

Bow Hunter

GEAR

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**HUNTING
NYALA**



A nyala bowhunt



By Frank Berbuir

An antelope I always wanted to bowhunt is the nyala (*Tragelaphus angasii*), a beautiful specimen of the spiral-horned antelopes, called *inyala* in Zulu or *njala* in Afrikaans. It is a middle-sized antelope, between a bushbuck and a kudu, and native to Southern Africa. The body length is 135–195 cm and it weighs 98–125 kg. The coat is rusty or rufous brown in females and juveniles, but grows a dark brown or slate grey, often tinged with blue, in adult males. Females and young males have ten or more white stripes on their sides. Both males and females have a white chevron between their eyes, and a 40–55 cm long bushy tail with white underside. Both sexes have a dorsal crest of hair running right from the back of the head to the end of the tail. Males have another line of hair along the midline of their chest and belly. Only males have horns, 60–83 cm in length and yellow-tipped. There are

one or two twists. The spoor is similar to that of the bushbuck, but larger.

The nyala is mainly active in the early morning and the late afternoon. It generally browses during the day if temperatures are 20–30 °C and during the night in the rainy season. As a herbivore, the nyala feeds upon foliage, fruits and grasses, with sufficient fresh water. It is a shy animal which prefers waterholes rather than open spaces. They are very cautious creatures. Old males live alone, but single-sex or mixed family groups of up to 10 individuals can be found. These inhabit thickets within dense and dry savanna woodlands. The main predators of the nyala are lion, leopard and Cape hunting dogs, while baboons and raptorial birds hunt for the juveniles. The nyala's range includes Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. It has been introduced to Botswana and Namibia, and reintroduced

to Swaziland, where it had been extinct since the 1950s.

It is August 2016 and luckily I made it back to beautiful South Africa to bowhunt again with my friend and professional hunter, Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. The overnight flight to Johannesburg went smoothly and flawlessly and the immigration was also done quickly. With bow and arrow equipment, as a sporting device, you usually do not have any special formalities with the Customs and I was happy to see Izak again.

As we had not seen each other for two years there was a lot to talk about.

For hunting the nyala we moved to a location in the Limpopo Province. On this beautiful property you could also find Cape buffalo and giraffe besides numerous plains game and some white rhinos. It is unbelievably impressive when you have an up close and personal encounter with these huge mammals and get a first-hand impression about their size, strength and appearance. They are awesome animals.

We first scouted for nyalas and tried our luck with several stalking attempts but were unfortunately unsuccessful. The bush was very dense and not easy to stalk so that each time we came within close range one animal in a group sensed or spotted us, sniffed or barked and all were on the alert. Therefore we decided to try our luck the next day in a blind at a waterhole.

Early in the morning we were there, waiting for what the day would bring. After an hour a couple of small warthogs came in followed by vervet monkeys. Later some nyala females with fawns trotted to the waterhole for a sip. A fantastic bushbuck also showed up and stood perfectly at 25 yards.

Behind our blind we could also hear a huge giraffe feeding on leaves from the treetops. It was very exciting. For some time it became calm and quiet again.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon all of a sudden a nyala female approached the waterhole slowly followed a huge bull. Within a split second our attention and tension rose. Izak gave me a sign to get ready and mumbled, "Look at this bull. This is a monster." The cow and bull were standing broadside at the waterhole, both drinking. We were sitting on small chairs and without making a noise I grabbed my bow slowly. The arrow with the Silverflame XL broadhead was nocked and on the rest. Silently I engaged my release to the loop on the string and simultaneously pulled my bow to full draw. Izak whispered, "28 yards broadside, shoot when the female is leaving and not standing behind him." I was at full draw aiming at the chest cavity of the bull, which was standing in front, for about 20 seconds, when the female stepped backwards and cleared the way for a clean shot without shooting her as well in case of a pass-through.

I slightly pushed the release trigger and the carbon arrow took flight on his mission and penetrated fully through the vital area of the animal. The nyala bull winced before he jumped to the right and ran back the way he came in. We were both quiet and followed the cracking sounds he made in the bush before it went quiet again. Izak raised his thumb, which meant he was probably down. I felt the shot placement was good and was a bit giddy with excitement. Izak tapped me on the shoulder, smiled at me again and winked. "Let's give him a bit of time,"



Dense bush in the Limpopo Province.



Grizzly Stiks's Silverflame XL Broadhead.

he said.

Half an hour later we went to the spot where I had shot him and found the arrow covered with blood about ten yards behind. We could follow his tracks clearly and after about 60 yards we saw the bull lying dead under an acacia tree. Another long sought-after bowhunting dream came true when we reached this magnificent nyala bull. Once more I was overwhelmed and more than happy together with Izak about this awesome animal and trophy. After some nice respectful trophy pictures we radioed the landowner to pick us up and loaded the animal on the back of the pick-up. Back in camp the slaughtering brought 60 kilogram or 132 pounds of first class nyala meat. What an extraordinary performance again of bow and arrow.

Together with my friend and PH, Izak Vos from Vos Safaris, I had a tremendous good hunt again with unforgettable impressions and memories. Once more thank you very much to Izak and his outstanding experience, company and organization.

Shoot straight, always good hunting, Waidmannsheil and *alles van die beste*.

Equipment:

Bow: Mathews Z7x @ 70 lbs / Arrow: Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350 / Broadhead: Silverflame XL 2-Blade 125gr Optics: Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder / Release: Scott / Camo: Sniper Africa

