

BowHunter

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BLACK WILDEBEEST IN NAMIBIA



Special moments last forever... and so do the memories of my hunt on a black wildebeest in Namibia, writes Frank Berbuir, who has been hunting in Namibia and South Africa for many years. Frank has hunted most plains game in Southern Africa and has written many articles for this magazine over more than a decade and a half.

By Frank Berbuir

I hunted in the South of Namibia on the fringes of the Kalahari Desert and on Omalanga Safaris in the North of Namibia near the Etosha-Nationalpark.

Once again I was bowhunting the first two weeks of November and had a successful, excellent and awesome time.

I hunted on foot, sat in a blind or directly in a camelthorn tree as well as in a tree stand in a tamboti tree.

Accommodation, meals and drinks – Scottish Malt Whisky as well as barbecued termites – were light and sweet, delicious and tasty.

I experienced different temperatures in the same location – from 41°C in the Kalahari about noon, down to 8°C at 5:30 a.m. in the morning with a strong wind from the South. It was really

cold in the desert in the Namibian summer. We also had heavy rain, but fortunately only two times for a couple of hours. That is Africa.

Because of much rain that year Namibia was very green and during the walk-and-stalks, I experienced the beauty of the fauna and flora at every corner. At the edge of the Kalahari, in the South of Namibia, we hunted on springbok.

Gustav my PH, also an avid bowhunter, was hunting with a rifle this time and I with my Mathews LX bow.

Stalking on springbok, on a property of 2 5000 ha, was a special challenge. Nevertheless, I approached up to roughly 40 meters to one good ram. However, I tried to hunt and film. After getting the scenery on tape and the arrow on the string, the buck realized was about to happen and bounced away in its peculiar way before I could shoot! That was nice to see but

unlucky for me. Fortunately some hours later my first African rabbit did not have the same luck as the springbuck and I shot him from 24 yards distance.

After three days near the desert, we headed back to Mopane Camp on Omalanga Safaris. There my priority was to bowhunt black wildebeest. The next day we glassed a group of twelve wildebeest of which two were "good" bulls.

Hunting on foot is a great challenge, but because of the open terrain, it was tricky, especially with twelve pairs of eyes, ears and noses in the wildebeest group that more or less noticed everything around them.

After spooking the herd several times we set up a mobile tree seat near the waterhole that the gnus frequently visited for drinking. I was sitting in a tamboti tree at about five meters height and about 25 meters away from the waterhole.

It was a nice spot, especially in the early morning hours when I saw a spectacular sunrise directly in front of me. However, I was also a little annoying in the late afternoon and evening hours with all the Culicidae or better known as "Bloody Hell"-mosquitoes pestering me. Nevertheless, I had nice views on some young warthogs, some ostriches, kudu cows with adolescents and a couple of red hartebeests. But the black wildebeest did not approach – not at all.

The next day it was still dark when I entered the tree stand at 5:00 a.m in the morning.

I fixed my stuff, drew the bow as an exercise to be familiar with several shooting positions and watched again the awakening of the African bush. Several Helmeted Guinea Fowls were on their run to the waterhole, also cape pigeons entered

and some other tiny birds. Interestingly also the birds landed near to me in the tamboti tree and were visibly surprised and sometimes annoyed about this Sniper Africa camouflaged creature. Especially the grey lorries with their devilling "go away" croaking are my favourite feathered friends: "Get out of this tree".

Just joking, they are really funny, and so are the red or yellow-billed hornbills. Although I appreciated the rich and fascinating world of African birds – my main objective was still to hunt wildebeest. This morning the only prey was a nice sequence on my videotape and the digital camera. In the afternoon I found myself back in the tree and at 4:30 p.m. the action started. With my Zeiss binos, I saw that in about 220 meters distance the black wildebeest group started their trail to the water. It is do or die now! As powered by a high-speed pump my blood pulsated through the veins as the gnus came nearer and nearer. At the same time some blesbuck came to the water from the other side.

"Oh, oh, not good, not good", I thought because the blesbuck would get my wind if they walked in behind me.

The black wildebeest came nearer to the water in their kitenish and sometimes crazy looking behaviour.

When they were at 55 meters the big bull in front went to the right from my point of view and made some snorting noises and shook his head up and down and to the left and right to show the blesbuck that he and his buddies are the bosses in the boxing ring. That worked – the blesbuck took off. The big bull still stood roughly 50 yards away, facing me and not giving me a proper shooting angle. Will he go to the left to the water or will

The beautiful open landscapes in Namibia are always amazing.





In the tamboti tree

he come nearer and go around the tree I am sitting on? Will he will get my wind?

The bull went forward and then to the right into the direction! I knew he would smell me when he gets behind me.

Suddenly at 30 meters, he stood still broadside for some seconds. “That is your chance, Frank”, I whispered to myself.

I drew quietly and quickly, while I sighted my customized 80 lbs Mathews LX bow in on the vitals – and then released the deadly arrow.

The 125-grain Silverflame broadhead equipped carbon arrow penetrated through the lungs of the animal and the black wildebeest bull jumped up like a brumby that did not want to be ridden by a human – and then he stomped off like a runaway train into the nearby bushes.

I started shaking quit bit in my tree-seat and needed some

minutes to calm down.

The sun was low when I climbed down from the stand half an hour later. Gustav, I and his German hunting terrier started to track the black wildebeest and found the bull in the bush about 350 meters from where I shot him. What an exciting bowhunt! I was much impressed when I saw the interesting and unique animal lying in front of me, struck down by a bow and arrow. I also hunted two blesbucks successfully, as well as a very good duiker ram and another rabbit. But that are different stories. Thanks to all who made this special moment memorable forever!

Alles van die beste, “Waidmannsheil”, shoot straight and always good hunting.

Equipment:

- Bow: Mathews LX 80 lbs (customized – one of 12 Sets available for 80 lbs on the LX).
- Grip: Gripwerks Birdseye Maple Custom Grip
- Sight: HHA Optimizer Sight
- Rest: Trophy Ridge Drop Away Rest
- Stabilizer: Vibracheck Stabilizer
- Quiver: Mathews 5 arrow quiver
- Release: Scott Wildcat Release
- Arrow: Carbon Express CX Hunter 300 Advantage
- Broadhead: Silverflame 125 grain
- Optics: Zeiss Victory 10x40 and Leupold RX III Rangefinder

