

# Bow Hunter



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# Rooiribbok bowhunt

By Frank Berbuir

The *rooiribbok* – in Afrikaans – or better known in English as the mountain reedbuck (*Redunca fulvorufula*) is a medium-sized antelope found, as the name implies, in mountainous areas and on dry rocky slopes and hills where sufficient grass and shelter are readily available. They will usually avoid open areas and peaks, staying close to the rocks, trees and scrub which they use for cover. The mountain reedbuck averages 75 cm at the shoulder and weighs around 30 kg. It has a grey coat with a white underbelly and reddish-brown head and shoulders. Only the ram has well-developed horns. These measure 13 to 18 cm and are heavily grooved for two-thirds of their length. They have sharp tips, and the anterior halves bend forward by up to 80 percent. Both sexes have a dark scent patch beneath the ears. Since they are predominantly grazers, water is an important habitat requirement. They tend to feed in the early evening and morning hours, normally in small groups of six or fewer animals. A typical group is made up of one adult male and several adult females and juveniles. Adolescent males are forced out of their herds and form small bachelor herds. There are three recognized subspecies, each of which has a separate distribution: southern mountain reedbuck (*R. f. fulvorufula*), Chanler's mountain reedbuck (*R. f. chanleri*) and western mountain reedbuck (*R. f. adamauae*). The southern mountain reedbuck inhabits an area from the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa to southeastern Botswana. Chanler's mountain reedbuck is found in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia.

**I**t is the end of August and I am luckily back in South Africa to hunt with bow and arrow again with my professional hunter, Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. Meanwhile I have hunted several times successfully in southern Africa on a variety of species. This time a mountain and a common reedbuck are on the list.

For this endeavour we are on a nice farm on the border of the North-West Province, close to the Limpopo Province. The landscape and scenery along the Crocodile River is gorgeous. The farm is managed by a lovely couple. We stay in a small hunting camp, our *jagkamp*, which we are familiar with from a previous trip.

There are some challenging and very rocky mountains around as well as dense bush and open plains. We try our luck at stalking in the mountains but due to the all-around pervasive sharp rocks and tall grass it is not only difficult and noisy but also risky because falling on these sharp-edged stones or twisting one's ankle is nothing we are looking for.

In Africa everything is defending itself – all the bushes and trees have thorns, the stones are sharp and tough, even the grass sometimes has barbs or flukes.

So we decide to sit in a pop-up blind close to a natural waterhole and salt-lick stone.

Izak, an experienced PH, has chosen this location due to the many mountain reedbuck tracks found here.

Our day starts in the morning with a walk to the blind.

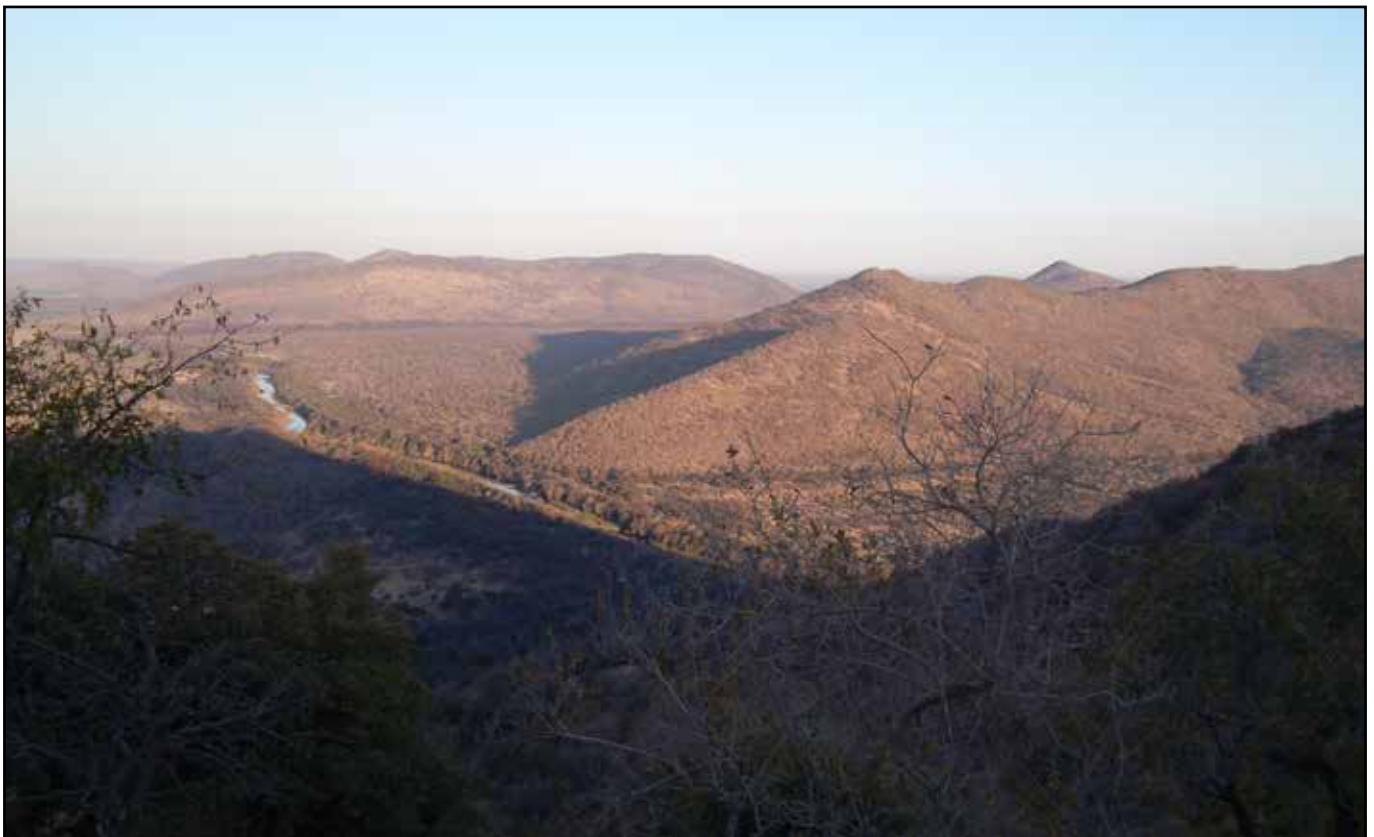
As mountain reedbucks roam during the day we do not start that early when it is still dark. Although it is August and winter in South Africa the temperature is comfortable and the rising sun is always a magnificent spectacle.

It is a very tiny blind. As there is no chance of putting two chairs in it I sit on a small cooler box due to the low height so that I can sufficiently manoeuvre my bow in different shooting positions. Slowly but surely it is also getting warm inside since the sun is shining on our blind. For about three hours nothing happens except some doves and francolins that fly and run around.

Then during the heat of the day an old, ugly baboon creeps out of the bushes, walking slowly to the salt lick, looking to our direction. Now we have to be quiet and motionless otherwise the day is done when he perceives our presence us and starts to shout. He stares at our blind but after a minute he sits down beside the salt lick, looking in a different direction.

With pleasure he picks up salt and nibbles on a blade of grass. A couple of minutes later he changes his position and after showing us his unpleasant rear end he sits down again, backside towards us. He seems to feel really safe and relaxed. But since he is sitting there not even doves or francolins show up anymore. Finally after half an hour he leaves by walking just five metres past the blind where we are sitting without noticing that we are there. Unbelievable.

Then it goes quiet again for a long afternoon. At about five o'clock we crawl out of the tent and walk back to our



Beautiful landscape along the Crocodile River.





Home of the mountain reedbucks.

camp with the prospect of an ice-cold beer and a tasty *braai* (Afrikaans for barbecue).

Day two follows more or less the same pattern except that the baboon does not show up. Where are the reedbucks and other animals? We see the tracks of eland, kudu, blue wildebeest, klipspringer and mountain reedbuck around the waterhole and salt lick but are they coming before sunrise or very shortly before dark? But the barbecue and a brandy-and-Coke this evening around the campfire is the reward for a long day.

It is day three when we are sitting in the blind quite early directly after sunrise. It is a bit crisp due to the wind blowing down from the mountains. That is probably the reason why the game is not moving either. It remains dead quiet the whole morning. Around noon the wind stops, it heats up again and two kudu females sneak in to the salt lick. Later a small warthog also strolls by from the waterhole. The scenery is nice especially when they do not realize that you are close, just about 20 metres away, and they remain calm and relaxed.

However, Izak and I are a bit annoyed. Where the mountain reedbucks? They are dependent on water and also like the salt.

It is early afternoon at about three o'clock on day three when I have my head in the clouds and Izak nudges me, pointing to the right side of our blind where a group of six mountain reedbucks is approaching. Three females, two adolescents and a big ram are coming closer. In a split second the adrenaline rush is back and the heartbeat rises.

The reedbucks amble slowly along, always checking the area to the salt lick, but the ram is standing apart behind a bush, nicely covered as if he smelt a rat. He is not moving and not coming closer, not at all – and there is no chance for a shot, not even with a rifle. About 15 minutes later the other reedbucks have finished and walk slowly back to him before they all leave running up the mountain.

What a clever a buck and what a pity for us. With a deep-drawn sigh we decide to finish for the day.

Day number four is the same as the days before, which means we sit in our cosy blind with a lot of hope and ambi-

tion. It is a bit like a daily routine that remains unvaried but you need to think positive and sometimes you need to continue doing what you are doing to be successful finally. No pain, no gain.

And the god of hunting is on our side this afternoon. At half past three a group of four mountain reedbucks approaches, three females and a good ram. The buck beards the lion in his den and comes to the salt lick together with the others. Now or never, but let's not get ahead of ourselves. To say I am excited now is an understatement. Very slowly I pull the bow and maneuver to the shooting window.

The reedruck is standing to the left, nibbling on the salt. The pin of the sight is focused on the vitals of the ram but a doe is still standing behind him. "Stay calm and focused," I mumble repeatedly to myself. Finally, after seconds that felt like an eternity, the doe moves away and he is standing clear. With a slight tap on the trigger of my release the arrow is dispatched on its deadly mission. Within a split second it disappears in the antelope before it flies out on the opposite side and stops in the ground. The ram jumps up, then jumps two more times before he falls over and expires. What an extraordinary performance again of bow and arrow.

Overwhelmed and more than happy together about this awesome animal and trophy we kneel at him. After a minute of respectful silence we arrange the ram for some trophy pictures. Back at our camp the "Happy Hour" beer tastes excellent. Fortunately three days later we harvest a

common reedruck as well, but that is a different story.

Once again I had a tremendous good hunt with unforgettable impressions and memories together with my friend and PH, Izak Vos from Vos Safaris in South Africa.

Shoot straight, take care, 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 @ 125 grain
- Optics: Zeiss Victory binoculars & Nikon rangefinder
- Release: Scott
- Camo: Sniper Africa



Fine mountain reedruck and a happy hunter.