

# Bow Hunter

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# Common reedbuck with bow and arrow



**By Frank Berbuir**

**We were lucky and happy to finally harvest a nice mountain reedbuck after four days of intense hunting. Now the next challenge awaited us – a common reedbuck. Therefore we were on a property close to Bela Bela in the beautiful Limpopo Province. Deriving its name from the geothermic hot springs around which the town was built, it was called Warmbaths, until 2002.**

**I**t was the end of August and I luckily made it back to South Africa to hunt with bow and arrow again with my professional hunter, Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. After arriving on the property and settling in we first wanted to do a game drive to become familiar with the terrain, the area and the game, especially where to find the common reedbuck. Even on a game drive I always take along my bow and arrows because you never know what can happen.

In the early afternoon we slowly made our way through the bushy and grassy grounds. The first animals we saw were some nice nyalas and warthogs. Suddenly when we turned right around a bush four Cape buffalo bulls were standing in our small driveway just about ten metres in front and they were not really amused to see us. We stopped and kept dead quiet so that you could hear a pin drop. The gang of four beasts were moving and shaking their heads and sniffing to catch our smell. Luckily the wind was in our favour and after some “showing off” and bragging the bruisers turned around moved slowly but back into the bush.

Holy Moley, that was an exciting encounter! Slowly we continued our drive when I whispered to Izak to stop because I

had seen a pair of horns sticking out of the grassland. We both checked with our binoculars and indeed there was a good specimen of a common reedbuck bedded down in the grass. Gently we sneaked out of the car to try stalking closer because the ram was lying about 80 metres from us. As quietly as possible we tiptoed from bush to bush. We had managed to shorten the distance down to 50 metres when suddenly the buck stood up.

Unfortunately at that moment we were in the open between two bushes but the antelope luckily did not look in our direction. Quickly I pulled an arrow out of my quiver and put it on the rest. I was at full draw and ready to release the arrow when the reedbuck turned his head and was staring at me. Not good. In the moment I pushed the trigger and sent out the arrow he ducked down – string jumped. The result was clear, I had overshot him. What a pity, pity, pity. That is life.

Izak put my mind at ease. “Don’t worry, the buck was just surprised to see us. Probably he will not go far and we might have another chance when we follow him slowly as long as he is in sight,” he said. OK, no sooner said than done. We looked for the arrow. Luckily we found it and watched out for the reedbuck

where he was going. Thoroughly we checked where to move using the available cover of the bushes and keeping an eye where the reedbuck was walking. Fortunately he did not run and we could follow him slowly.

Roughly an hour later we arrived at the edge of the bushy area. We stalked through to follow him. We could see him. He was standing calm and relaxed 65 metres from us at the edge of a bushy area. The only problem was that there was just grassland between him and us and no cover to hide and sneak in closer. It was a far shot for bow and arrow but I had practised far shots as well.

Let's give it a try, I thought. I put an arrow on the rest and pulled the bow, aimed a bit lower in case he might string jump again – and undershot him. The arrow flew tightly directly behind his front legs under his chest into the bush. He jumped up twice before he vanished into the bushes. Izak looked a bit disappointed at me but I was, nicely said, more than upset and swearing at myself. We decided to leave it for the day and went to the car to drive back to our camp. I also wanted to check if it were probably just buck fever or whether something was wrong with the bow, sight or arrows.

Back in camp I did a bunch of shots on the practice block and came to the conclusion that it was better to take the sturdy German Kinetics Silverflame broadhead instead of the mechanicals I had used on our first outing that afternoon. Their flight and shooting results were more precise. Izak handed me a beer and told me to relax at the campfire. "We will find him again tomorrow. Don't worry. Relax. He is an old buck and they are used to be territorial," he stated. Sitting around a nicely burning campfire under the African sky with a tasty South African beer was indeed relaxing.

Next day – new chances! It was early morning when we started. We were not superstitious but both of us skipped shaving that morning in the hope of better luck. In the bakkie we drove

close to the place where we had seen the reedbuck the day before. At crawling speed we were moving forward, checking the area simultaneously with the binoculars. All of a sudden we spotted him bedded down in the grass in front of a bush about 200 metres away.

We stopped, got quietly out of the car and started our stalk. It was quite challenging moving forward between the bushes and the grassland not to spook the ram. But silently and slowly, step by step, we could shorten the distance down to 32 metres. It was early morning and a bit crisp, maybe that was why the buck up to now was not aware that we were in his neighbourhood. He was still lying calm and relaxed. I could feel my heartbeat rising rapidly when I drew the bow in slow motion and aimed at his chest cavity. Once I released the arrow on its mission it hit him hard within a split second. The reedbuck jumped up and ran away at full speed. We looked after him before he went out of sight and gave it a break for 20 minutes. It was also good to calm down myself and get my back blood pressure to normal.

On the spot we found a good blood trail and followed it for about 50 metres before it abruptly stopped. That was somehow strange. We called Jacob, the tracker of the farm, who had been waiting in the car so far. He should accompany us following the tracks.

To make a long story short, it took us three hours before Jacob finally found him under dense thick brush. These trackers and their abilities to read the signs are amazing. We all were relieved to find the reedbuck. I was also more than happy to harvest the southern reedbuck.

Again it was an awesome and challenging hunt with bow and arrow. Finally I could harvest this nice specimen of a common reedbuck. Once again I had a tremendous good time with a lot of experiences and memories together with my friend and PH, Izak Vos from Vos Safaris in South Africa.

Shoot straight and always good hunting. ●

Habitat of the common reedbuck.

Equipment:  
Bow: Mathews Z7X at 70 lbs  
Arrow: Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350  
Broadhead: Silverflame XL 2-blade at 125 grain  
Optics: Zeiss Victory binoculars and Nikon rangefinder  
Release: Scott  
Camo: Sniper Africa

