

# BowHunter

ISSUE 18

GEAR



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# A KLIPSPRINGER BOWHUNT

By Frank Berbuir

**Every continent has its “small big game.” South America has brocket deer, Asia has muntjacs and mouse deer, Europe has roebuck, and so forth, but no continent is so enriched as Africa with its profusion of pygmy antelopes. It is simply fascinating to see how many there are, how diverse the group is and how challenging it is to hunt them.**

**F**or example, the first time I saw a klipspringer was during a safari in 2007 in Namibia in the Khomas Highlands. It was standing like “The Lion King” on a rock on top of the mountains overlooking the valley. The tiny antelope was far away – even for a rifle hunter, but I could observe him for a while with the binoculars. Since that time I never saw one again.

In continuation of my quest for the pygmy antelopes, and after our successful bowhunting adventure on a blue

duiker and red duiker, the next most sought after specimen was a klipspringer. With my PH and friend Izak Vos from Vos Safaris, we were on an excellent farm in the North-West province borderline of the Limpopo province. One year before we hunted a mountain reedbuck successfully at this location.

During that safari, we saw plenty klipspringers roaming there and visiting a natural waterhole as well. We decided to sit at this waterhole in a raised stand that looked like a small

cabin.

It was the middle of August and as usual, during South African wintertime it was chilly early in the morning. The “usual suspects”, such as guineafowls and francolins, visited the waterhole first. Then it was calm again for quite a while. At about 09:00 Izak tapped me on the leg and pointing with his index finger in the direction to my left.

A klipspringer ewe and ram were very cautiously approaching the waterhole from behind our stand. We both followed their tentative travel closer to the waterhole with our binoculars and I tried to take photos through the binoculars.

Izak mumbles: “Frank, get ready. Once they finally stop at the waterhole and stay calm you should take the shot.” I quietly placed an arrow on the rest of my bow and stood up from the chair. With the rangefinder, I checked the distance, which was 41 meters when they finally stood still at the waterhole.

I softly drew the bow and placed the single dot of my sight on the vital area of the bokkie. After all these years in the bush and in Africa I realized that I was amazingly nervous. I released the arrow – but the arrow missed its target! It narrowly missed the belly and flew into the mud.

Both of the klipspringers instantly turned and run back in the direction they came from.

Izak looked to me and asked quietly: “What is going on, you missed?” I was so angry annoyed about myself, that for a short while I considered throwing my bow in the corner of the blind. Luckily I did not do it!

Usually, it is not the fault of the equipment, it is the hunter. “Sit down and relax”, Izak said, trying to appease me.

Easier said than done because it has been the best chance I would get and I messed it up. For at least ten minutes it was silent in our stand. We both did not say a word. Then suddenly Izak, who continued to look in the direction where the klipspringers disappeared, again tapped me on the leg and pointed out with his finger that both pygmy antelopes were returning to the water.

“Hope dies last”, he murmured. I could not believe it, but really they were sneaking in again on a slightly different route, but they were coming back. It looked like the hunting gods were in my favor and offered a second chance. “Stay calm and take your time”, Izak said. I was already standing with the bow in my hand and an arrow on the rest, following the klipspringer’s movements through the small shooting window.

Finally, the little buck stopped at the water at 29 meters and his female luckily stood behind him checking the area. I was at full draw now and could feel my heart pumping like a high-speed engine. The shooting lane was clear, I was breathing smoothly. The little antelope was standing steady and calm and with the tip on the trigger of my release. Then the arrow was off on its mission. A second later it penetrated through the ram. The klipspringer swung around and sprinted back the way it came in. He ran out of sight and we did not hear any breaking branches or other noises.

The female was still standing on the spot, looking after him in surprise. “did you hit him, I could not see the arrow?”, Izak asked “Yes, I am sure”, I replied. We both looked at the ewe since she was still standing motionless looking in the direction that the ram left. Then all of a sudden she started



**The waterhole where we were waiting for the klipspringers.**

walking and after a couple of meters ran away at full pace. We both looked at each other and asked ourselves what was going on. Did the ram fall and expire in range of sight and for that reason did she run away?

After ten minutes of rest, we decide to leave the cabin and look for the klipspringer. We first went to the spot where I shot it and collected the arrow. Ok, there were blood and hair on the arrow, which means I did hit him. We saw his tracks for a couple of meters, but no blood at all. That wasn't very encouraging, but we continued on his tracks. Going a bit further Izak unexpectedly stopped and raised his binoculars to check the area in front of us. Then he looked at me, shook my hand firmly, and said: "Congrats, well done. Your klipspringer is in the salt, it is laying right in front of us about 30 meters away!"

The impression in my face was probably like a kid that got a big gift at the moment I realized what he said. It was like a heavy burden had been lifted from my shoulders. I was more than happy. When we got to the place where he expired I kneeled, looked, and examined this specific gorgeous specimen of the tiny ten antelopes. Again it was an

awesome and challenging hunt and experience with bow and arrow and finally, I could harvest this awesome klipspringer. After some nice pictures, we enjoyed the success with a cold beer. Once more it was a tremendous hunt with unforgettable impressions and memories 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:** 125 grain German Kinetics Silverflame

**Optics:** Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder

**Release:** Scott

**Camo:** Sniper Africa

