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**RED STAG IN
SCOTLAND**

**ROANING
WESTERN
AFRICA**

**THE ULTIMATE
PREDATOR**

**SOUTH DAKOTA
BIG BUCKS**

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Special Moments Last Forever

BY FRANK BERBUIR

And so do memories of my bowhunting adventure for Black Wildebeest (*Connochaetes gnou*) on Omalanga Safaris in the North of Namibia near the Etosha-National Park. Once again, I was hunting with bow and arrow the first two weeks of November in Namibia together with my friend and PH Gustav Bauer and had a successful, excellent, and awesome time.

We walked and stalked, sat in a blind or ambushed ourselves directly in a camelthorn-tree, or constructed a treeseat in a tamboti-tree. Accommodation, meals, and drinks were light and sweet, delicious, and tasty as always.

Also with the weather, I experienced different capers at the same location ranging from 104°F about noon down to 48°F at 5:00 in the morning with strong winds. One day, we also

had heavy rain fortunately only two times that day for a couple of hours. That is Africa. Because of much rain that year Namibia was very green and during the walks and stalks I experienced the beauty of the fauna and flora at every corner.

I wanted to hunt this time especially for the “Gnus,” i.e. Black Wildebeest or white-tailed gnu and Blue Wildebeest or brindled gnu. Both of them belong to the group of antelopes of the genus

Connochaetes. Wildebeest is Dutch for “wild beast” or “wild cattle” in Afrikaans (*beeste* = cattle), while *Connochaetes* derives from the Greek words *kónnos* which means “beard”, and *khaíte* for “flowing hair” or “mane.” Some sources claim the name “gnu” originates from the Khoikhoi name for these animals: *t’gnu*. Wildebeest were first discovered about 1700 by Dutch settlers on their way to the interior of South Africa. Due to their resemblance to wild cattle, these people called them wild ox or wildebeest. The black wildebeest was first known to westerners in the northern part of South Africa a century later, in the 1800s.

Both species of wildebeest are even-toed, horned, greyish-brown ungulates resembling cattle. Males are larger than females and both have heavy forequarters compared to their hindquarters. They have broad



Up high in the tree on the tree seat.

muzzles, Roman noses, shaggy manes and tails. The most striking differences between the black and blue wildebeest are the orientation and curvature of their horns and the color of their coats. The blue wildebeest is the bigger of the two species. In males, blue wildebeest stand roughly 5-foot tall at the shoulder and weigh around 550 pound, while the black wildebeest stands up to 4-foot tall and weighs about 400 pounds. Females are slightly smaller and lighter.

The horns of blue wildebeest protrude to the side then curve downwards before curving up back towards the skull, while the horns of the black wildebeest curve forward then downward before curving upwards at the tips. Blue wildebeest tend to be a dark grey color with stripes, but may have a bluish sheen. The black wildebeest has brown-colored hair, with a mane that ranges in color from cream to black,

and a cream-colored tail.

However, for a couple of days, we tried to approach and stalk a nice old blue wildebeest bull without success and because he never came to any waterhole during the day; we decided to go for the other gnu. Within the last days, we did some intensive scouting as well and glassed 12 "Black Beester" with two good bulls in that group. So we made plans to check out this opportunity. Walk and stalk would be a great challenge, but because of the open terrain, it was tricky; within the observed Black Wildebeest group, the 12 pairs of eyes, ears, and noses realize more or less everything around them. After spooking the herd two times in my stalking approaches, we set up a mobile tree seat in a tamboti tree near the natural waterhole the Gnus frequently visited for drinking. Now, I was sitting 15-feet high in a tree roundabout 25 yards away from the waterhole. Nice spot

especially in the early morning hours when I participated the wonderful sunrise directly in front of me, but also a little bit annoying in the late afternoon and evening hours with all the culicidae, or better known as "Bloody Hell"-mosquitoes.

Nevertheless, I had nice views on some young warthogs, some ostriches, Kudu does with adolescents, and a couple of Red Hartebeester. But the Black Wildebeest did not approach – not at all.

So, for the next day, I looked forward for a new game and hopefully new opportunities.

It was early, quite cold, and dark this morning when I entered the tree seat at 5:00 o'clock in the morning.

I fixed my stuff, drew the bow as 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, the birds also 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 devilish "go away" croaking are my favorite feathered friends--get out of this tree.

Just joking, they are really funny as well as the red or yellow-beaked Toku's. But I did not want to talk only about the rich and fascinating world of Southern African birds; I was still looking for Wildebeest.

This morning the only quarry were nice sequences on my video tape and the digital camera.

At the early afternoon, I was back in the tree and fortunately at half past four the action started.

With my binoculars, I saw that around 250 yards away the Black Wildebeest group started their trail to the natural waterhole.

It's do or die now. As powered by a high-speed pump, my blood

pulsated through my veins when the gnus came closer and closer. At the same time, some blessbucks came to the water from the other side.

"Oh, not good, not good," I thought because the blessbucks would get my wind if they come behind me.

The Black Wildebeests came nearer to the water in their kittenish and sometimes crazy looking behaviour.

When they were at 55 yards, 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 Blessbucks that he and his buddies are the boss in the boxing ring. That worked--the Blessbucks buzzed off. The big bull still stood their roundabout 50 yards away facing to me--so no shooting possibility.

Will he go to the left for the waterhole or will he come closer and go around the tree I am sitting on, and I am in the awkward position that he will get my wind? The bull went forward and then to the right--oh, oh, oh--wrong direction; he will get my wind when he gets behind me. Suddenly at 30 yards, he stood still broadside for some seconds.

"That's your chance, Frank" I whispered to myself. I drew my bow quickly, sighted in on the vitals, and released the arrow.

The 125-grain Silverflame broadhead penetrated completely through the animal and the Black Wildebeest bull jumped up like a brumby that did not want to be ridden before he stomped off like a runaway train into the near bushes.

After I had realized all that, I started shaking in my treeseat and needed some minutes to calm down.

The sun was low a half an hour later when I climbed down from the stand and radioed for Gustav, and together with his German hunting terrier, we found the Black Wildebeest bull roundabout 350 yards from where I had shot him.



A happy hunter with a fantastic Black Wildebeest bull.

What an exciting bowhunt and amazing trophy. I still was impressed when I saw this interesting and unique animal lying in front of me struck down by bow and arrow. The trophy ranked in the Gold Medal evaluation according to SCI measuring. I also hunted successfully 2

Blessbucks, a very good Duiker ram, and two rabbits, but that is a different story. Thanks to all who made these special moments memorable forever!

Always, good hunting.
Frank UHM

EQUIPMENT LIST

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

Broadheads: Silverflame 125 grain

Optics: Zeiss Victory 10x40 and Leupold RX III Rangefinder

Camo: Sniper Africa