

BowHunter



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Bowhunting a Namibian greater kudu bull



by Frank Berbuir

As many hunters know Namibia is an amazing, exciting, beautiful and successful hunting experience. So it was and always is for me. During the 243 miles' drive from Windhoek to a hunting farm near Otavi and the Etosha National Park in the north of Namibia I once again enjoyed the beauty, naturalness and wideness of Africa. Gustav and his wife, Uschi, made me again a hearty welcome and a wonderful time. I felt rather like coming back "home" than being in a foreign country.

On the evening of my arrival we had a delicious dinner with eland steaks, grilled pumpkins, potato wedges, one of Uschi's fantastic homemade desserts and South African wine under the lapa and open barbecue fire where we made plans for the next days.

On Saturday morning we firstly checked a tree stand built on an old tree near a waterhole, where Gustav and Rudi, one of his hunting guides, often saw and found tracks of large kudu bulls.

A kudu bull was the top priority on this hunt. So I found myself sitting in the tree stand in the afternoon together with Gustav equipped with the video camera.

Half an hour later some Cape pigeons, guinea pigeons and louries gathered close beside and above me in the tree I was sitting. Curiously they were watching us, these Sniper Africa camouflage-dressed creatures. Within ten minutes more than twenty birds were sitting around me. Two young warthogs and some kudu entered the scenery, but unfortunately no kudu bull. Due to changing winds and the coming sunset we decided to climb down after four hours and left it for the day.

On Sunday morning we went out very early to a ground blind at another waterhole on their huge 6500 hectares property. I enjoyed a wonderful African sunrise with the funny spectacular cackling and sight of helmeted guinea fowls, the grey "go-away" louries and some other birds. Again some kudu

cows with adolescents showed up, but the bull stayed perfectly covered at the edge of the bushes. Now I understand why his second name is the "grey ghost of Africa". For over an hour the bull stood in the bush without any movement. Unfortunately when some young oryx bulls approached he finally disappeared.

After this exciting morning we drove back to the farmhouse for Uschi's breakfast, enriched by our morning adventures. The hot hours of the day we enjoyed swimming, tanning and hanging around the pool or relaxing in the shade, reading a book or hunting magazine or observing the waterhole 90 metres from the farmhouse. Then hunting was strictly prohibited, but you could find a lot of action during the day. In the midday heat a troop of twelve black wildebeest galloped in for a quick drink and over 20 mongooses strolled in and tried to get a sip without falling into the water. For the afternoon hunt we went back to the same ground blind but no kudu bulls came in.

The next two days we drove for a sightseeing tour to Swakopmund, where we roamed through this nice, clean and ancient coastal city at the Atlantic seaside of Namibia.

Besides a wonderful sundowner at the shore, as well as some shopping and visiting places of interest, we also made an amazing tour through the nearby Namib Desert, the oldest desert in the world, in our Land Rover Defender.

The day after our sightseeing return I was more than excit-



ed to hunt again and went out very early with PH Rudi. For this day I had the determined intention to hunt a kudu bull successfully.

In his 30-year-old, but still working Land Rover, we drove several miles before we had to walk for almost a mile to our blind. I was really happy to wear a jacket because Rudi had folded down the front window. The early morning wind in September was pretty cold and the fine red sand was grinding my teeth.

Before sunrise at 05:30 we were ready in the blind. As always guinea fowls were our first visitors. At round about 08:00 I thought about shooting one for the kitchen but to prevent any alarming signal for maybe approaching game I did not.

That was good because some minutes later I could see small, brown-grey tips going up and down in the near treetops, which meant kudu bull (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros* – koedoe) was approaching!

As usual the cows came first and the three good bulls stayed at a safe distance at the edge of the scrubland. Then also four young blue wildebeest bulls came nearer.

The cows drank quickly before they trotted away slowly. The wildebeest snorted several times and the irritated kudu bulls decided not to drink and took another way but not to the water.



Frank climbing the rugged steps to the treestand.

That is the way life goes – sometimes.

So we left the blind quietly. Rudi climbed into a nearby tree to glass with the binoculars where the bulls were now. Since they were not far away we decided to stalk them. We had to make a bigger loop to bypass the thorny bushes and keep the wind against us. Meanwhile it was 09:30 and pretty warm. We stalked very slowly and quietly, clearing the way of any noisy foliage or branches and always checking the wind. One hour later we made our way through to the edge of the scrubland. With the binos we could see the bulls. They went only 300 to 400 metres from the blind and stood now in the shade under some huge camel-thorn trees. From our position the bulls were 60 metres away but for a good shooting position we had to stalk a bit nearer. When we made our first step we heard a barking



The area in Namibia where Frank hunted the kudu.

like from a dog. Some kudu cows came in 50 yards behind us and saw our movement. The bulls were gone once more and we went back to the farm a little disappointed.

After we had stocked up our energy with a good meal and relaxed a little we resolved to go out to the blind again. “The bulls must come back, they wanted to drink,” was my thinking and hope. So we found ourselves back in the blind at 15:00 and I was fortunately right. The three bulls showed up again in the afternoon. With the binoculars we judged the best one. With every step closer my blood pressure increased.

Finally the biggest kudu bull stood broadside at 31 yards. I was at full draw with my 70 pound Mathews bow. I pulled the trigger and released the Silverflame broadhead-equipped carbon arrow. Within a second it went through both lungs of the animal before the trunk of a bush behind stopped it.

The bulls jumped off and after 30 yards the two others stopped as if they were asking, “Hey, why did we run away?” They watched their companion I had shot and which stood 50 yards forward.

When they saw the bull collapsing they cut off directly into the bush, and I was totally happy. The kudu bull expired within range of sight.

We waited some minutes before I went to my trophy and realized it was a fine bull. What a fantastic hunt and wonderful day. After an exhausting and thrilling day we finally made it. We took some nice trophy photos in this wonderful landscape under the Namibian sun. A day to be kept in my remembrance for a lifetime.

Thanks to all who made my bowhunt possible and successful! Always good hunting. Shoot straight. ●



Frank with the kudu he bagged in Namibia.