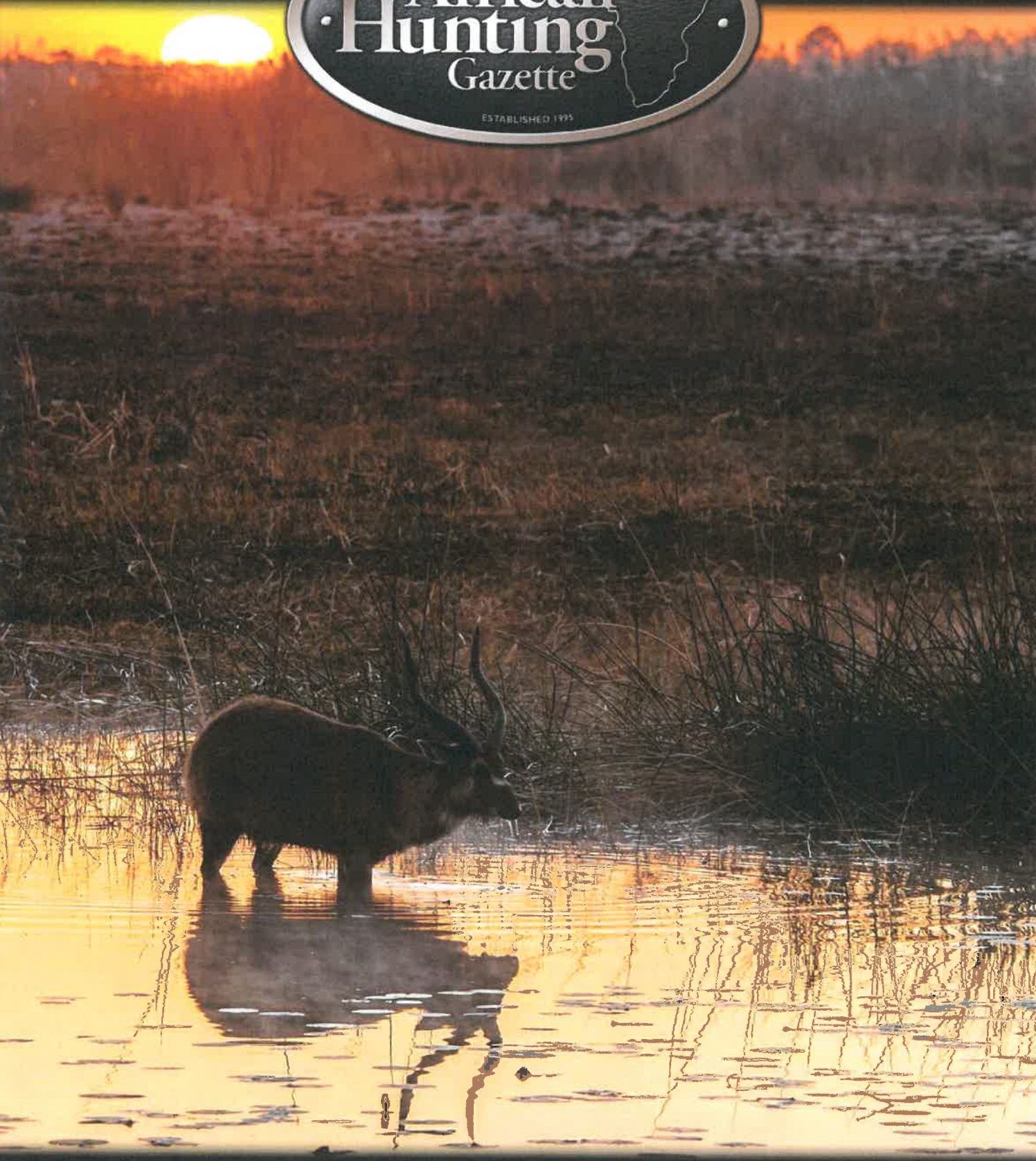
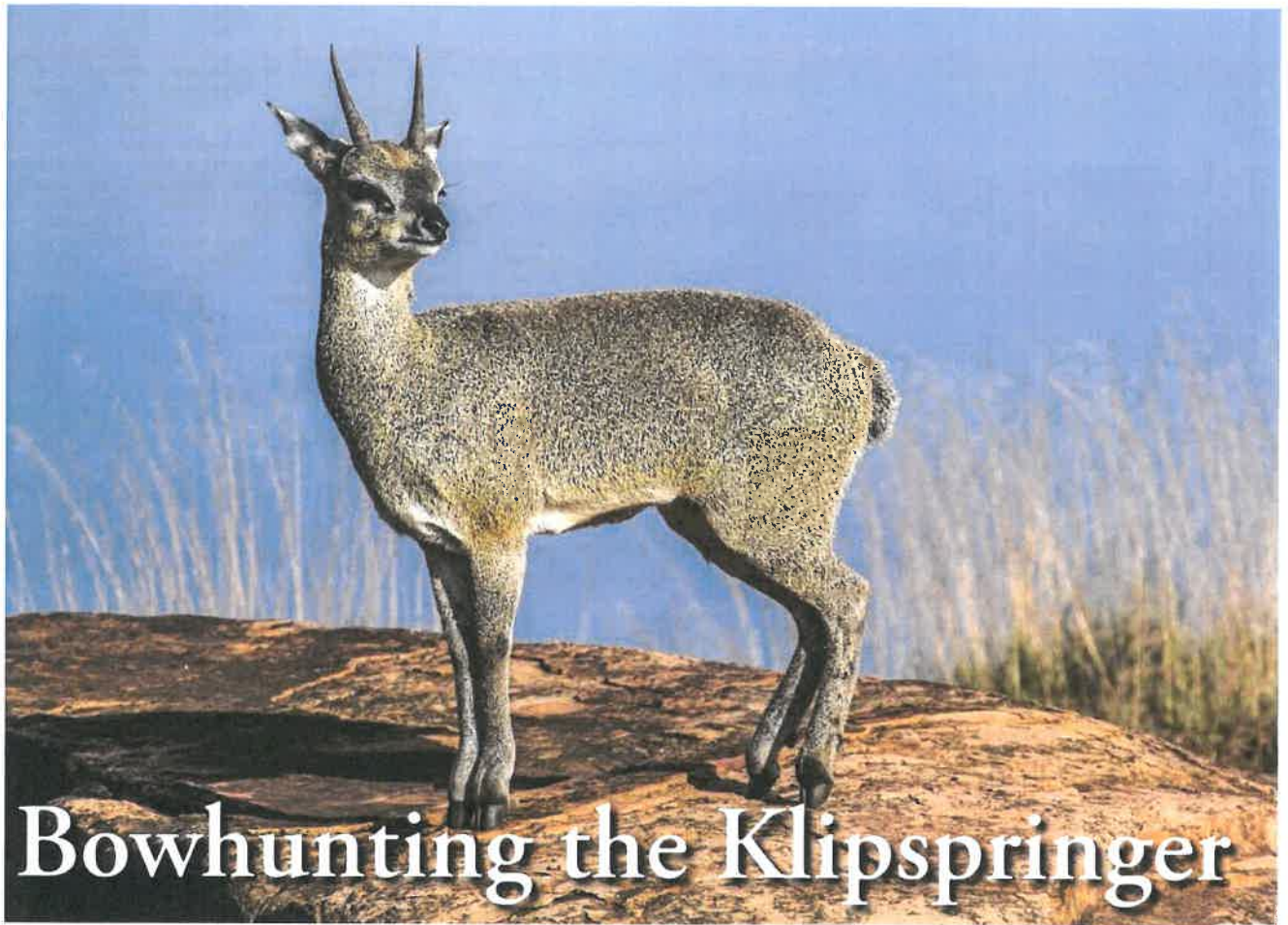




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Bowhunting the Klipspringer

By Frank Berbuir

Every continent has its “small big game.” South America has brocket deer, Asia has muntjacs and mouse deer, Europe has roebuck, but no continent is as enriched as Africa with its profusion of pygmy antelopes.

It is simply fascinating to see how many there are and how diverse the group is and how challenging it is to hunt them. The first time I saw a klipspringer was during a safari in 2007 in Namibia in the Khomas Highlands. It was standing like the Lion King on a rock on top of a mountain overlooking the valley. The tiny antelope was far away, even for a rifle hunter, but I could observe him for a while with binoculars. Since that time, I never saw one again. After my successful adventure on a blue duiker and red duiker bowhunt, my next most sought-after specimen in my quest for the pygmy antelopes, was a klipspringer.

I was with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris on a nice farm in the Northwest Province bordering the Limpopo Province. The previous year we had successfully hunted a mountain reedbuck there. During

that safari we saw many klipspringers that drank from a natural waterhole. We decided to sit at this waterhole in a raised covered stand, like a little cabin. It was the middle of August and a bit chilly in the South African winter early morning. Guinea fowl and francolin were the usual first visitors to drink. Then it was calm again for quite a while. About 9 o'clock Izak tapped my leg, pointing to my left.

A klipspringer doe and buck were approaching very cautiously to the waterhole from behind our stand. With our binoculars we followed their tentative progress closer to the waterhole, and I tried to take photos through my binoculars.

“Frank, get ready,” Izak murmured. “Once they finally stop at the waterhole and stay still, you should take the shot.” I quietly put an arrow on the rest of my

bow, and stood up from the chair. With the rangefinder I checked the distance, which was 41 meters to where they finally stopped at the waterhole. I pulled the bow softly, and the single dot of my sight aimed on the vital area of the *bokkie*. After all these years in the bush and in Africa, I realized that I was incredibly nervous. I released the arrow and ... failed! The arrow flew just under his belly into the mud. Immediately both klipspringers turned and ran back in the direction they came from. Izak saw the anger on my face.

“What is going on? You missed,” he asked quietly. I was so annoyed with myself that for a brief moment I felt like throwing the bow in the corner of the cabin! But I did not. Usually it is not the fault of the equipment, it is the hunter.

“Sit down and relax,” Izak said calmly.

Easier said than done, because this might be the best chance I had. For at least ten minutes it was quiet in our stand. Neither said a word. Suddenly Izak, who was watching the whole time in the direction where the klipspringer had gone, tapped again on my leg. He pointed to both pygmy antelopes coming back to the water.

"Hope dies last," he murmured. I could hardly believe it, but there they were sneaking in again on a slightly different route. Looked like the hunting gods were in my favor and offering a second chance.

"Stay calm and take your time," Izak said gently. I was already standing with the bow in my hand and an arrow on the rest, following through the small shooting window the klipspringers' movements. Finally the little buck stopped at the water at 29 meters with his mate luckily standing behind him checking the area. *I am at full draw now, and can feel my heart pumping like a high-speed engine. The shooting lane is clear, I am breathing smoothly, and the little antelope is standing steady and calm.* With the tap on the trigger of my release, the arrow was out on its mission, and a second later it penetrated the buck.

The klipspringer turned and bounded back the way it came. We could not see where he went and we did not hear any breaking branches or other noises. The female just stood on the spot looking after him, as if wondering why he went off.

"You hit him? I could not see the arrow," Izak said.

"Yes, I am sure." We both looked to see



Overlooking a nice waterhole.

what the doe was doing, but she was still standing there and just looking after the disappearing male. She walked a few steps and then suddenly bolted off. We looked at each other wondering what was going on. After a ten minute wait we decided to leave the cabin and look for the klipspringer. We first went to the spot where I shot it and collected the arrow. OK, there was blood

"Wait until he's broadside and looking away."

and hair on the arrow which meant I shot him. We saw his tracks for a couple of meters but no blood at all. Not very encouraging, but we tried to continue on his tracks. A bit further on Izak unexpectedly stopped and raised his binoculars to check the area in front of us. When he put them down he looked at me, and shook my hand firmly.

"Congrats, well done. Your klipspringer is in the salt. It lay right in front of us about 30 meters away!" When I realized what he said, it was as if a heavy burden had been lifted from my shoulders. The expression on my face at that moment was probably like that of a kid that gets a big gift. I was more than happy. When we got to him I knelt down to examine this gorgeous specimen of the Tiny 10 antelopes.

Again it was an awesome and challenging hunt and experience with bow and arrow. After some nice pictures we enjoyed our success with a cold beer. Once more, a tremendous hunt with unforgettable impressions and memories with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris in South Africa.

Shoot straight, take care, always good hunting, "Waidmannshei!" and "Alles van die beste."



My object of desire.

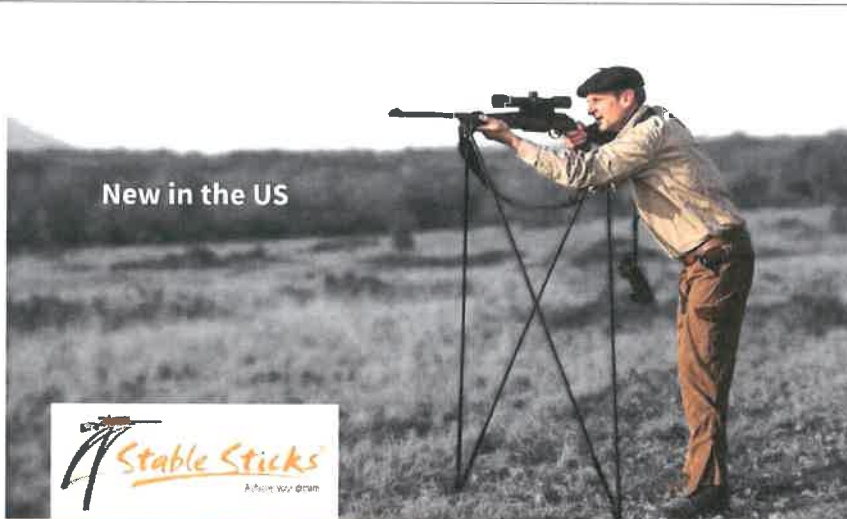
Though often overshadowed by the Big Five, with much attention focused on hunting the large and glamorous African species like kudu, gemsbok or wildebeest, hunting the Tiny 10 species of pygmy antelope in Africa can be an extremely challenging and fulfilling experience. All of these antelope are extremely small, the largest specimen, a common duiker weighing less than 50 pounds, and therefore it is very demanding to get close for a shot on such a small target. Luckily, years ago I had bagged a common duiker in Namibia, and a steenbok, a blue duiker and a red duiker on bowhunts in South Africa over the last six years.

Description:

The name klipspringer, *Oreotragus oreotragus*, is the Afrikaans name for “rock jumper” and alludes to the animal's ability in rocky territory where it can be seen moving freely, seemingly on tiptoe. It is a small and stocky antelope found in eastern and southern Africa that was first described by German zoologist Eberhard August Wilhelm von Zimmermann in 1783. Adaptations for its specialized niche include a stocky build with massive hindquarters, a short neck, a vestigial tail, a dense undercoat with brittle, air-filled guard hairs, and the ability to stand on the tiptoes of its truncated hooves. The coarse-haired coat is variable in color with shades of grey, yellow, brown or red, and acts as an efficient camouflage in its rocky habitat. A prominent feature is the large, black pre-orbital gland. Klipspringers

have smallish rounded ears positioned far back on the head, with noticeable dark inner markings. Klipspringers reach between 43 to 60 centimeters, respectively 17 to 24 inches at the shoulder and weigh from 8 to 18 kilograms (18 to 40 pounds). Ewes are slightly larger than the rams. Only rams have short and spiky horns, which are ringed only at the base and typically measure 7–9 centimeters (3.0–3.5 inches). It is mainly active during the early morning and late afternoon, resting during the hottest part of the day among rocks or beneath overhangs. This tiny antelope is more monogamous than other antelopes. Individuals of opposite sexes exhibit long-term to lifelong pair bonding. The mates tend to stay as close as within five metres of each. Males form territories of about 19 to 121 acres, in which they stay with their partners and offspring. Primarily a browser, the klipspringer prefers young plants, fruits and flowers. Leopard, jackals, and spotted hyena prey on them. Calves are vulnerable to eagles and baboons. Because klipspringers often have to leave their refuge to forage, they are very alert to predators and to alarm signals of other species. They react by fleeing to higher ground with or without first calling, the female leading. Once they are safe they give whistling alarm calls in duet.

The klipspringer inhabits places characterized by rocky terrain and sparse vegetation. Its range extends from northeastern Sudan, Eritrea, northern Somalia and Ethiopia in the east, to South Africa in the south, and along coastal Angola and Namibia.



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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.