathews Z7x @ 70 lbs

Arrow: Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350

Broadhead: Silverflame XL 2-Blade @ 125 grain

Optics: Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder

Release: Scott

Carro: Sniper Africa

look for him." We waited half an hour, then went to the spot where I had shot him, and found the arrow about ten yards behind full of blood. We could follow clearly his tracks and blood trail. After about 60 yards we saw him dead, lying under an acacia tree – our magnificent and beautiful nyala bull. It was another long sought-after bowhunting dream came true. Once more, together with Izak, I was overwhelmed and more than happy about this awesome experience and result.

We took our time to honour the moment and animal, along with admiring the trophy. After some good, respectful pictures, we radioed the landowner to collect us and load

the animal on the back of the pick-up. Back in camp we all enjoyed an ice-cold beer and celebrated this wonderful hunting adventure. The slaughtering brought 60 kilogram (132 pounds) of first-class nyala venison.

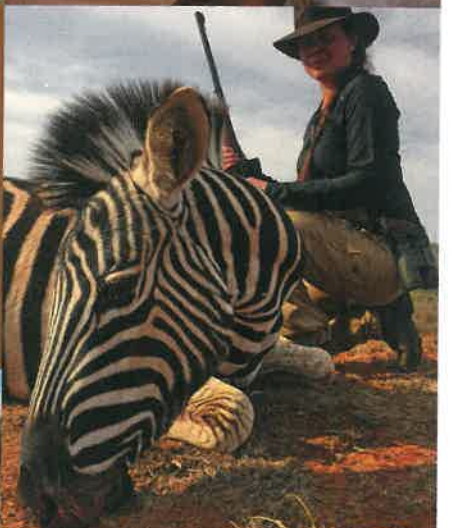
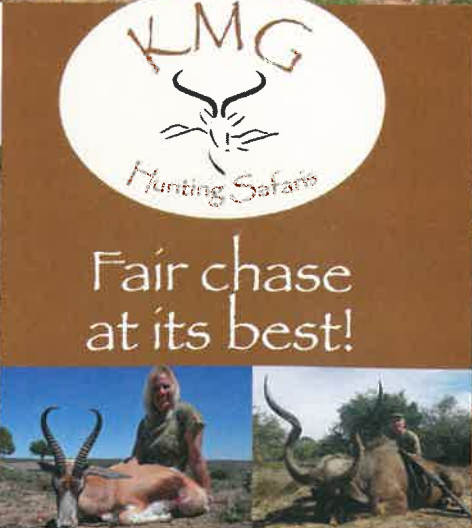
In the end, good things come to those who wait, and our patience paid off with a splendid nyala bull.

What an exciting safari again. Once more thank you very much to Izak for this outstanding experience, his company and organization. Combined with the extraordinary performance of bow and arrow, this was an event of a lifetime.

Shoot straight, always good hunting, "Waidmannsbeil" 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 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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