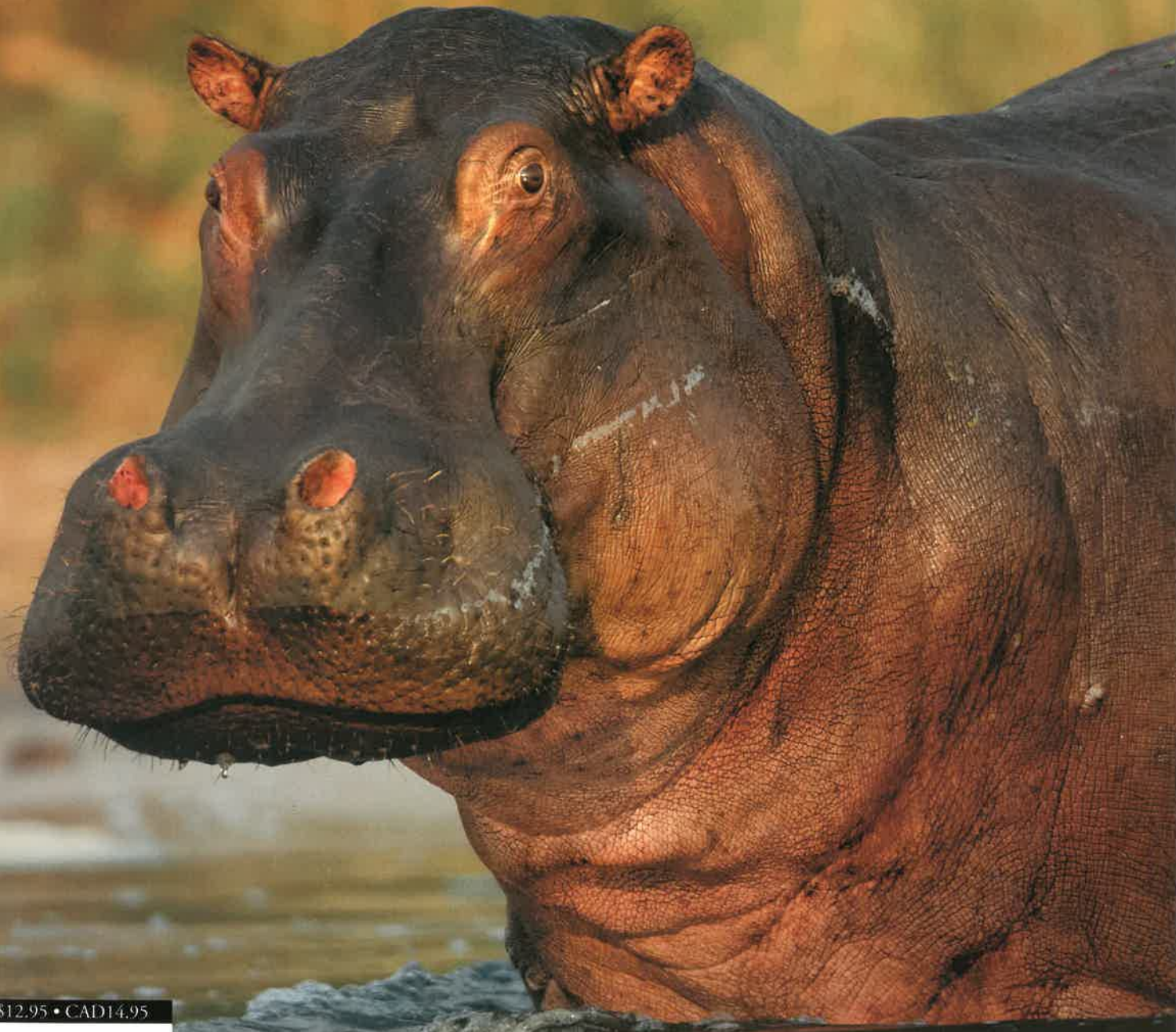


African Hunting Gazette

ESTABLISHED 1995



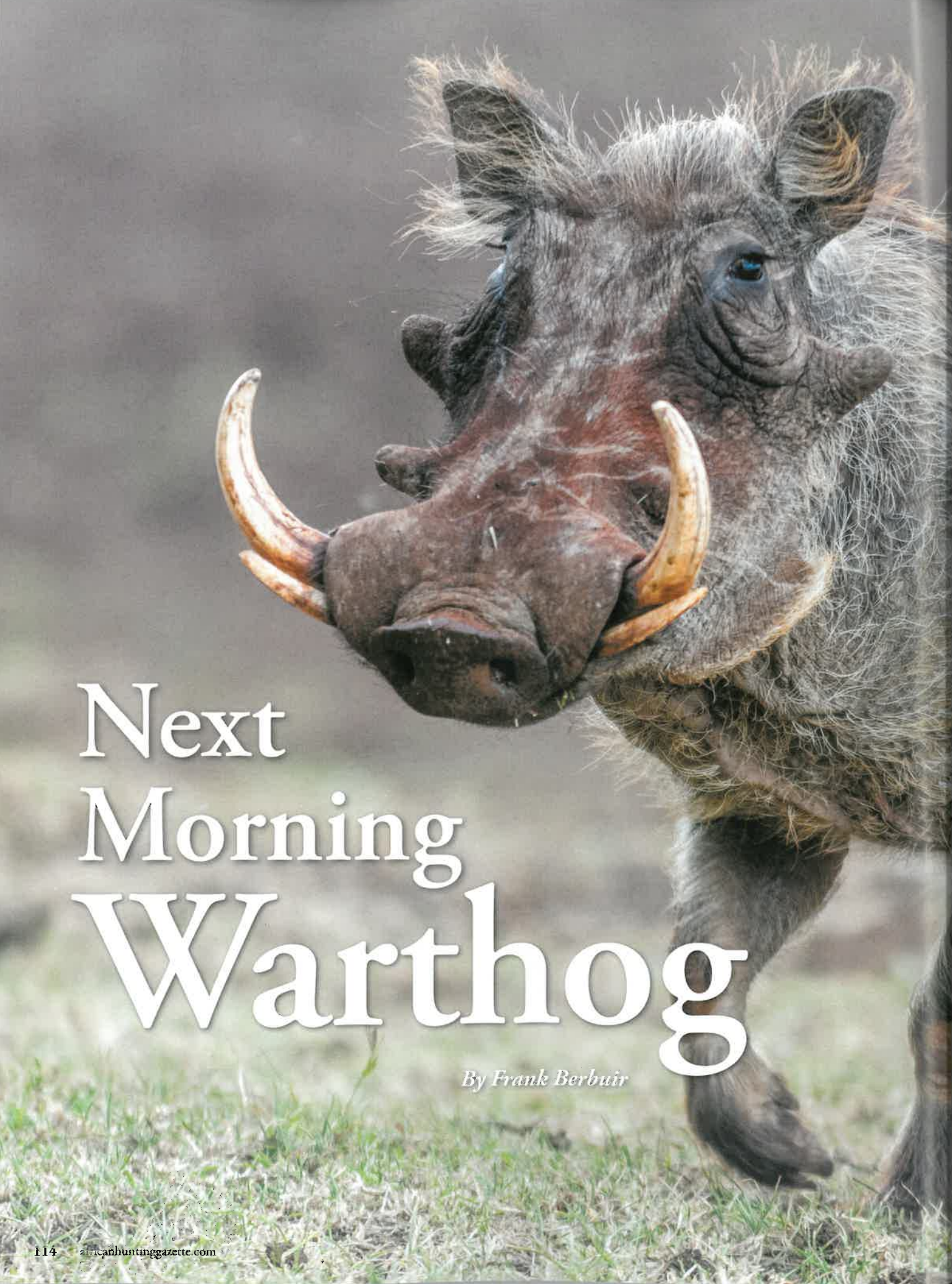
US\$12.95 • CAD14.95



Volume 21 • Issue 3

HUNTING THE GREAT CONTINENT OF AFRICA

Spring 2016



Next Morning Warthog

By Frank Berbuir

*Suddenly and unexpectedly,
a big “pig of the plains”
(vlakvark in Afrikaans)
came out of the bush and
approached the waterhole
from the right side...*

2004 in northern Namibia was the first time I got acquainted with those weird-looking critters called warthogs. They are fascinating to see, with their huge, double pairs of tusks protruding from the mouth and curving upwards, their mane down the spine to the middle of the back, and the wart-like protrusions on the large head which serve as a fat reserve and are used for defense when males fight. And it was really funny seeing them running with the tail standing up straight like an antenna! I was lucky to take a nice big old boar with bow and arrow that time, and since then became addicted to hunt and shoot these bruisers.

However, during my hunt with Izak Vos and Vos Safaris in early August 2014 my main intention and hunting ambitions were not to shoot a warthog – but you never know or can tell what can happen.

Over six days of this hunting trip we had some very memorable occurrences with the wildlife in the beautiful Limpopo area in northern South Africa. We walked and stalked, or glassed and stalked, and could bag some great trophies as well. A massive eland bull was the quarry I was now focused on. We had found several tracks of a group of eland the last days at two different natural waterholes, and tried to get close to them, but always they spied us early and escaped somewhere.

So we decided to sit in a blind for that afternoon. Izak and I were joined by Anton, the land owner who also likes to hunt with bow and arrow and just wanted to follow the action. It was rather cozy and crowded with three people in the small blind that was imbedded nicely in the surrounding area under an old acacia tree. We had entered at two o'clock in the afternoon, and although it was August and South African wintertime, it was fairly hot. For about an hour nothing happened till a squad of about 25 banded mongoose ran quickly to the waterhole to take a sip. It was entertaining to see this band of tiny but very lively carnivores running around for about five minutes before all became calm again.

Then a breeze has sprung up, unfortunately swirling around, which was not good for our situation. From our former experience with the wind the last few days, we were prepared, and had brought some dry rhino dung in a bag. We lit it as scent control against the capricious wind. In fact it worked, because when all of a sudden some kudus approached the waterhole they were not disturbed at all by the special mixture of smells.

Only we were affected, because after a while it smoked like a chimney inside, and we felt like cured meat. With the smoke getting into our eyes we were all close to crying, and Anton had to cover his eyes with a handkerchief. We all had to try hard not to laugh about it, especially when suddenly and unexpectedly, a big "pig of the plains" (vlakvark in Afrikaans) came out of the bush and approached the waterhole from the right side. Then we became highly excited.

"Frank, do you see this monster?" Izak whispered. "Holy smoke – that's a bruiser," was my reaction. "Do you want to shoot it?" he asked. What a question! "Sure, let's go for it, this is a whopper," I murmured.

Generally, warthog have a clear modis operandi when they approach a waterhole. They go straight to the water, kneel down or bend head down, scoop some water, turn around, move back the way they came in – and disappear again. And all that happens normally fairly quickly. Exactly like this the old warrior behaved, and therefore everything had to go fast. Izak looked

Generally, warthog have a clear modis operandi when they approach a waterhole.



Happy hunter Frank Berbuir with a happy PH Izak Vos, and an unlucky but good warthog bruiser.



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through my rangefinder when the big boar arrived at the water, and with his left hand showed four fingers followed by a clenched fist, which meant it was standing at 40 metres.

I was sitting on a small plastic chair and had my bow all ready with a dead-quiet nocked-in arrow in my left hand. Nicely broadside the warthog was standing now, with its head bent down for drinking. My heart rate and blood pressure peaked when I drew my bow in slow motion, and settled the 40 metres sight-pin on the spot of his vitals.

I released the arrow, and within a split-second it was in the hog's chest – we could also see the impact.

The boar turned to the right and ran up the way it came. We saw it staggering after about 30 metres, and 20 metres further on, it fell.

What excitement! The shot placement seemed good, and Izak and Anton held their thumbs up. They whispered: "Good shot, dead pig." We did not celebrate then because some kudu were still there and we did not want to spook them – maybe eland would show up later as well. So we kept quiet for another hour until the sunset started and it became dark quickly. We decided to leave the hide, although there were still three kudu females around, but now it was dark, and from the noise we made leaving through the back of the hide, they jumped off without even realizing



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High grass and thorny bushes and trees are a good cover for warthogs.



The Limpopo landscape – so diversified and beautiful.

what had spooked them.

We walked to the waterhole, and about five metres behind the spot where the warthog had stood we found the arrow. There was a good blood trail, and we followed it to the point where we had seen the warthog falling down.

But the warthog was not lying there! We saw that it made it back on its feet somehow, and we followed the tracks and blood trail before that also disappeared. Because it was late and dark, Anton phoned one of his trackers to bring one of his hunting dogs.

Anton and Izak saw I was a bit concerned and nervous about the situation, and reassured me.

“With that shot, the boar is dead. We will find it, don’t worry.” When the tracker

arrived with his dog named “Danger”, we started at the point of the last tracks and blood spots, and with flashlights we tried to illuminate the surrounding area that mainly consisted of knee-high grass, some bushes and acacia trees.

Meanwhile it was nine o’clock at night, totally dark and “Danger” was not really impressively motivated, concentrated, or convincing. She looked at us with an expression like: “Guys, it is late. I am off work now, and want to lie beside the campfire.”

After an hour of intensive search we stopped and drove back to camp. For me this was a more or less sleepless night, and early in the morning we all gathered again at the point of the last tracks and blood spots. Now “Danger” seemed to be awake and dedicated, and picked up the spoor.



A happy hunter with “Danger”, the brave – and finally reliable – hunting dog on the way back after the successful search for the “next morning warthog.”

After about 100 metres on we heard her barking. Quickly we walked to where she was, and saw the “vark” lying dead under a dark, thorny thicket where it had slipped in before it expired. It was really difficult to see it lying there. After the hard tracking of last night, we had finally made it this morning under the glittering African sun.

My feeling of relief was immense, and I could not resist cuddling the brave dog that had found my next morning warthog. The placement of the shot and the broadhead hole showed that the shot was good and cut both lungs, but these critters are tough as we have realized once again.

Exhausted but happy about getting this South African tusker, we took some trophy pictures before we went back to the pick-up, loaded up the warthog, and enjoyed a hard-earned cold Castle Lager, even that early in the morning! Later in camp Danger got one of our delicious “boerewors” (Afrikaans for “farmer’s sausage”)!

Once more I thank Izak very much for the great organization, his experience and company, and all the nice people I had the opportunity to meet during this fantastic time.

“Baie dankie & alles van die beste.”

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