

BowHunter

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BOWHUNTING STEENBOK

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Steenbok Bowhunt quest

By Frank Berbuir

I remember quite well my first encounter with a steenbok in Northern Namibia in 2004. On the second day of this hunt with my PH, Gustav, we suddenly spotted this beautiful tiny antelope. It looked really cute with his huge radar-bowl-like ears, graceful, slight build, nice brown coat and big eyes looking at you like a child begging for sweets. Gustav went on so much about the beauty of this animal that I finally felt sorry trying to shoot it.

The next time I tried to hunt it was in 2007, again in Namibia, in the Khomas Highlands. The black tracker who guided me this time was extremely experienced. From the beginning when he found the first fresh tracks he followed them like a predator and after a three-hour stalk in the

burning midday sun of November he pointed to a beautiful buck resting in the shade of a small brush. The bokkie was relaxing at approximately 30 metres. I remembered my first chance encounter a couple of years before and this time I was also a bit reluctant to shoot an animal lying down. When we moved a step forward the steenbok jumped up and was gone within a split second. That was the last time I saw a steenbok in all the years afterwards that I went to Southern Africa for hunting with bow and arrow.

In August 2014 I was once again back in beautiful South Africa to hunt with bow and arrow, again with my friend and Professional Hunter Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. On my bucket list this time I again had a steenbok, this beautiful creature of the Tiny Ten. Izak told me beforehand that he knew an interesting place up north in the Limpopo Province

not far from the Botswana border where we could hopefully find this long sought after antelope. After my arrival at the Johannesburg airport in early August and the nice welcome by Izak we enjoyed talking about our ambitious hunting plans for the following eight full hunting days.

Having in good memory our extremely successful bow-hunt on a huge Cape buffalo and more big game animals the year before I decided to take along again for this hunting adventure my reliable and trusty Elite GT 500 bow set at 90 pounds draw weight with the Easton Full Metal Jacket 250 Dangerous Game arrows and the Muzzy Phantom SS 200 grain broadhead, with a total arrow weight of 800 grains. For sure for a steenbok this bow and arrow combination was quite a bit overloaded, but with this equipment and bow setup I felt comfortable the previous time and all the shootings and practices went very well during the last months again.

“Never change a winning team,” was my thinking, especially with regard to our intention to harvest besides the steenbok also a Cape eland.

The first day at our final destination, after setting up our camp, we just scouted for game animals by glassing and stalking as well as driving within the area. Izak had definitely not exaggerated about this spot and the occurrence of steenbok. On this day we saw numerous impala, warthog, blesbuck, kudu and blue wildebeest, and about a dozen steenbok with some really good trophy bucks, does and youngsters. We also spooked a pair of bat-eared foxes just twenty metres in front of us, which was a unique encounter for me because I had never seen them before.

The countryside, or bushveld, was quite flat with grasslands peppered with thorny bushes. When we arrived at a large grassy field we spotted within the range of vision at approximately 120 metres from us a big steenbok male with a pair of really long horns. Izak estimated them at five and a half to six inches. It was a very impressive specimen of this small antelope. He was facing us for quite a while before he jumped off. “This is the one we will go for tomorrow. He will stay in the area; they are territorial animals and there is a fair chance to stalk him and get close early tomorrow morning,” Izak said.

Early the next morning, after a quick coffee and biscuit, we were on the way to the area where we had spotted him the day before. We glassed the area thoroughly with the binoculars and walked at a slow pace along the rim of field behind the bush line as cover. All of a sudden Izak mumbled: “There he is, resting on the ground. Do you see the bare spot with no grass? He is lying in front of the grass and the bare spot is in front of him.” I moved my binos a bit to the right and could then also see him. Yes, it was the one we saw the day before. Now we had to plan to get closer because the distance was about 70 metres. There were just some small bushes we could use as cover and we needed to keep our silhouette as low as possible.

Izak crept slowly forward like a leopard and I followed in his tracks directly behind him.

At the last bush between us and the animal he stopped and grabbed my rangefinder, checked the distance and whis-

pered, “He’s lying at 40 metres nicely broadside. Now or never, Frank.”

It was show time, now it was up to me. I moved up slowly on my knees, nocked in the arrow quietly and pulled my Elite GT 500 bow calmly and smoothly to full draw. I had to slide my upper body a bit to the right for clear shooting and aimed with the 40-metre pin of my Spot Hogg sight where Izak had told me on a spot low on his vitals because he was lying on the ground. I could feel my heart beat in my chest while aiming and finally tapping on the trigger of my Scott release. The Easton Full Metal Jacket Dangerous Game arrow was on its deadly mission and within a split second hammered into the tiny antelope’s body where I had aimed. “Yes,” Izak whispered with a sizzling sound. “The arrow went through,” he rejoiced. He had followed the action with his binoculars. The steenbok did not get up on his legs, it passed away on the spot.

Izak smiled at me, shook my hand, hugged me and said, “Congrats, well done my friend. You got your steenbok!”

I was overwhelmed and very emotionally touched when we walked to him and I saw this beautiful animal. Finally, after all these years, a beautiful trophy steenbok was lying in front of me.

We arranged the buck for some nice and regardful trophy pictures. Back at our camp, even though it was just ten o’clock in the morning, a Castle Lager beer tasted excellent. The bakkie was stored for a full-mount trophy in a cooler box before sending it to Izak’s uncle, Jan Viljoen, my taxidermist of confidence, who had done a fantastic job on my previous trophies, but that is another story.

On the remaining days of this safari we had even more exciting encounters, hunting success and moments of lifetime memories, but that is another story as well.

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

Baie dankie en alles van die beste!

Equipment:

Bow: Elite GT 500 set at 90 pounds

Arrow: Easton Full Metal Jacket 250 Dangerous Game with heavier inserts.

Broadhead: Muzzy Phantom SS 2-Blade at 200 grain

Optics: Zeiss Victory Binoculars and Nikon Rangefinder

Release: Scott

Camo: Sniper Africa

