

# African Hunting Gazette

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A photograph of a reedbuck standing in a grassy field. The reedbuck is the central focus, shown in profile facing left. It has a slender build, a light brown coat, and a white underbelly. Its most distinctive feature is its long, spiraling horns. The background is a soft-focus landscape of green grass and trees. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

# Bow, Arrow, and a *reedbuck*

*By Frank Berbuir*



*It is end of August and I am lucky to be back again in South Africa to hunt with bow and arrow with my PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. After several successful previous hunts there on a variety of species, this time a mountain and a common reedbuck are on the bucket list.*

We are on a nice farm, managed by a lovely couple, on the border of the North West Province close to the Limpopo Province. We are familiar with our small hunting camp - our jagkamp - from a former trip. The landscape and scenery along the Crocodile River is stunning. There are some challenging and very rocky mountains as well as dense bush and open plains, and we try our luck on stalking in these mountains. However, because of the sharp rocks and high grass everywhere, it is not only difficult and noisy, but also risky - falling on these sharp-edged stones or twisting one's ankle is not what we need.

In Africa everything is defending itself! Every bush and tree has thorns, the stones are jagged and sharp, and even the grass sometimes has barbs. So we have decided to sit in a pop-up blind close to a natural waterhole and salt lick block. Izak, an experienced PH, chose this location because of the many mountain reedbuck tracks found there.

Our day starts with a morning walk to the blind. Mountain reedbuck roam during the day, so we need not start while it is still dark. Although August is the South African winter, the temperature is comfortable and the rising sun is always a magnificent spectacle and a nice warm up. As the pop-up blind is a very tiny one, there is no chance to put two chairs into it.

I sit on a small cooler box so that I am able to maneuver my bow into different shooting positions. Our blind gradually warms up as the sun shines on it. For about three hours nothing happens, except for some doves and francolins flying around. Then during the heat of the day, an ugly old baboon creeps out of the bushes, walks slowly to the salt lick,

looking in our direction. Now we have to be quiet and motionless, otherwise the day is done if he realizes we are there and starts to bark an alarm. He stares at our blind, but after a minute he sits down beside the salt lick, looking away. He picks up salt which he seems to be enjoying, and nibbles on some grass. A couple of minutes later he changes his position, in the process displaying his unpleasant rear end before he sits down again, his back to us. He seems unconcerned and relaxed. But while he is sitting there, not even doves or francolins show up anymore. Finally, after half an hour he leaves, walking just five meters from our blind without noticing that we are there – unbelievable.

Then it went quiet again for a long afternoon. At about five o'clock we crawl out of the tent and walk back to our camp with the delightful expectation of an ice-cold beer and a tasty braai.

*There is no chance for a shot, not even with a rifle.*

On day two it is more or less the same set-up, except the baboon does not show up. Where are the reedbucks and other animals, we ask ourselves. We see the tracks of eland, kudu, blue wildebeest, klipspringer and mountain reedbuck around the waterhole and salt lick, but are they coming before sunrise or very shortly before dark? However, the barbecue and a brandy-and-Coke this evening around the campfire is a reward after for a long day.

It is day three when we are sitting in the blind quite early, directly after sunrise, and it is a bit crisp from the wind blowing down from the mountains. Probably that is why the game is not moving, and it is dead quiet the whole morning. Around noon the wind drops, the day heats up again, and two kudu females sneak in to the salt lick. Later, a small warthog strolls by past the waterhole. It livens the scene



Our cosy “jagkamp” – hunting camp.

to see them unperturbed, especially when they don't realize that we are so close, only 20 meters away. But we are a little disappointed - we keep wondering where the mountain reedbucks are, particularly as they are dependent on water and also like the salt.

It is early afternoon and I have my head in the clouds, when Izak nudges me and points to the right of our blind. A group of six mountain reedbuck approach! Three females, two adolescents and a big ram are coming closer. The adrenaline rush is back, and the heart beat increases. The reedbuck walk slowly, continually checking the area to the salt lick. The ram stands apart behind a bush, concealed and cautious. He does not move, does not come closer - not at all - and there is no chance for a shot, not even with a rifle. About 15 minutes later the other reedbuck are finished at the water and salt lick, and walk slowly back to him before they all leave, running up the mountain. Smart buck, but a pity for us. With a deep-drawn sigh we decide to finish for the day.

On day four it is more of the same: We sit in our tiny blind with a lot of hope. It is rather like an unvaried daily routine, but you need to think positively, and sometimes you need to continue doing what you are doing to finally be successful. No pain, no gain.

Finally the goddess of hunting favors us when, at half past three, this time a group of four mountain reedbuck approach with three females and a good ram. Time to beard the lion in his den! The ram comes to the salt lick with the others. It's now or never. To say I am excited is an understatement. Slowly I pull the bow, and slowly I maneuver to the shooting window. The reedbuck is standing to my left, licking on the salt. The pin of the sight is focused on the vitals of the ram, but a female is still



Nice mountain reedbuck and a happy hunter.

standing behind him.

“Stay calm and focused,” I mumble to myself. Finally, after seconds that felt like eternity, she moves and he is standing clear. With a slight tap on the trigger of my release, the arrow is on its deadly mission, and within a split second flies into and through the antelope, and lands on the ground. The ram flinches and falls. What an extraordinary performance again of bow and arrow.

Overwhelmed and more than happy with this awesome trophy animal, Izak and I kneel next to him, and after a few

minutes of silence in respect, we arrange the ram for some pictures. Back at our camp the “Happy Hour” beer tastes excellent. Fortunately, three days later

we also take a common reedbuck, but that is a different story.

Once again I had a tremendously good hunt with unforgettable impressions and memories, with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris in South Africa.

Shoot straight, take care, and always good hunting - “Waidmannsheil” and “Alles van die beste.”

### Smart buck, but a pity for us.

The Rooiribbok (Afrikaans) or Mountain Reedbuck *Redunca fulvorufula* is a medium-sized antelope found in mountainous areas, on dry rocky slopes and hills where sufficient grass and shelter is readily available. They usually avoid open areas and peaks, staying close to the rocks, trees, and scrub for cover. The mountain reedbuck averages 75 cm at the shoulder, and weighs around 30 kg. It has a grey coat, white underbelly, and reddish-brown head and shoulders. Only the ram has well developed horns, sharp-tipped, measuring 13 to 18 cm, heavily grooved for two-thirds of their length. The anterior halves bend forward by up to 80 per cent.

Both sexes have a dark scent patch beneath the ears. Predominantly grazers, water is an important habitat requirement. They tend to feed in the early evening and morning hours, normally in small groups of six or fewer animals. A typical group is made up of one adult male and several adult females and juveniles. Adolescent males are forced out of their herds and form small bachelor herds. There are three recognized subspecies, each of which has a separate distribution: Southern Mountain Reedbuck R. f. *fulvorufula*, Chanler's Mountain Reedbuck R. f. *chanleri*, and Western Mountain Reedbuck R. f. *adamauae*. The southern mountain reedbuck inhabits an area from the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa to southeastern Botswana. Chanler's mountain reedbuck occurs in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia.





*A great mountain reed buck.*

*German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practiced 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.*



- Western mountain reed buck
- Chanler's mountain reed buck
- Southern mountain reed buck

*The habitats of the different mountain reed buck.*

**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

**Camo:** Sniper Africa

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