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Highly strung

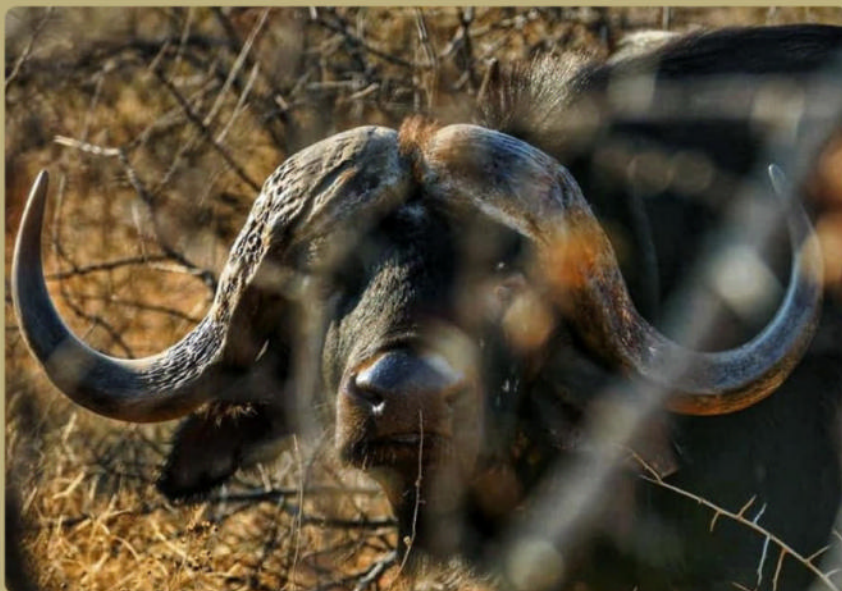
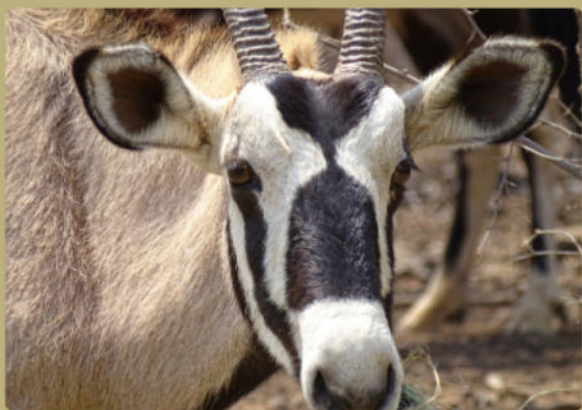
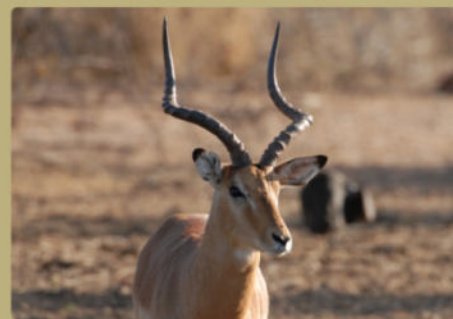
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TIME FOR CHANGE! –

The African Hunting Gazette's Membership Model

For more than 20 years, AHG's mission has remained unchanged—promoting hunting in Africa. Through those many years our subscription price has not waivered. But change we must, and I want you to understand why.

Let me dial back a few years so you have the background. In 2000 I was in California and visited the offices of the Petersen's Hunting Group, hoping to develop some sort of venture with the huge publishing house. Kevin Steele was one of the gents I met in their offices on Los Angeles' Wilshire Boulevard. As it turned out, we didn't engage in a formal partnership, but on that same visit I picked up a copy of a publication I fell in love with, the *Double Gun Journal*. Even back then their subscription price was \$50; their cover price was \$12.95. I decided that *African Hunting Gazette* should follow their model.

Magazines have two primary customers, readers and advertisers. Through these past 20 plus years we have had several loyal advertisers whose support we've sincerely appreciated. It's no secret, however, that the advertising industry has experienced material change of late, and that some have moved away from print. Our readers, meanwhile, have remained consistently loyal through the years. They want to hold a magazine. And to be able to give them that magazine, we need to adapt to the changing times.

I'm not sure whether some advertisers recognize just how much our readers love this magazine. Or maybe we simply haven't done a good enough job with our print magazine and monthly digital publication to attract their investment. Maybe it's a combination of the two. Either way, what's unavoidable is that we must respond to skyrocketing production and distribution costs in the printed publication world.

Against this backdrop, interest in and demand for great content seems to continually grow. In response, three years ago we launched our monthly digital publication, the *AHG Monthly*. Not surprisingly, almost 50% of the recipients read it each month, a nearly unheard-of open rate. Yet, despite their appreciation for our monthly digital magazine, and in an ever-toughening advertising environment, readers continue to demand the printed, quarterly magazine.

Our only solution is to adapt or die, as Charles Darwin told us. The *Double Gun Journal* did not adapt and, as fine a publication as it was, it is out of business today.

While I've stayed in touch with Kevin Steele over these past 23 years, it wasn't until this past July that he was my guest at Afton Safari Lodge. Our visit seemed a

fitting reminder, given the above warning, that we have no option other than to roll out the necessary changes and ask readers to pay for what they want. Moving forward, *African Hunting Gazette* will be offering more value, getting back on track, and ensuring that we deliver exactly what you signed up for.

Thank you for your continued support and interest. You have my commitment that we will do everything we can to keep promoting the excitement and wonder that is hunting in Africa, and will continue providing great content intended to ensure you remain informed and entertained as you dream about, and plan for, your next hunt on the Dark Continent. 🦋

Regards

Richard Lendrum –

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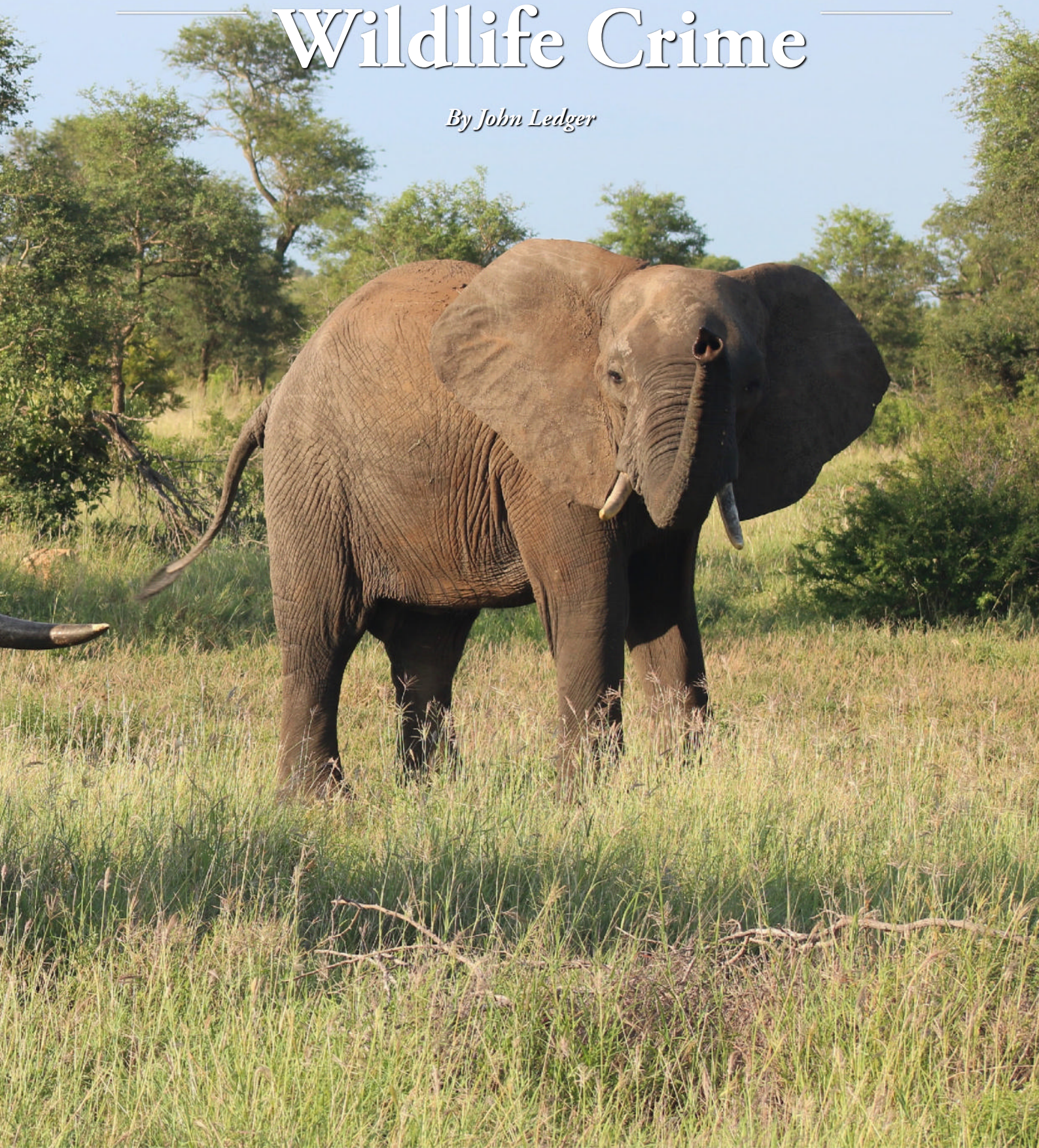
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Namibia Addresses Wildlife Crime

By John Ledger



Wildlife crime continues to evolve. Namibia continues to adapt. As a nation, we possess great pride in our natural resources. When threats to wildlife populations and other environmental resources escalate, we respond to defend our natural heritage. The year 2022 saw the most rhinos poached in our country since 2015, when the first major poaching wave in independent Namibia peaked. We were able to rebut that initial assault, and we are implementing a range of innovative responses to the current spike.



These words are from the opening paragraphs of Namibia's Wildlife Crime Report for 2022. You can find the full report here: https://n-c-e.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/Namibia_National-Report_Wildlife-Protection_2022_F_re1_online_230602_1.pdf

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This report should be of interest to our readers who would like to know how African countries are dealing with the threats to their wildlife resources. Namibia leads the continent in its progressive attitude to wildlife management, and to the sustainable

use of wildlife as a financial asset to rural communities. Many hunters have had the pleasure of trips to Namibia where the spectacular landscapes, abundant game, friendly people and excellent facilities have provided an outstanding experience. The communal conservancies in the country have demonstrated how wildlife can be a viable alternative to livestock when it is allowed to derive its full value in the marketplace.

In Namibia, eco-tourism flourishes alongside subsistence and conservation hunting to create a sustainable wildlife economy that benefits the communities who share their land with wild animals, and biodiversity protection falls effectively into place in natural habitats that are not disturbed by the cow and

the plough. If the futile and ineffective CITES bans on trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn were removed, allowing the full value of these wildlife products to be realised, the nature-based economy of rural Namibia would be far more viable than it already is. If the time and money spent on pursuing and prosecuting elephant and rhino poachers was spent on managing a legal trade in ivory and rhino horn, the country would certainly consolidate its place as the continent's leader in demonstrating that a wildlife-based economy is both viable and desirable.

Given that (for now) African countries are forced to bear the yoke of the CITES constraints, this report from Namibia is an outstanding example to other countries on the continent about how

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to address wildlife crime. Dr Chris Brown, CEO of the Namibia Chamber of Environment writes:

“This is a very thorough and comprehensive report from three key agencies working closely together – MEFT, Namibian Police and the Office of the Prosecutor, but it also embraces a far broader group of collaborators and partners both within Namibia and internationally, ranging from government agencies, communities, NGOs, private sector, donors and international law enforcement agencies. You would be hard-pressed to find any other country in the world that produces such a comprehensive, data-rich, transparent, and professional annual report on their wildlife crime situation. The agencies involved, and their supporting organisations, must be heartily congratulated.”

[MEFT is the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism].

This excellent report is packed with comprehensive statistics, graphs, and interesting data. There is also some fascinating discussion on how wildlife crime should be approached in a country such as Namibia, with its diverse populations and widely divergent socio-economic status of various individuals involved in wildlife crime. On the one hand the courts may have to deal with a poor rural dweller who has killed an animal to provide meat for his starving family. On the other, we find in court a member of a wealthy, greedy criminal syndicate only interested in making as much money as possible from the illegal trade in wildlife and plants. Should both be punished equally under the law?

The conservation-conscious public often demands extreme punishment for wildlife-crime perpetrators. Yet crimes are committed with varying motivations that depend on the circumstances of the accused and many other factors. Wildlife cases may differ significantly in their seriousness and complexity. The interests of an urban, conservation-conscious society may be far removed from the realities of rural communities surviving on subsistence agriculture. What is a just verdict and an appropriate sentence?

The prime achievement reported is the decline in elephant poaching, while the low points are the increase in killing of rhinos and pangolins and the removal of rare succulent plants for the international trade, fuelled by wealthy collectors of these unusual Namibia floral assets.



Status update – elephant protection in Namibia

During 2022, records of both elephant poaching and ivory trafficking were at their lowest levels in Namibia for the past six years. Cases related to elephants made up less than ten per cent of all wildlife cases registered. Namibia's elephant population remains at its highest for the past 150 years and is currently not under severe threat from wildlife crime, although vulnerabilities undoubtedly exist. Since 2016, the presence of national security forces in state parks has reduced poaching impacts significantly. The Namibian elephant population of around 24,000 animals can be divided into four partly interlinked subpopulations, which have different vulnerabilities.

The largest sub-population of around 15,000 animals occurs in the Kavango

East and Zambezi regions. This transboundary population spends part of its time in neighbouring countries. The animals can thus be targeted by poachers in Angola, Botswana, Zambia and Namibia, which significantly increases their vulnerability, even if current poaching losses in Namibia are very low. The elephants of Khaudum National Park and adjoining community conservancies in both the Kavango East and Otjozondjupa regions have increased significantly in recent decades, facilitated by protection and permanent water in the park. Khaudum is the most inaccessible national park in Namibia and poaching has not yet impacted this population.

At present, the elephants of Etosha National Park are not being targeted by ivory poachers. This population is considered to be at carrying capacity

for the park and has remained relatively stable in recent years. The animals are extremely calm and are one of the park's primary attractions. The elephant population of the Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area can be divided into the desert-adapted elephants living in marginal elephant habitat on the fringes of the Namib Desert, and those roaming the Elephant Highlands above the Great Namibian Escarpment. Limited ivory poaching has occurred here but has not impacted the overall population.

Human-elephant conflict is currently a bigger issue than poaching for elephant conservation in Namibia. Most of the country's elephant ranges are at – or above – carrying capacities, as animals and humans share limited land and resources. This is particularly relevant for the elephants of the Kavango East



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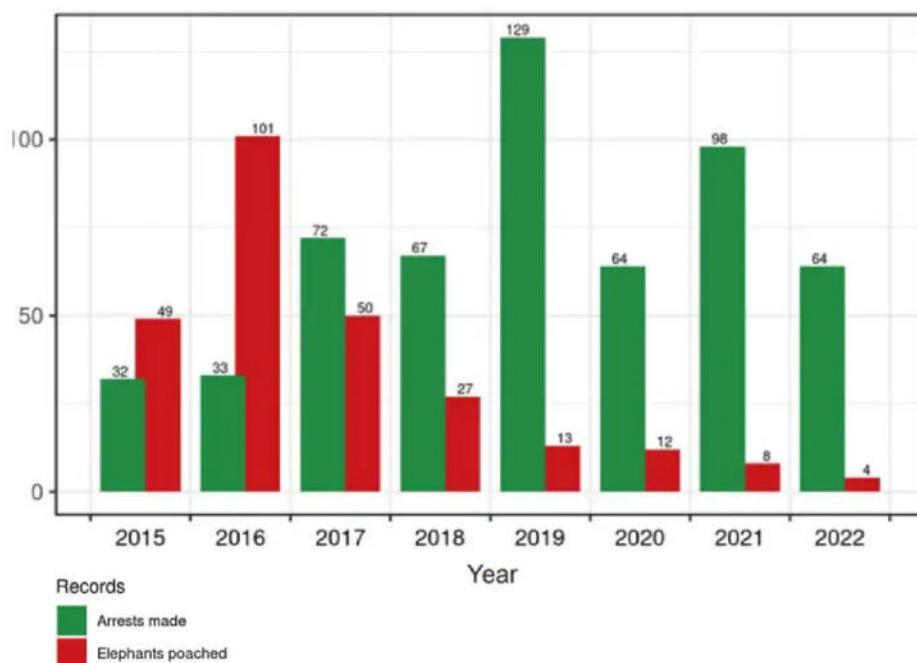
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and Zambezi regions. The viability of the wildlife movement corridors that have been designated in the Zambezi Region, where human settlement and land use are relatively high, is vital for the health of the large population, which needs to be able to move seasonally between Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Angola to remain viable. Human-elephant conflict around Khaudum National Park is a problem for this population, especially on the western boundary of the park, where livestock farming and localised cropping are pressing right up to the park boundary. Persistent drought in northwestern Namibia is affecting elephant populations here, compounded by human-elephant conflicts, particularly in the Elephant Highlands, where elephant and people numbers are the highest.

Number of elephants poached vs. arrest made per year



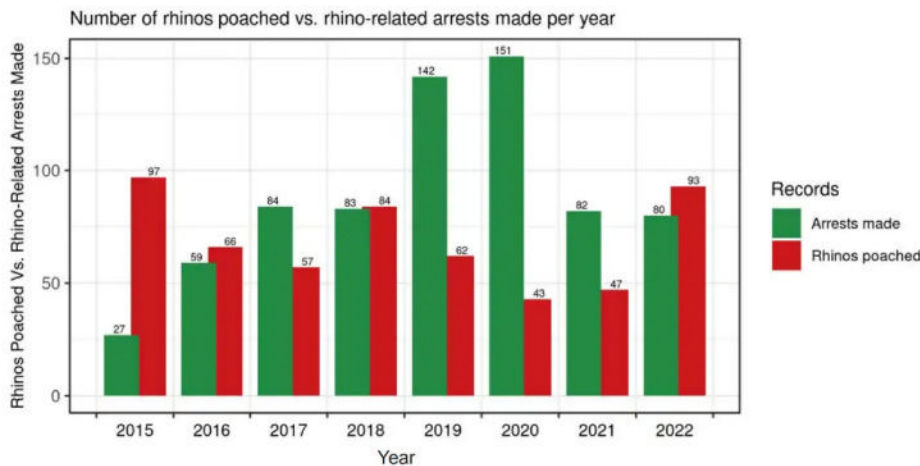
Status update – rhino protection in Namibia

Rhino poaching represents the most complex current wildlife-protection challenge in Namibia. Rhino horn has such a high value that the long, treacherous path from killing a rhino, cutting off its horns, smuggling these out of the source country and along a convoluted trade route to the consumer far away on another continent can be smoothened from end to end with money - with small wads of cash and equipment supplies for the rhino killers and their aiders and abettors, and diverse payments, presents and bribes for middlemen and colluders all along the passage. The lure of cash will keep the poachers coming. This is organised crime – criminal gang activity, racketeering and money laundering on a large scale. In the face of such a relentless onslaught, it is impossible to completely protect all rhinos, all the time, within Namibia's vast, thinly populated landscapes, where rhino ranges are scattered around the country in state and private reserves, as well as community conservation areas. Highly motivated rhino rangers in community conservation areas, supported by national security personnel, have been the most effective at limiting poaching losses.

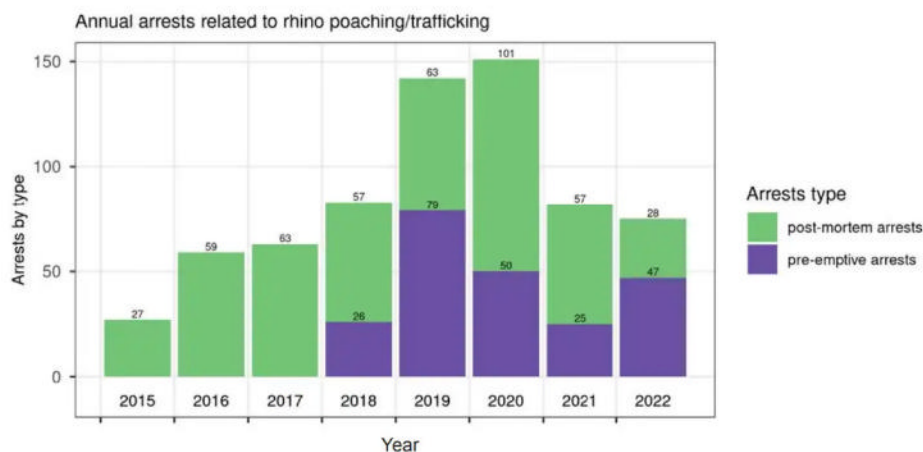
Some carcasses of poached animals are found only months or even years after

the incident, and some may not be found at all. Poaching of rhino cows that have a calf often leads to the loss of the calf. The number of animals known to have been killed by poachers is thus an underestimate of actual losses. An assessment by CITES has concluded that annual poaching losses in Africa must remain below 3.6 per cent of the population for continental rhino numbers to grow. The losses suffered in Namibia in 2022 still represent less than three per cent of the national population of around 3,500 animals. Yet the Namibian population occurs in fragmented sub-populations and the percentage of losses it can withstand is likely to be lower than the CITES figure. Under these circumstances, rhino protection needs to become a highly effective combination of stringent antipoaching and rhino-security measures, pro-active law enforcement that prioritises pre-emptive arrests, and swift apprehension of those who manage to poach – and finally effective prosecutions resulting in stern deterrent sentences.

Rhino protection and rhino-crime prosecutions are currently the biggest challenges – a high number of suspects in rhino crimes are being arrested, but far too few are being convicted and served with deterrent sentences. It must be noted however, that inadequate investigations have led to the acquittal of suspects in some cases. Rhino protection is being improved through a range of interventions. Special Courts dedicated to hearing wildlife cases have proven highly effective in reducing the backlog of cases on the court roll, as well as delivering appropriate deterrent sentences. Similar courts focused specifically on rhino cases should be initiated as a matter of urgency to reverse the currently extremely low rate of case finalisation, as well as the low annual conviction rate.



One encouraging development has been the number of pre-emptive arrests that have prevented rhinos from being killed; this is the result of very good information-collection and intelligence at grass-roots level in Namibia.



Status update – pangolin protection in Namibia

Pangolins currently rank second behind rhinos amongst the most-targeted high-value species in Namibia in terms of the number of cases registered in 2022, yet the drivers of the trade in Namibia are complex and at least partly fuelled by misperceptions regarding local demand. Arrests and seizures consist almost exclusively of cases where products are offered for sale to undercover law-enforcement personnel. Pangolin products are very rarely seized in other circumstances, such as customs searches at border posts. Pangolin seizures dropped significantly during 2022, and were 54 per cent lower than in 2021 and 69.2 per cent lower than the peak experienced in 2019. Active law enforcement and substantial deterrent sentences, particularly those imposed by the Special Courts held in 2022 are believed to have contributed to this. Importantly, it is not known how many pangolins are being successfully smuggled out of Namibia. Current information suggests that this ratio is low, but more research is needed, including tracing pangolin-product origins and trade routes through DNA analyses of pangolins and pangolin products in source, transit and end-market countries. DNA data is being collected in Namibia to enable

this, but must be matched with data from transit and end-market countries to establish the presence and extent of international trade. An international initiative to facilitate such analyses is currently underway.

Live animals make up a substantial portion of pangolin seizures, reaching close to 40 per cent of all seizures in some years. While it was initially believed that the majority of pangolins seized alive could be safely released back into the wild, post-release monitoring has shown that pangolin rehabilitation is complex and mortalities can be very high, reaching over 50 per cent in hard releases (i.e. where no rehabilitation is done prior to release). While exact mortality rates are currently not available, due to some monitoring-tag failures and other limiting factors, it has become clear that more careful rehabilitation must be prioritised to enable better survival rates.

Wildlife crime is just one of diverse threats facing pangolins in Namibia. Road kills are recorded intermittently, and electric fences, particularly those erected on small-stock farms to protect sheep and goats against jackal and caracal, are resulting in significant pangolin mortalities. Deaths from these causes may currently be higher than those inflicted by wildlife crime (electric fences also kill tortoises and other vulnerable small creatures). Electric fences are believed to have largely eradicated pangolins from some commercial small-stock farming areas in southeastern Namibia in recent years. The increasingly common electric boundary fences of game reserves and national parks, installed to keep wildlife in, also pose a threat to pangolins, but can usually be erected in a way that minimises mortalities amongst small wildlife. This however requires active awareness creation and very specific fence installation, where the lowest

electric wire is at a height that avoids pangolin electrocutions.

Namibia is home to a diversity of rare and endemic succulent plants (plants with thick, fleshy leaves or stems for storing water). Two key centres of plant endemism are found in Namibia, one in the northwest (extending into southern Angola) and one in the southwest (extending into northern South Africa), which are likely to be increasingly threatened by transboundary crime, especially via South Africa. Numerous rare and endemic species occur in more localised settings across other parts of the country.

Succulents are often small, with unusual growth forms and unique features, which makes them extremely popular as ornamental plants in homes and gardens. Worldwide demand for ornamental plants has exploded

in recent years, driven in part by the Internet, which enables easy connectivity to markets across the globe while incurring a low risk of being apprehended. In the past three years, the volume of plant material seized in South Africa increased by more than 250 per cent and it is believed that some rare species have been poached to extinction in that country. Instances of plants being actively harvested in southern Namibia by criminals entering from South Africa have been recorded, with some arrests having been achieved and large numbers of plants seized. It is feared that in the vast spaces of southern Namibia, extensive plant poaching may be going unnoticed.

The Namibian government authorities are frustrated by the time it takes for wildlife crime arrests to result in prosecutions and convictions. Due

to economic headwinds left by the Covid pandemic and problems related to population and underemployment, general crime is on the increase and the courts are congested, with cases involving wildlife being bogged down with the rest. The implementation of special courts to deal with wildlife crime have been rather successful, and more of these are recommended by the report.

Timber, abalone, carnivores and reptiles also feature in Namibia's natural resource crime landscape, and the report contains many more details than can be included in this brief article. I am sure readers will join me in congratulating Namibia for its exemplary reporting of the challenges the country faces and the measures that are being implemented to protect the wildlife resources that are the shared heritage and wealth of all its citizens.

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Dr Chris Brown:

The report highlights the following observations: "Criminals are members of the public – when the public is vigilant and reports suspicious behaviour and openly condemns all crime, criminal activities become very difficult" and "Crime becomes near impossible when good people from all sectors work together to fight it." It is clear that the current adaptive, responsive and transparent approach is the right one. We just need to continue to strengthen and support it.

Dr John Ledger is a past Director of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, now a consultant, writer and teacher on the environment, energy and wildlife. He lives in Johannesburg, South Africa.
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perks. In addition, private game ranches constitute an estimated 13% of the country and are the backbone of a healthy and expanding trophy hunting industry.

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What Do You Do with a **WARTHOG IN A CAVE?**

By Ricardo Leone

This past January 2023 at the DSC Show, I was reunited with my professional hunter, Gamshad Gam, from a memorable Tanzanian Safari, nearly a decade ago. We had not seen each other nor talked since October 2013. As we sat in his booth to catch up on our respective life events, we reminisced about our unforgettable warthog chase. There are some things you just cannot make up! What do you do with a warthog in a cave?

This was only on my second African hunting safari – I was still climbing a steep learning curve. We were in the Kizigo Hunting Block in Tanzania, and it had been a hard trip to date with rough living. It was Day 10 of our 12-day safari, and I still had a warthog on my wish list. I really wanted to take one – so much so that when I had an opportunity at 8:30 that morning, I rushed a shot on a running warthog and missed.

Now it was game on – I needed to find another one. This was my sole goal for the remaining three days. Luckily, within the next thirty minutes, we had found another worthy warthog. This one was about 100 yards away off to our right. We were driving in a dried riverbed, so the pig was slightly above us up on a ridge. Gamshad had me steady my rifle on the cab of the Land Cruiser for the rising shot. I quickly took aim and shot. I knew the moment

I fired that I had pulled the gun to the right. Sure enough, I hit the warthog in the back leg or foot. It spun around and ran back behind the vehicle and away from us. While I was sure it was not happy about its foot, it could still motor along. Everyone got off the Land Cruiser except our driver, Mushi, and we started what was going to be a very long stalk.

I shot this second warthog at approximately 9 a.m. The injured animal ran onto a rocky area, so while it was not great for leaving tracks, we were still able to pick up a blood trail. The heat of the day intensified shortly after that and was relentless until late afternoon. For the next two hours we tracked the warthog in the open sun – at times it seemed we were going in circles. I really admired the trackers – between intermittent tracks and blood drops we were able to keep on the warthog's never-ending winding trail.

We surmised from the tracks that I must have shot the warthog's foot.

By 11 a.m. we were exhausted from the heat - or at least I was. We all took a break to rest in the shade and have some water. One of the trackers went back for Mushi and the Land Cruiser so we could have a snack from the cooler – we needed a source of energy. After a thirty to forty-five minutes break, it was time to resume tracking. We assumed the warthog was also resting somewhere – we just had to bump him.

Shortly after we restarted tracking, the government scout and a junior tracker believed they had found the warthog in a burrow. The two of them were in front of the rest of us. Gamshad and the senior tracker were trying to signal to the scout and junior tracker to just sit tight. But while the scout and junior tracker should have known better than to provoke the hiding warthog, they either could not hear

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The cave opening halfway up the rock outcrop.

Gamshad or were just caught up in the moment. I was just behind them, and Gamshad and the senior tracker were just behind me – we were spread out covering as much ground as possible.

Before you knew it, the warthog literally jumped straight up out of the burrow into the air. I could see it swing its head right, then left, trying to gore the scout and junior tracker with its tusks while making a noise that sounded part snort part roar. The two men leapt back as I shouldered my gun. I had a clear shot of the warthog but could not fire because of the proximity of the scout and tracker. While clearly an exciting moment, we were also frustrated with the two men for not being patient and taking advantage of their find. We all just sat back and watched the warthog run a few hundred yards out of the grassland straight towards a rock outcrop where it seemed to disappear into the center of it. It was now well after noon.

It took a good 30 minutes to regroup and make our way to the rocks and cave. As we approached, the environment changed from the extreme heat of the open bush to a partially shaded rocky

area that was, thankfully, cooler. I really appreciated the shade as I sat there and finished my sandwich. The crew was totally focused on their lunch and had forgotten about our mission. Mushi arrived just past 3 p.m. and lunchtime ended abruptly as it was time to answer the question of what to

do with a warthog in a cave.

It was not your usual vertical cave, the kind you can walk into. This one was horizontal, only two to three feet high and twenty or more feet wide, the entrance about halfway up the rock outcrop. The roof of the cave looked almost suspended in the air. We had to

The last wisps of smoke after our failed effort to smoke the warthog out of the cave.





Gamshad and Tracker deciding how to enter the cave.

climb up a good ten-foot slope to it. Judging by all the old bones we found just outside the entrance, the cave was likely home to predators. On the rocks above the cave several hyraxes just sat watching us for a while. Then, in the blink of an eye, they were gone. I think if they had known of the forthcoming entertainment, they would have stayed to watch the antics.

Although we assumed the warthog

was in there, we could not see into the cave. I cannot recall whose idea it was, but either Gamshad or our tracker came up with the idea to light a fire in the cave's entrance and smoke the warthog out. The crew assembled a firepit on the ground below the cave and started a fire. They cut down leaf-covered saplings, lit the leaves, and tried to stuff the burning saplings into the cave without the fire going out.

Gamshad inspecting the cave and "making a plan."



Gamshad positioned me at one corner of the cave's mouth looking across the entrance and asked me to sit ready with my rifle in hand for when the warthog ran out.

Well, so much for a grand plan. The smoke found its way into everyone's eyes, except the warthog's, and the saplings burned out without the warthog, or anything else for that matter, exiting the cave.

It was now past 2 p.m., five hours after our first sighting of this warthog. And if the warthog was not coming out – then we had to go in. However, we had a problem - we could not find a torch in the Land Cruiser. Gamshad sent our driver, Mushi, back to camp to retrieve both a torch and a rope. Mushi's drive would take at least an hour. In the meantime, as the firepit still had embers – the crew decided it was time for lunch.

I was not really in an eating mood. However, I had to do something to pass the time as no one else was interested in my warthog at that moment. While the crew settled in to cook a hot meal, I grabbed a sandwich from the cooler and found a rock to sit on to reflect on the events of the day.

Eventually Mushi returned with a large torch and a long winch strap. It seemed we had all the equipment for the extraction. Gamshad sent one of the crew into the cave with the torch to have a look. The unfortunate tracker slid in on his side and quickly retreated to tell Gamshad the layout. He explained that the warthog was in the cave lying still in the back corner. Gamshad then sent the same tracker back in with the torch to keep the light on the warthog. Gamshad grabbed his rifle and started to slide in. He quickly retreated, asking for my rifle as I had a red dot in my scope and his scope did not. Gamshad later explained he could not see with his scope and needed my illuminated dot to aim at the warthog. The irony was that my rifle, a 1960's classic Griffin & Howe pre-64, model



Our ten-year reunion – a real pleasure to spend time with an exceptional PH.

70 .375 H&H, was going to finish the mission while I was asked to stand down for safety reasons. Trust me, the thought of a bullet ricocheting around the cave did cross my mind. I did not vigorously complain about being relegated to spectator. Gamshad grabbed his ear protectors – something the tracker did not have - and off Gamshad went again, sliding in on his side. The rest of us stood back and plugged our ears for what was sure to

be a sonic BOOM!

Within a few seconds Gamshad fired – the noise was thunderous, and dust billowed out of the cave. Gamshad crawled out backwards with a smile on his face saying, “We have our pig.” A few seconds after Gamshad exited the cave, the tracker came out – poor chap had dust all over his face and body and he was shaking his head trying to stop his ears from ringing. He grabbed the winch strap and went back into the cave to tie

one end to the warthog. Now, seven hours after I made the initial bad shot, the warthog was finally pulled out of the cave. After a thorough photo session, our exhausting warthog hunt was complete. This was a true team effort.

Meanwhile, everything in the Land Cruiser had been emptied out – it seemed we had set up a new camp in front of the cave. Even the firepit was still smoldering. It was time to pack up the Land Cruiser, load the warthog and head back to camp. We made it back before the other hunting party returned from their afternoon game drive. I showered, sat by the campfire, and sipped a gin and tonic as I continued to reflect on the day, trying to organize my racing thoughts into a concise story – one I could share over sundowners. I was not sure if this was going to be an embarrassing story or a fantastic hunting story – the truth was somewhere in the middle.

In the end, the warthog was the last trophy of my very successful safari. The last two days of our safari ended up being exclusively a photo safari – no more game worthy of giving chase, but plenty to admire. In hindsight, the warthog hunt was a fitting end to what was a very hard, yet successful 12-day hunt, as I bagged everything on my wish list – even my first pig in a way that you just cannot make up!

A relieved hunter with Gamshad still wearing his ear protectors.





A Safari to REMEMBER

By Lavon Winkler

It was a slow and tedious process where each step was carefully taken, and stealth was of utmost importance. After moving quietly in what seemed an eternity, Rhuan and Jackson settled in at the base of a tree where they would be well concealed and could better monitor the activity of the herd. With the thick bush and the herd being wary, this cat-and-mouse game seemed like it could go on for hours.

I love Africa. There is just no way better to summarize how I feel about each opportunity to hunt Africa. When I step off the airplane, I know every day will be an adventure in this very special and enchanting land. With each visit, memories are made that last a lifetime and each day is filled with expectation of something new and exciting. Although my wife Lora and I had traveled to the Dark Continent several times, this was a very special visit because, joining us for their first visit to Africa were our daughter Katie Yingling, her husband John, and their awesome teenagers (Jackson, Joy, and Jocelyn). Our first week was a photo safari to Kruger National Park.

On arrival at Johannesburg late in the afternoon we were greeted by a representative of the Afton Safari Lodge who escorted us through the airport and cleared our two rifles through the South African Police (SAP). Thanks to the assistance from Afton, this entire process only took a few minutes until we were on the short shuttle ride to their lodge. We quickly settled into our rooms and soon were enjoying a magnificent steak dinner and drinks around the fire. Afton is by far the best way to transition after a long transatlantic flight. After a good night's rest, we were off on our Kruger adventure.

As it was Yingling's first visit to Africa, Lora and I wanted it to be major event for the entire family, and we knew we could depend upon Rhuan Barnard and the Thwane Safaris Africa team to make this an amazing experience for everyone. Unsurprisingly, they far exceeded our expectations! We saw more than 26 species and 2,000 animals and did so while avoiding all the congested traffic that is typically associated with touring Kruger. Rhuan and his team (PH Armond and professional chef Joel) were beyond professional, attending to our every need and then some.

After four days in Kruger, we traveled to the Thwane Safari Africa's hunting concession in Northern Limpopo



Three generations of hunters: Jackson Yingling with his father John and author's grandpa. The beginning of big-game hunting for this young hunter.

where our group stayed two nights in the very comfortable and beautiful Kwenia Lodge. On offer were game drives, petting cheetahs, some hunting, incredible cuisine, and a special birthday celebration for Katie. Jackson, my eldest grandson's hunting in the United States was only for upland game and waterfowl, so a highlight of this safari experience was that while the entire family was at Thwane, Jackson, his father John, and I

would do some hunting with Rhuan to see if Jackson could take his first big-game animal with his father present. We checked the rifles to ensure they had not taken too many bumps and bruises in the long flight from the States, and after a quick firing test and a slight windage modification to the .243 Win, we were ready.

We each get only one "first safari" in Africa, so we concentrated on Jackson's

Jackson and grandpa with Jackson's beautiful wildebeest taken toward the end of the safari.



wish list of animals that included warthog, wildebeest, and impala. His "maybe list" was a kudu, blesbok, and baboon. My list was simply for crocodile, red lechwe, and civet. Because Jackson's father would only be with us one evening and the next morning, finding that "first animal" could be a challenge. Rhuan's advice was that we keep our eyes and ears open for anything on Jackson's list and said that impala would likely give us the best chance of success while his dad was there to share in the experience. With that understanding, we began our search.

This hunt was in Northern Limpopo in August following a very heavy rainy season. While a typical August would be characterized by most of the leaves having fallen from the trees, the opposite was true. Most of the trees were heavily leafed which greatly shortened our sight distances. To add to the challenge, we were approaching the time of a "super moon" when most animals would likely move more at night than during the day. Hunting conditions this year could best be described as, "now you seem them and now you don't." Hunting at Thwane is always the most rewarding of my experiences in South Africa, but this was by far the most challenging hunting conditions I had experienced in the Limpopo Province.

I was excited to be a part of introducing Jackson to big-game hunting especially on the Dark Continent, and Jackson was both excited and apprehensive about it. In his home state of South Carolina, he competes at an impressively high level at both the regional and state level for competitive shotgun (skeet, trap, 5-stand, and sporting clays), so effectively handling a shotgun was not a concern. A centerfire rifle used on big game, however, was a new experience and he questioned his ability to transition to it, especially as he respects wildlife and believes in effective flora and fauna conservation.

While impala seem to be so plentiful when game viewing or hunting in South Africa, when you really want a nice



Upon seeing this amazing nyala, Jackson decided to save the kudu for the next safari.

one to present a shot opportunity, they seem illusive. The Thwane Safaris Africa concession in South Africa is a generous 14,000 acres. That first evening we drove and drove looking for a trophy impala Jackson could pursue. After a few hours and covering a couple of thousand acres, we caught a glimpse of a small herd of impala in the dense bush. We drove past the herd, then left the vehicle and started a slow stalk back to where we first saw them. Once there, John and I stayed behind and Rhuan and Jackson continued their stalk. It was a slow and tedious process where every step was carefully taken, and stealth was of utmost importance. After moving quietly in what seemed an eternity, Rhuan and Jackson settled in at the base of a tree where they would be well concealed and could better monitor the activity of the herd. With the thick bush and the herd being wary, this “cat and mouse” game seemed like it could go on for hours.

Patience is often a necessity in hunting, and this was one of those times. It would be a real test for a 17-year-old first-time safari hunter, and we watched from afar as Jackson and Rhuan took time for a shot opportunity, with Rhuan coaching Jackson patiently, getting him ready for the monumental moment in his big-

game hunt. The old ram moved slowly a few inches at a time, eventually exposing part of his chest. Finally, Jackson went onto the sticks and squeezed the trigger of the Browning High Safari .30-06. The animal darted to the side only to travel 30 yards before collapsing. Jackson had shown the poise of an experienced hunter and had made a perfect shot in a difficult situation.

Jackson with his blesbok. One shot off the sticks at 200 yards!



We honored him with the centuries-old rite of “bleeding,” a social ritual that initiates newcomers to the hunting ranks. This practice varies widely, and usually involves a parent or senior member of the hunting party (in Jackson’s case Rhuan Barnard) taking blood from a hunter’s first kill and applying it to the hunter’s face. This traces back to the 700s A.D. as a tribute to St. Hubert, the Patron Saint of Hunting. Later in the week an SCI Official Measurer verified that Jackson’s first big-game trophy would go into the SCI Record Book as a gold level impala. What a very special experience that Jackson, his father and I will cherish for a lifetime. A family historical moment with three generations of hunters in the bush of Africa.

Two nights later everyone in our group returned to the United States except for Jackson and me. We stayed another week and I enjoyed hunting with him and seeing the gradual transformation from bird hunter to a novice big-game hunter with greater knowledge and maturity.

As the week unfolded, Jackson took a trophy wildebeest, a cull wildebeest (as bait for my crocodile hunt) an additional cull impala, a beautiful mature gold level



Jackson and Rhuan literally riding off into the African sunset on the last evening of the safari.

nyala bull and a very impressive blesbok. I got my crocodile and a nice red lechwe. The time we spent together was priceless - tracking through the bush, sitting in a hide, sharing great meals, and telling stories in the evening around the fire.

Introduce a young person to hunting. Make it about them and their experiences. Watch them grow and learn. It can be one of the greatest gifts you can give them, and it passes our centuries-old tradition of hunting to the next generation. Hunting raises our awareness of that which is important in life and motivates hunters to become better engaged in conservation.

I can't wait to hunt with Jackson again. In fact, we are already planning our next hunt!

A safari hunter is born. Africa will forever be calling Jackson to return.



Jackson after the "blooding" ceremony. It was such an honor to be with him as he entered the realm of big-game hunting.

Year of the hunt and hunting dates: **August 7 – 13, 2022**

Country where hunt occurred: **South Africa**

Hunting area, ranch or concession name: **Northern Limpopo – Thwane Safaris Africa**

Outfitter and satisfaction rating: **Thwane Safaris Africa - Excellent Rating**

Professional hunter and satisfaction rating: **Rhuan Barnard - Excellent Rating**

Rifle and cartridge details and satisfaction rating: **Browning High Safari 30-06 - Excellent rating**

Ammunition and bullet details and satisfaction rating: **Hornady Superformance - GMX 180gr. - Excellent Rating**

Riflescope details and satisfaction rating: **Leupold VX-III 4.5-14x40 CDS – Excellent Rating**

Taxidermist and satisfaction rating (only if you have received your trophies) – **Jim Rice, Cutting Edge Taxidermy – Excellent Rating (past experience from multiple safaris)**

Lavon Winkler, retired executive, grew up in Northeast Missouri and was introduced to hunting at the age of ten by his father. Although most of his hunting has been in the United States, he has hunted multiple times in South Africa and New Zealand and plans to expand his international hunting experience. Lavon is a Life Member of the following: National Rifle Association, Safari Club International, Kansas City SCI Chapter, and the African Hunting Gazette. 🇳🇬

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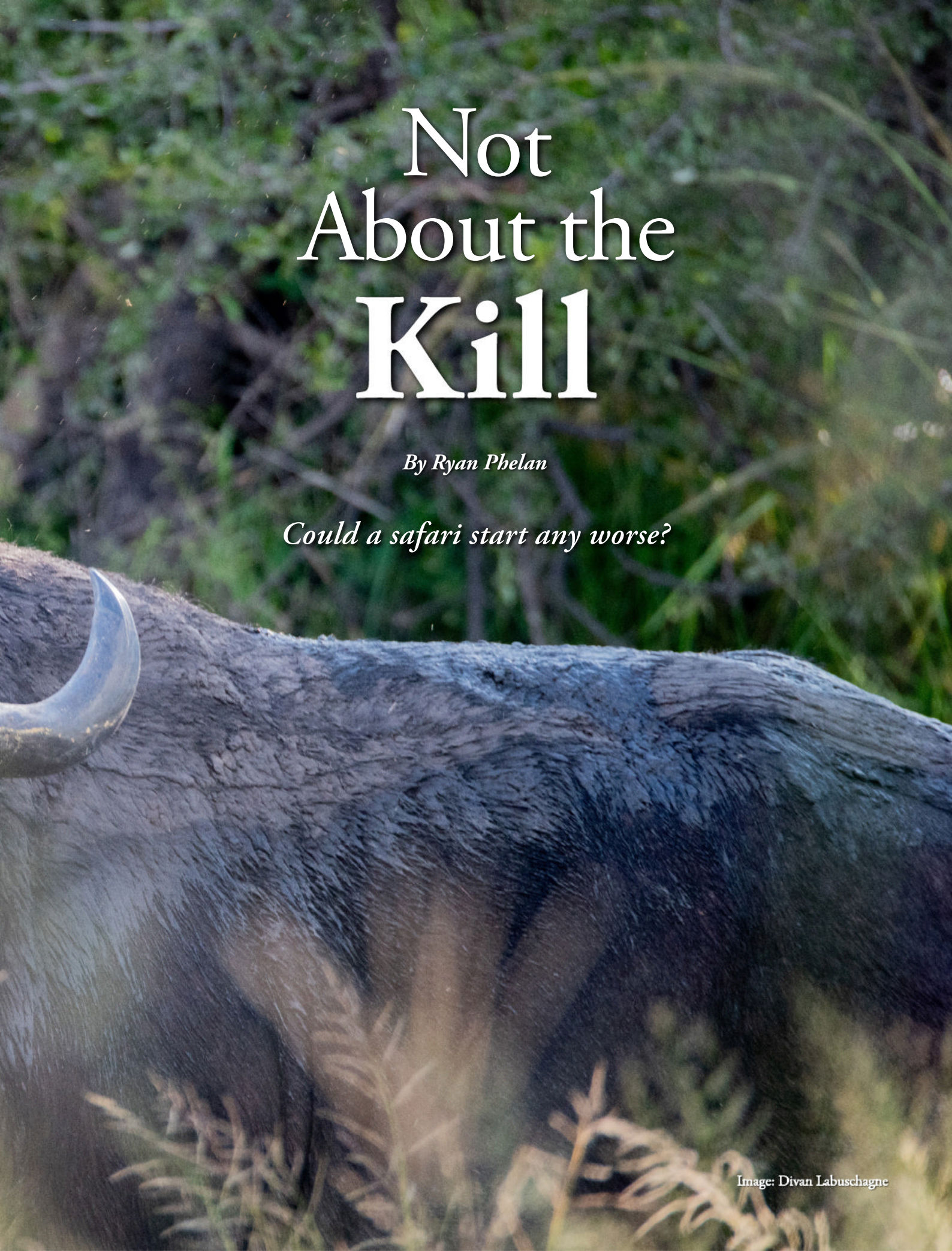
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Not About the Kill

By Ryan Phelan

Could a safari start any worse?

On the hunt

We were told, at the Beitbridge border post between South Africa and Zimbabwe, that His Excellency, the President of Zimbabwe, was attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony, and, in true African style, there were strict instructions that no guns would be allowed into the country until 11 p.m. that night. It was 10 a.m.!

We had travelled 1500 kilometers and still had a four-hour drive to the hunting camp, so, in order to ease the pain on our friend and client of twelve years, we decided to leave the three rifles in a lock-up and proceed to the hunting camp. Our spirits picked up when we turned off the main surfaced road between Beitbridge and Masvingo and started to drop into the Limpopo Valley. A cold beer consumed under the spreading arms of a giant baobab tree got us into 'swinging safari' mood.

At the hunting camp, in a lovely setting on the banks of the Nuanetsi River (now known as Mwenezi in Zimbabwe), the supplies were unpacked and, cold beer in hand, we discussed the plans for the next day.

We were in the Campfire portion of the Sengwe Safari Area to hunt buffalo for seven days. The Sengwe, in southeastern Zimbabwe, is bordered by Mozambique to the east and South Africa to the south.

All agreed that driving back to the border post for the rifles and returning to camp in the dead of the night would be foolish. They, however, felt that it was quite reasonable that I should get up early the next morning, head back to the border post, get the rifles and return to camp while they relaxed and made plans for hunting the buffalo.

The camp was a welcome sight after a long, uneventful trip to pick up the 9.3x62, .375H&H and .458 Win. Patrick and Bruce had meanwhile done a scouting walk down the Nuanetsi River to the Mozambique border, notching up some first-time bird species sightings, such as the Eastern Nicator. They also



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Lunch of champions, under Nyala Berry tree.

saw places where elephant had recently dug for water in the dry riverbed, but no sign of buffalo.

Distances in this large communal hunting area, dotted with villages, were too great to attempt to hunt that afternoon. We therefore enjoyed a leisurely afternoon spotting new bird species and chatting around the fire under the large jackalberry trees.

Our local PH and outfitter broke the news that we would be departing camp at 3.30 a.m. to get to the banks of the Limpopo to look for buffalo. Wow, that was an early start. Pat and I decided that 2.30 a.m. would be a fine time for a cup of coffee and some chats around the fire.

Bruce, our client, had barely surfaced and was on his second sip of coffee at 3.05 a.m. when our PH strolled past.

"Okay let's go," he stated casually.

So much for 3.30 a.m. In Africa, 'you have the watches, we have the time.'

Walking through that dense riverine brush to get to the side channel banks of the Limpopo River is one thing. Walking in the pitch dark, rifles loaded, along elephant paths, with the smell of fresh elephant dung all around, is something else. Definitely an adrenalin-pumping experience.

We were already scouting for buffalo

deep in the maze of islands and side channels when sunrise chased shadows under the giant acacia trees. We saw the tracks of three Dagga Boys that had headed into the impenetrable thickets after drinking, but decided to call it off in that area and head further upriver when the trackers saw eight large, unfriendly elephant bulls.

The rest of the morning was unsuccessful, and we went back to camp for a quick bite.

That afternoon we headed to an area bordering the Gonarezhou National Park and attempted to intercept bulls coming out of the park to drink in the Nuanetsi River. We found lots of elephant tracks and signs of some loan Dagga Boys in the area, but nothing that we could catch up with.

I noticed that the solid old Nissan Patrol was being nursed through its gears during the one-hour drive back to camp at dusk. A clutch problem on the brew. An ominous sign for sure, but the excitement of the hunt trumped the expectation of disaster to come.

The following day we had the same early start to head down and check the banks of the Limpopo for sign. Plenty of buff tracks, but all of them were heading across the river into South Africa.

We popped in at another hunting camp later that morning and discovered that a client had shot a nice elephant bull upstream. We decided to take Bruce to see the kill.

Seeing how an elephant kill unfolds in a tribal community area was a game changer and an eye-opening experience!

When we arrived, there were between 85 to 100 men, women, and children, as well as dogs, bicycles, and donkey-drawn carts all around the site. The men were busy cutting up the carcass, women waiting in the wings, dogs darting in for scraps and kids cooking tit bits over a nearby fire.

After the parts needed for the client's trophy and the best meat cuts for the Chief had been removed, it was open season. The entire elephant, bones, offal, and all, was gone in no time. Loaded onto carts, bicycles, heads, or any other means of carrying this precious protein back to their villages. Some of the people had walked in excess of ten kilometers to get to the bonanza.

Sustainable hunting certainly benefits local communities in many ways!

We then headed down river towards Mozambique. A stop at a tiny, thatched hut in the middle of nowhere yielded ice-cold beers, as only Africa can serve up!

The heat intensified and we decided to find shade under a large nyalaberry tree and retire to the ground for some well-deserved shuteye.

The sound of the bells around the necks of donkeys towing a cart along the track heralded the arrival of a supply of freshly made lala palm wine. A sample of palm wine, followed by a surprise meal of elephant heart kebabs, cooked over a small fire by the trackers, washed down with a shared quart of Black Label beer, went down a treat. Life is good in the bush!

When the shimmering heat started waning, we loaded up and headed off. We had traveled for about fifteen minutes when the old Nissan suddenly gave a couple of shudders, followed by silence.

We were out of diesel, in the middle of nowhere. Mozambique about eight kilometers away with no border post or gas station, the camp about a one-and-half-hour drive away, and no cell phone comms. Life in the bush is not all good, but no point in stressing. Africa has its ways.

We got out the camp chairs and cool box, made a fire in the road, started drinking cold beer and, well, just waiting.

Not long before a donkey cart arrived heading somewhere from nowhere. Our two trackers hopped on and off they went. Our PH disappeared back along the road to look for a spot with cell phone comms.

A vehicle that runs the Mozambique border illegally, arrived about two hours later out a 20 liter plastic container of diesel was pulled out from under a tarpaulin. This had been organized by our PH who managed to get comms from a small hill with local connections.

Not ten minutes later, a small motorbike arrived with one of the trackers on the back, clinging to another 20L container of diesel. Truly amazing. Africa at its best.

The stress and panic that ensues in our First World lives in this type of situation



Daybreak on the river banks of the Limpopo.



just disappears when in dark Africa with folk who know how the system works.

Well, that was the afternoon hunt done. It was a long drive back to camp in the dark.

The next morning, we drove up a corridor between the park and the Mozambique border to check the area around a pan with the only water for miles.

We picked up the tracks of two Dagga Boys that had left the pan and headed back towards Mozambique, and decided to track them through the miombo woodlands. Tracking got tough at times because of the dense grass, resulting in a fair amount of stop and start, and circling back, but the trackers persisted.

I noticed a glint of a horn after about two hours of tracking, and hissed to the spread out group to stop and sit down.

It was a Dagga Boy with his head up testing the wind. I felt the wind on my back and realized he would soon wind us. Bruce was right next to me, and I got him on the sticks. We had to edge back and forth to get a clear view through the trees, but eventually got a good sight on the bull. He was broadside, but slightly quartering away with his head turned towards us, offering a decent behind the shoulder shot. The sun setting into our faces and into the scope made it tricky,



but I shielded the scope and spoke Bruce through the shot.

Boom! The .375H&H bellowed, the buffalo dipped and took off. The second bull also broke cover. Pat and I both upped our rifles to try put in a follow-up shot as the first bull crossed through a gap in the trees. I was about to squeeze off, when my peripheral vision picked up a third bull which none of us had seen. I pulled out of the shot, suddenly questioning which of the bulls was hit and not wanting a second wounded bull.

We gave it ten minutes or so but with light starting to fade we had to get tracking. The three bulls were staying together and only three tiny drops of

Landmine warnings signs.



blood were found, indicating that the shot was not fatal.

We continued following cautiously, checking behind every giant termite mount and scanning each dark bush. Suddenly the bush cleared and there was a railway line.

The look on the trackers' faces summed it up.

"We go no further," they said.

"Why?" was our forlorn question.

The answer: "That is Mozambique. Landmines. No go."

It all happened so fast that it was difficult to come to terms with the reality.

Tough, but it is what it is. Nothing one can do. An epic stalk, tracking

buffalo the way it should be, great setup, but it's hunting and not simply picking an item off a shelf.

Things go wrong and that's life!

The trackers and PH, after a brief chat, concluded that the bulls must return to that pan for water. Probably not that day but maybe in the next day or so. We agreed to check the area for tracks coming back from Mozambique over the next few days.

Our residual doubt about the trackers decision not to follow the buffalo past the railway line was totally erased on the way back to the camp. We passed a military base that spends every day detecting and removing mines, sector by sector.

Never question a tracker's local knowledge!

Spirits at an all-time low. Well, nothing a Glenmorangie on ice and a big campfire can't sort out.

We went back to the pan area in the morning to check whether the buffalo had crossed back from Mozambique. No sign, so we decided to traverse south along the park boundary to see if any other bulls had crossed into the area.

Things were going well. Seeing amazing countryside with huge Rhodesian mahogany trees and massive marula trees. The bush road entered a dry riverbed, and was not long before



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the Nissan bogged down to the diff in the fine-grained river sand.

Not the best time to discover that 4x4 did not work. Oh shit. Now what? Use the winch. There is no winch! Use the high lift jack? There isn't one! Phone a friend? No. Zero comms!

Once again, can't sit down and cry. It's Africa, make-a-plan. Start digging!

Bruce, just taking it all in his stride and seeing the adventure and humor in it all. What a champion!

After a lot of bush mechanic tricks with a bottle jack, logs, and tree branches we managed to get the old dog out of the sand and back into the forest. We cut a new path through the trees in order to get around the sandy section, and eventually rejoined the bush road.

Back to camp again for another bottle of good old Scottish around the blazing mopane logs.

The next couple of days followed the same modus operandi. Check for tracks coming into the pan area, with no luck.

We eventually decided to change and head back down to the Limpopo River to see if we could catch bulls coming out of the thickets in the evening.

Well, as you know, buffalo hunting in daylight is exciting and adrenalin pumping, but heading out under a full moon, on the white sand in the side channels of the Limpopo, was an experience like no other. Scrutinizing every shadow cast by the moon, listening to hippos honking, elephant feeding all around, as you sneak into the wind trying to catch the bulls moving across the sand between the islands.

We walked a number of miles, but unfortunately did not connect with any buffs.

The vehicle had been sent ahead to meet us where they could get through the brush to the riverbank and, after loading up, we started out through the dense riverine brush. A hidden stump in the grass shot the old Nissan into the air

and when we returned to earth, it would go no more. Some sort of damage had been done.

No problem, we knew that there was a rustic hunting camp not that far away, but we would need to run a gauntlet to get there. Walking down a lane of death, twelve-foot-high dense brush on either side, with nowhere to run, in an area that was full of elephant feeding at night.

Flashlights out, rifles loaded, we snuck quietly along the never-ending channel of darkness and arrived at the camp on the banks of the Limpopo around 1 a.m. We hastily made a fire, and a rummage through the camp cupboards found supplies to make a hot cup of coffee. That stiff cup lifted the spirits somewhat.

We crashed for the night in the makeshift camp, with a few blankets and a mattress, discovered during the rummage offering meagre comfort.

A fish eagle's morning call pulled us



from a deep, well-earned sleep. Coffee in hand and the sun coming up, we waited for the trackers who had departed at 4 a.m. to go get help and another vehicle with spares to fix the old Nissan.

I suddenly noticed movement on the opposite bank of the Limpopo. Nine old buffalo bulls. Beautiful specimens, just ambling along with no obvious purpose. On the South African side of the river!

We watched and waited. They moved up the riverbed and drank at a pool about 550 meters from us. Still on the South African side. Would they cross into Zimbabwe and give us a chance?

And then they casually moved back into the thicket on the wrong bank. So close and yet so far!

The afternoon was our last chance and we headed back up to the pan to scout for the wounded bull's tracks. Again, as fortune would have it, no joy.

That last night around the campfire we could not help looking beyond the fact that we had not got the buffalo we had come a long way for. That is life and a lesson that things don't always work out perfectly. Sometimes one needs to look beyond what is ideal and enjoy the adventure, no matter what happens. But, boy, we had been enriched by experiences that many will never encounter.

A hearty breakfast, sad goodbyes, and we were off on our four-hour trip back



to the border thinking that we had pretty much seen it all.

Oh no. Just to top it all off, out stepped a chap with machine gun pointing at us as we crested a large hill. Another chap, pistol in hand, next to him and a third fellow brandishing a large metal plate, adorned with spikes, to throw under the tyres.

They were not wearing any discernible uniform so we could not help thinking that this was it. Can't back up as that might cause them to shoot, so stop, open the window slightly and greet 'machinegun man' with a nervous friendly smile.

He returned our greeting with a large smile and explained that they were on

the lookout for a stolen vehicle, and that they were Zimbabwe Police, and they were really sorry for scaring us. Scare us they certainly did!

How fitting an incident to end our adventure. An adventure that showed it's not always about killing things but about all the other events that can happen and unfold while hunting. Enjoyment can be had in even the most unfortunate situations, if you are open minded and positive.

Thank you to Bruce for being such a trooper, taking this adventure with Hotfire Safaris in his stride, and always looking on the bright side.

We will return for your Dagga Boy. 🇳🇮







Fourth
LEOPARD
at eighty

By Peter Feuerle

The leopard cannot be seen if he does not want to be seen, and that makes hunting him the perfect hunt. If you want a realistic chance to shoot a leopard, you must make him come to you, which means hunting over bait, or following a pack of hounds.



The gift of the hunting gods.

An occasional chance encounter does happen - but getting a shot this way is a gift of the hunting gods and never proof of your own skill or determination. My chance encounter for a leopard was in Namibia a good many years ago. I was actually looking for a cheetah, although then (as now) cheetahs could not be imported into the United States. In a fit of vanity, I wanted to be able to brag that I hunted all three of Africa's big cats. As it turned out, my PH Fred Bezuidenhout and I could not find a cheetah, despite mile upon mile of patrolling and glassing the wide-open, rough and treeless terrain. Then one day, accompanied by the land owner, we saw three spotted cats calmly amble up a close-by hillside. Spots they had, except they were leopards, not cheetahs. But the landowner, like ranchers the world

over, was no friend of predators, and shouted, "Shoot one, shoot any one of them." He had permits, so we bailed out of the bakkie, I got on the sticks, let fly at the one trailing behind just before it reached the ridge, and it was down. It was a young male, that I would not have shot but for the rancher's vocal demand.

This was my third leopard. The first two attempts were on my very first African safari, in each case with spectacular lack of success. My first attempt was over bait in the last few minutes of shooting light. After a few afternoons in the blind, nothing happened except no-shows, so we changed location. At the new spot, hunting at night with artificial light was permitted. I was very optimistic, but the outcome was even worse than the previous attempt.

It had started promisingly enough. In the blind, less than two hours after dark, we heard a cat feeding on the bait, crunching ribs and generally leaving no doubt even to my inexperienced ears that we had a leopard.. My PH, Dean Kendall, slowly turned up the spotlight, and there it stood, broadside, fetchingly illuminated in red. It glimpsed in our direction and slunk away before I could get my act together. Seeing a leopard in the wild for the first time does interesting things to one's composure!

But nothing strengthens one's resolve like a little humiliation. So I booked another hunt with Dean, in the Dande safari area of Zimbabwe, where using lights was not permitted. It is mostly hilly woodland, and probably had been for millions of years, judging from the large grove of petrified wood that we saw - even entire tree trunks. Perhaps by now the area has become a place for fossil collectors.

Finding the right leopard track in the first place can take days or can happen within hours. One has to distinguish those of a cat from those of a hyena, tell how old the tracks are, or even to determine whether they are from a male or female. When a fresh track is found, generally size of spoor suggests gender, which can be confirmed when a cat is on the bait. You hang a trail camera or two and hope to get a shot of the cat's rear end. We were lucky, and it did not take us long to find what my team of experts, after spirited debate (how I wished I could understand Shona and Ndebele!) deemed it the right cat.

We still needed bait and I had a good time shooting for the larder, the cat's and the camp's. We found a suitably shaped tree, in the right place with an optimal distance between it and the blind with a clear shooting lane. Scent trails were laid around the area and clear paths were made to get in and out of the blind noiselessly in the dark - I found that pieces of toilet paper as a guide show up amazingly well by starlight.

My wife Nancy was with us, and as we rolled away, she casually asked,

"That big tree branch we cut to clear the shooting lane, what kind of tree was that?"

" Oh, an ebony tree."

" Stop! Turn around! I want a piece of that wood!" Slight amusement in the bakkie, but this was Africa, and what the lady wants, the lady gets. So we turned around, and our men hacked out a chunk of ebony, the black heartwood, using axes forged from leaf springs and kept sharp. It seemed no rural Matabele male goes out without his axe. Nice, economical swings each hit exactly in the same notch, no undue exertion, letting the steel do the work. I still have that chunk of wood. I drilled a row of half-inch holes in it, and it is now a display rack for decorative wine bottle stoppers.

Dean and I went into the blind around four o' clock. It was still sweltering from the heat of the day. Two hours till sundown. No talking, no loud swatting of bugs, anxiously watching the sun drop lower and lower. And no sign of a cat. I confess that my tolerance of frustration was tested. But then things came together. The cat showed up while I could still get a decent sight picture and identify the cross hairs against its body. I squeezed the trigger, was blinded by the muzzle flash, and the next thing I knew was Dean slapping me on the back and saying (much more calmly than I felt) "Good shot, Peter". We waited the proverbial cigarette time, and with our flash lights walked over to the bait site. There on the ground, lay my leopard. Dead.

Buoyed by my success using the classic method of hunting leopard, I decided to try something completely different, a hunt with hounds, something I had done in the North American West for cougar. (The main difference is that in America we may not use baits - everything depends on the tracking ability of your hounds.) I found a hound hunt in Namibia on a cattle ranch not far north of the Naukluft Mountains. That area seems to be a veritable breeding

ground for leopards that invade the surrounding countryside. The cattle operation is limited by the nature of the terrain, which is largely flat in the east of the property, while to the west it becomes mountainous and rises to a high escarpment bordering the desert of the Namib. The cattle do not venture into the rough country, so there are no fences in the hunting area.

Mare van der Merwe, one of the owners, was my PH. Our houndsman, Glenn Mel, came all the way from the Eastern Cape, accompanied by a helper and about a dozen tough-looking, noisy, sinewy devils that, it turned out, just loved being cuddled and tried to lick your face if you would let them. On each outing, Glenn would select a dog team of perhaps six or so, and explained that the team had to include distinct specialists: trackers to pick up

cold tracks, fast sight hounds to run the cat down once they had spotted it, and bruisers that would hold the cat at bay. I saw later that the trackers actually lost any interest in the cat after it had been brought to bay, preferring to wander around and check out all the interesting scents, while the sight hounds hung around but were content to loudly proclaim to the world that they had won the race.

The first step of the hunt was no different from a hunt over bait. We set up several bait sites, although it took time because the area was large and finding tracks was difficult. The ground was coarse gravel which does not show tracks well, unlike the fine powdery soil I had seen in Zimbabwe. Eventually some of our baits got hit, and then we found the fresh tracks of an encouragingly large cat. Not only that, but Mare said

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The female beyond price.

he knew the cat, as its right front paw showed an old scar, possibly the result from pulling out of a leg-hold trap. It was deep but perfectly healed. He said he had actually hunted this cat but had never been successful.

It was time to let loose the dogs of war, and they didn't wait around. They started running as soon as they hit the ground, calling out joyfully. Because we expected a long pursuit we stocked up on bottled water, but we were still loading up backpacks when the sound changed and all hell broke out no more than half a mile away. Turned out the cat had gone to ground in a cavern formed by an old rock fall. The hounds were smart enough not to go into the opening - there was something snarling frightfully inside.

We approached at right angles to the cat's line of sight from the cavern, or rather its line of attack, which promptly came. The cat hurtled through the throng of dogs, turned around, and shot back to its shelter before they could even react.

I had been warned that something like this might happen and had mounted a red dot sight on my rifle. Then I did something that is generally frowned upon. In order to save time the next time around I clicked my safety off. When the next charge came, the red dot was instantly on the cat's shoulder, no dog was in my sight, I fired, then the cat was back in the cave. But it left a huge splatter of bright red blood on the rock face, and there was no further sound. The leopard, a large male that made the record book, is now a full-body mount in a jumping-up position, with his right front paw stretched out high showing his battle scar. I think I owed that to him. The full emotional impact came later, in replaying the whole drama in my mind.

After that I hunted more leopards, but I have never had the desire to do it again with hounds. I am glad for the experience, and I like dogs. But I think that a leopard does not deserve this humiliation. Call me a sentimental fool. All my subsequent

leopard hunts were done in a modified classical method, that is, from a blind over bait, but using artificial illumination or light enhancement.

On one occasion when we checked in the morning, the bait was gone and there were lion tracks. If lions move in, the leopards will decamp. On another occasion, the local game authorities had decreed that, killing a female would carry a US\$ 20,000 fine - not a risk to run. We had not been able to reliably determine the cat's sex, and gave up. Another disappointing situation involved a cat that apparently did not like the location of the bait and paid only short visits. So we un-wired the bait so that the cat could take it somewhere else it preferred. Sure enough, the next morning the bait was gone. We followed tracks and found that a pack of hyenas had ambushed our cat, which had wisely dropped its meal and treed up.

Once we found huge tracks of a brute that patrolled the area but never took any of the baits. I decided that we go after that giant, but in spite of incredible performance by our trackers over two days, we never caught up with it. A problem for today's hunters is that we tend to run out of time, unlike the legendary hunters of old who could afford weeks or even months.

My latest leopard kill, number four (which will probably be the last one), happened in early 2021 after my eightieth year. We were in a private game conservancy in KwaZulu-Natal. It is rare that South Africa issues leopard permits for export, but the owners of the conservancy has received a "destruction permit" based on the finding by an outside consultancy that the area's plains-game population could not sustain the number of predators that were found there. So this was basically

The chance encounter cat.





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Fourth leopard at age 80.

a cull hunt, though in the owner's opinion on a far too limited scale.

With Pienaar ("Pine") Breytenbach as my PH, I set out. What followed was a circus! Because of Covid-related travel complications I did not bring my own gun but borrowed one from Pine, which carried a thermal imaging device, as we expected all the action to happen at night. We went out diligently in the dark so I could practice. We also had a rifle with conventional telescopic sights for daytime work, so I never fired the "night" rifle in the daytime.

When we had a cat on bait and the blind set up, I went into the blind one late afternoon with the "night" rifle, while Pine moved our vehicle a mile or so down the road, to return on foot. But before he got back, with the sun still well above the horizon, our leopard

showed up right beneath the bait tree, and calmly stepped forward to inspect the open area between him and my blind - just stood there as if enjoying the view. A thermal imaging device also works in daylight, but my practice shooting had been based on the premise that I would have to use it only in the dark. It is a complicated thing, and I did not know which button to push, lever to move, or dial to turn in order to make that thing work in daylight.

So I looked at the cat and it seemed to be looking at me, though of course I was concealed in the blind. I dearly wished I had our "day time" rifle, but that was gone with Pine; you do not wander around an area where the Big Five roam without being suitably armed. After a fairly long while, the cat turned and ambled back into the bush.

I thought I was done, but an hour or so later, now in complete darkness, the cat showed up again to get its meal at last. I had him broadside, picked the wrong reticle, shot and missed, and he calmly slinked down, the way cats do, from the branch down to the ground. But he stayed just long enough so I could change the reticle to the one I had used in our practice sessions, and shot again.

And that was the end of it. The hide was carefully prepared, and I believe that it was offered to the Zulu king as is the traditional local custom.

Like everyone else, I have known for decades that going into the field with unfamiliar equipment is a fool's errand, but sometimes the gods favor the fools, in this particular case if they are in their eighties. 🐾





Plains Game, Guns, & Gear: Field Notes from the Kalahari

By Terry Nelson

Africa, the Dark Continent has been the focus of adventure and conflict for centuries. It is hard for me to explain, but it has been a fascination for me for a lifetime. It is said that once you have set foot in Africa, the yearning to be back there can never be satisfied... some claim Africa captures the soul.



I've been exceedingly fortunate to have traveled there twice, and the drive to go back is already drawing me to plan yet another African excursion, even after a recent trip.

My latest outing really began this past January at a meeting with PH Stephen Bann, owner/operator of SB Hunting Safaris. at the SCI in Houston Texas. Plans were soon made for a hunt in the Northern Cape of South Africa in May of this year. I was keen to take a Springbok Slam, which is the four color phases of that antelope - common, copper, black, and white.

In addition, the diversity of other plains-game species was sure to offer many additional opportunities during my hunt, and I found myself in the southern Kalahari region of South Africa with rifle in hand.

RIFLES USED

While I was ready to try a new big-game rifle on this hunt, I also took my old, trusted Model 70 .270 Winchester, a rifle that has traveled many thousands of miles with me and taken much big game.

But a key focus of this safari was to put through its paces a rifle and a

brand that I had never tried before. The Christensen Arms Mesa FFT is based on a traditional bolt action platform rifle built with the hunter in mind. Weighing only 5.5 pounds without scope and hardware, this gun has the lines and feel of a perfect hunting rifle.

Established in 1995 Christensen Arms is based in Gunnison, Utah. The company stands by their claim of "always made in America." Christensen is "focused on incorporating top-tier aerospace materials and processes into

production - resulting in some of the most lightweight, precise, and accurate firearms in the industry and around the globe," according to a company spokesman.

The Mesa FFT that I took on this safari came with Burnt Bronze Cerakote finish on the barrel and action. Its carbon fiber stock is dark green with tan accents, a camo pattern ideal for any hunting venues. Other camo finishes are available from Christensen. Sling studs are included and the receiver tapped





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and drilled for scope bases.

Introduced in the first half of 2022, the Mesa “FFT” stands for “Flash Forged Technology.” FFT technology consists of the latest advancements in carbon fiber composites and construction, specifically in the stock and other components. The light but strong sporter-style stock, floor plate, and bolt knob all share in helping to eliminate up to one pound of weight compared with most other rifles of the same dimensions.

The Mesa FFT comes standard with a Christensen Arms stainless steel barrel and Featherlight Contour, a removable stainless steel “Seamless” radial muzzle brake, a 1/2 × 28 threaded muzzle, a precision-machined receiver and, as mentioned earlier, a carbon fiber FFT Stock. Accuracy is backed by a sub-MOA guarantee.

I selected the .300 Winchester Magnum for my safari, a tried-and-true option for African plains game such as eland, roan, sable, and wildebeest. The Mesa FFT is also available in no less than 15 other chamberings including many of the newer caliber offerings such as 7MM PRC and .300 PRC.

AMMO

Known to be the perfect weight grain bullet in the .300 Win Mag I chose to utilize 180gr offerings only. I tried numerous brands of factory ammo but the hands down choice for accuracy was Sierra Game Changer with its 180 grain





TGK (Tipped Game King) bullet.

On the range I fired numerous three-shot groups that were no larger than ½ MOA (half-inch at 100 yards). Several three-shot groups were also fired at 200 yards and likewise proved to be sub-MOA. Online ammo vendor Lucky Gunner was gracious to provide ammo for the initial testing of the Christensen, including the standout Gamechanger load.

Felt recoil with the .300 Win Mag cartridge was minimal in this rifle considering its light weight. With Christensen's seamless, removable radial muzzle brake, I can report the recoil is in the same class as the .270 Win or .30-06 Springfield cartridges.

GEAR

A quality rifle deserves a quality optic. Enter Lucid Optics and their L5 4x-16x44 rifle scope.

Atop the Christensen Mesa FFT, I used the Lucid L5 rifle scope for the entire safari. The Lucid L5 offers a 30mm tube and precise 1/8 MOA windage and elevation adjustments on lockable, tactical-style turrets. With side parallax adjustment and ocular diopter adjustment, the L5 provides a sharp target image over the entire magnification range of 4x-16x. The reticle also serves as a precise MOA measuring device with 2 MOA increments below the rifle's zero along with viable windage values built in.

Lucid Optics also offers quality binoculars that are ideal for the hunter. For this safari I utilized their model B-8, 8x42 magnification binos. They provided a wider field of view and only weigh 24 ounces, perfect for some of the thick thorn brush in Africa. Additionally Lucid offers the model B-10, 10x42 for those who want even more magnification.

As anyone who has traveled overseas with firearms will tell you, the case in which you transport guns is important. I utilized the rugged Nanuk model 995-gun case that held two rifles. The

case, new when I departed, returned showing scars from hard handling and use by the end of the trip.

While the Nanuk case came with standard foam inserts that can be cut to fit the specific profile of one or more firearms, I discovered a much better option. Enter KOR. This company offers a replacement system for the standard foam inserts found in most hard rifle cases. Officially, the insert is called a “vacuum-rigidizing structure,” or “VRS.” Company owner GP Searle, has obtained a patent for the system. The VRS is an inflatable bladder or pillow, filled with beanbag-like granules that provide a specific outline of your firearm and holds it securely in the case.

The VRS system works via three simple steps:

1. Apply air to the system by a hand pump that is supplied.
2. Position the firearm(s) in the preferred position in the case
3. Remove the air from the system via the same hand pump.

The end result is a rigid and secure outline specific to your particular firearm not unlike a mold of the gun itself. It stays that way until air is pumped back in, at which time the KOR can be re-configured for any other firearm(s).

There is no question that KOR Universal Firearms Transport System worked on my trip and carried two rifles securely in the Nanuk case for many thousands of miles. The bottom-line result was that both rifles arrived unscathed and were checked for zero at the safari camp. Zeros on both rifle scopes were still in place with no adjustments required.

ON SAFARI

My intent on this safari was primarily for plains game and not dangerous species such as lion, Cape buffalo, and so forth. But make no mistake, all African game seems to have a toughness not found in game elsewhere in the world.



Many plains-game species are larger-bodied antelope such as wildebeest, gemsbok, roan, sable, eland, and others weighing in the 500 to 1500+ pounds. Most hunters in the US or Europe are

indoctrinated to shoot big game behind the front shoulder to hit vitals, i.e., the heart and lungs.

For many of the larger antelope in Africa your PH will advise you to shoot

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of plains game. It was not long before we were glassing springbok in the afternoon and making short stalks to attempt a good shooting position.

Finally, near the end of the day, we stalked to within a relatively short distance of about 125 yards on a nice black springbok ram. I made a one-shot kill off the shooting sticks with the .270 Win., my first animal down on African soil since 1985. It's important to practise on sticks before your safari and most of my shots were off sticks.

Day two began early with a hearty breakfast around 6:30 and then to the bush looking for the other springbok color phases and larger plains game. We saw springbok almost continually but they were as elusive or difficult to approach as any of the other game. Later on, Stephen spotted a very nice roan antelope. While not my primary focus, a roan was certainly of interest.

Seeing that the roan had exceptionally long, heavy horns, we were out on foot to attempt a stalk. Keeping a ridge between us and the antelope, we closed the distance to within about 175 yards, and from the sticks I fired one shot to the left shoulder and the roan went down immediately. The Christensen

through the shoulder or on the point of the shoulder because the vital organs of African game are set farther forward in the chest cavity than game in other regions of the world.

As previously mentioned, my main goal was to take all four color phases of springbok, which are found in many regions of South Africa. In addition, I was looking for some of the larger plains-game species to include wildebeest, kudu, sable or roan.

My hunting area, at the southern edge of the Kalahari was a privately owned ranch of about 50,000 acres - close to 80 sections of land based on US measurements. A huge swath of country by anyone's standards. In almost all of South Africa, hunting takes place on private ranches, not government-owned concessions as may be the case in other regions of Africa.

I was picked up by Stephen Bann at Kimberly Airport, and after a pleasant drive I arrived midday at Thuru Lodge situated at the southern edge of the Kalahari, about three hours west of Kimberly. It was to be our hunting camp and base of operation for the next six days.

Much of the elevated terrain is covered in camel thorn trees or black thorn brush. We had spectacular views from

the back of the Land Cruiser pickup with Stephen

and his tracker, Shawn, who took it in turns to be in the back with me. We also hiked to higher terrain on foot and then utilized our quality optics to spot game. The number and variety of game was astounding.

Itching to get into the field as quickly as possible that day, we had a quick lunch and then were off in search



and the .300 Win Mag cartridge performed well and provided my first big game taken with it.

As the days passed all too quickly, I took a total of seven plains-game species with the Christensen .300 Win Mag. The rifle and the cartridge performed flawlessly. Roan, sable, Cape eland, blue wildebeest, red lechwe, blesbok, and common springbok all fell to the Christensen.

Two of these took more than one shot. Both the eland and the sable required three shots each. Although both were solidly hit with the first shot, they required follow-up shots. African game is tough.

My longest shot with the Mesa FFT .300 Win Mag was around 350 to 400 yards on the common springbok. The Christensen proved its accuracy repeatedly and no doubt my pre-hunt time spent on the range was in no small way critical to the overall success of the safari.

In a matter of days, I completed my springbok slam with my .270 Winchester, all taken after stalks through the black thorn and from the shooting sticks.

Aside from the Christensen Mesa FFT and my trusted Winchester, the quality gear from Lucid Optics, KOR, the bullet performance of the Sierra Gamechanger ammo, along with a nice custom knife from Mark Wilkie back in New Mexico, all played their own part.

Just before sundown on the last day of hunting, I was fortunate to take a nice kudu bull in the camel thorn and black thorn near the edge of a long African plain. The bull fell to my old .270 Win and I was reminded of Jack O'Connor's time in Africa so many years ago and how much he admired the .270 cartridge.

Not long after, we drove to the crest of one of the Kalahari's tall red dunes and reminisced over the past week's hunt. We enjoyed a brandy around the fire, and watched the sun disappear behind the hills of South Africa.

Yes, it is safe to say that Africa captures the soul. 🌄





ROOIHARTBEES in the Wind

By Michael Arnold





The truck-destroying track from the brushy lowlands into the mountainous areas of the Blaauwkrantz property.

The hartebeest might have remained calm, but the nimrod trying to shoot him wasn't. Stupid, but the fact that I was trying to aim at an animal in a gale force wind never entered my rattled brain. Again I tried to place my crosshairs between the bull's shoulder blades as he faced me at 200 yards with his head down, grazing. And again my scope swung wildly as this time I placed my hand over the barrel in front of the scope in an effort to stop what I thought was my bull-fever-induced shaking.

As the panic started to build, I thought simply, "What is wrong with me?" The image of the Cape (red) hartebeest at which I was attempting to point my 7mm Remington Magnum would not stay still. The trophy bull swung from one side of my Nightforce scope's field of view to the other, resulting in the crosshairs traveling from tail to nose of the unaware animal.

A few days before my attempt to take the red hartebeest (rooihartbees in Afrikaans) my PH Arnold Claassen and our tracker Jambo, had introduced yours truly to the 100,000+ acre "farm" of Blaauwkrantz Safaris. Arnold and I had returned the evening before from the Great Karoo region where we had been successful in our quest for a Vaal rhebok. I had read and heard from other hunters, that a first safari quite often involves the hunter – in this case, me – starting out with relatively modest plans for numbers of species to be taken, but ends with a radically different (read "greater") number in the salt. But as we headed into the mountains of the main Blaauwkrantz property, my mind was focused on mountain reedbuck and/or zebra, and not much of anything else.



So, “Not really interested,” was my response when Arnold declared, “That’s a big hartebeest!” I had no clue how big he was, but even I could see that, unlike the other bulls near him, his horn tips were widely flared. That was my only observation as he and his companions kicked up a cloud of dust as they quickly left in their deceptively fast rocking-horse gait. We didn’t collect any animals that morning, but the encounter with the big bull had the effect for which all outfitters must be praying; I couldn’t forget the lovely coloration and massive, weird-shaped horns as the rooihartbees disappeared over the high ridge.

The next few days we spent much time in the mountainous region and took an enormous mountain reedbuck and a fine klipspringer. In fact, we spent so much time traveling the incredibly

The author is extremely happy with his beautiful Cape hartebeest bull. The blurring around the edge of his right sleeve is not bad photography - it was the result of the gale-force wind across the ridgeline on which he and his trophy were perched.





rough rocky tracks that when we were finally coming down the mountainside for the very last time, Arnold exclaimed, "Thank God I don't have to go back up there again on this hunt, because I'm going to have to replace my truck from all the beatings it has taken!" But during our forays for the reedbeek and klipspringer we never found that Cape hartebeest from the first day - an animal that I now wanted. And badly!

On the afternoon of the third day we drove away from the lodge, back through the lowland scrub, heading for the track that would send us back up into the mountainous section. As we went, we "herded" a group of about 8000 Angora goats along the track in front of us. I said I should ask Arthur Rudman, patriarch of the clan and in overall control of Blaauwkrantz, what the trophy fee would be for one of his beautiful rams. Given the quality of wool produced, I suspect it would have been substantial.

About 8000 Angora goats are scattered across the 100,000+ acre Blaauwkrantz farm. Arthur Rudman and his farm hands are seen here manually packing the Angora wool into bales for shipment.



But truly, I only had eyes for one animal, the red hartebeest bull we had seen that first day. Arnold warned me that we might very well run out of time without coming across that same animal. Those flared tips had me captivated, and it would be tough to convince me to take another bull.

However, against such long odds, here I was with the bull dead-to-rights and all I had to do was steady my rifle. It seems ridiculous in hindsight, but at the time I had no clue it was the wind. But Arnold knew exactly what was keeping me from shooting. Then suddenly the wind calmed for a few seconds. The crosshairs finally settled on the ridge of the bull's back, the trigger broke, and I was rocked back. As I recovered from the recoil, I watched as the bull rolled down the steep hillside. Though ecstatic at our success, I also wondered how the devil we were going to recover the animal for photography and field dressing.

I shouldn't have worried. Arnold's long-suffering truck came to the rescue once again. Reversing down the slope to a point as close as possible to the hartebeest, we extended the cable from the electric winch in the back of the truck and secured it to the bull. While Jambo slowly retracted the cable, Arnold and I kept the bull's horns and hooves from digging into the ground. Once it was loaded, Arnold drove back up onto the ridgeline and back into the teeth of the gale-force winds. My face in most of the "trophy" photos is classic – teeth gritted, eyes blurry from the blowing sand, but still wonderfully, immensely pleased. The bull that I had so flippantly passed on the first day had become a very important quest, a quest that was finally successful.

"Thank goodness," said Arnold, "at least we can quit going into these Blaauwkrantz mountains to try and find one specific, trophy rooihartbees!"

Mike Arnold's first game species were rabbits, quail and dove. He took his first big-game animal at the age of five, a Texas whitetail. Because he could not support the rifle himself, his Dad let him rest the .243 Winchester over his shoulder. It is probably why his Dad was deaf in his left ear... More recently, he has hunted elk, mule deer, black bear and mountain lion. His first safari in South Africa was with Blaauwkrantz Safaris.

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3 Friends for AFRICA

By Rick Holbert

I've had the privilege and good fortune now to hunt in Africa four times now. I've had numerous discussions with good friend Richard Lendrum (the editor for African Hunting Gazette) about talking to people about going to Africa and what a great adventure it can be. I talk to people, both hunters and photographers alike almost on a daily basis on how economically they can make that trip happen. It's one of the greatest adventures a person can experience.

So, sitting around one evening sipping some fine single malt Scottish holy water I got to thinking about my next hunt. Who to invite to share it? The people who I really connect with and understand my thought processes are veterans. And I had just the fellows in mind to share this trip with me. John Vaeth is a US Airforce NCO veteran from the Vietnam war. He was involved inn B-52 maintenance and did two tours of duty. Joe Noone is

a retired US Marine Colonel who has been involved in various operations over the last 30 years. As for myself, I was a US Army NCO Vietnam combat veteran with the 82nd Airborne. I can assure you this guaranteed many a war story while enjoying sundowners after supper. Contacts were made and both gentlemen signed up for the trip. Contacting the fine and helpful staff at TWG Travel Agency, we booked our airfare and obtained travel insurance with Ripcord.

From left to right: John Vaeth, Joe Noone and myself, Rick Holbert

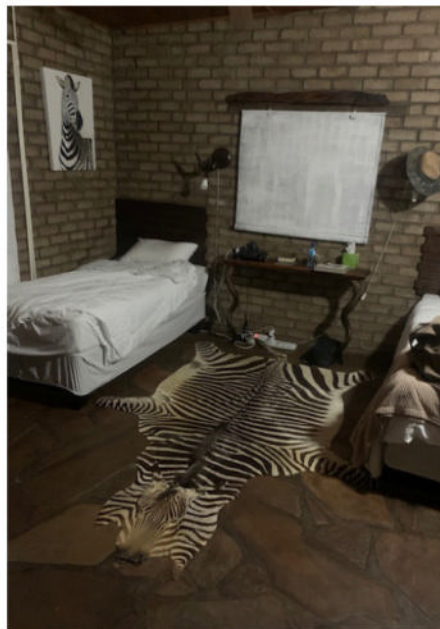




L to R Janneman, Makkie, Gerrit Breedt and good friend Pete Underwood.

The day of departure finally arrived on 5 May, flying out of Armstrong International airport in New Orleans, Louisiana. We flew with Lufthansa thru Frankfurt then direct into Windhoek Namibia. Everything went smoothly. Our flight arrived at 8:00 a.m. the morning of the 7th. Our PH (Gerrit Breedt) had hired a driver by the name of Andre to pick us up. With his help we picked up our checked bags and cleared the gun room and in short order we were on our way. Andre being proud of his country pointed out various sights while en route to our destination. That afternoon (it's a five-hour drive) we arrived at Farm Mooilaagte east north-east of Grootfontein Namibia. There we were greeted by our host Gerrit Breedt, his charming wife Makkie and son Janneman who is also a fully licensed PH.

We arrived at the farm early enough so that after grounding our gear, rifles and ammo were unpacked and off to the range to check zeros on the rifles. A couple of minor adjustments were made and we were set to start hunting the next day. John was shooting a Mossberg Patriot in 300 Winchester Magnum. We selected a 200-grain bonded core bullet/load for his rifle. Joe was shooting a Winchester Model 70 Classic in .375 H&H with handloaded 300-grain Swift A-Frames. As for myself, I was



The zebra chalet at ElandPro Safaris.

shooting a left hand Zastava Model 70 Mauser action chambered in 9.3X62. I was using handloaded 286-grain Swift A-Frames also.

Retiring back to our rooms we finished unpacking, got cleaned up and prepared for supper followed by the chance to get acquainted all around.

A word at this point about the accommodations at ElandPro Safaris. The rooms are outstanding! Very comfortable beds, hot showers in each room, and spacious. The staff go out

of their way to ensure your stay is very pleasant and go out of their way to make this happen. Breakfast and lunch are served in an enclosed dining room off to the side of the lapa and the evening meal is served in the lapa proper. The food is first rate and the side dishes Makkie prepares are a food lover's dream come true. After a hearty meal and sundowners, it was time to turn in as the hunting would start early the next morning.

The morning of the 8th broke clear and beautiful as only an African morning can. It was to be an incredible day for my friend John. After breakfast we headed out to the trucks to start our hunt. We were all worried about John as five weeks before departure, he had had a surgical procedure to replace a faulty pacemaker. His doctor okayed his going but he was weak and having trouble getting off and on the truck. But each day he got stronger and by the fourth day of hunting he was getting up in the hunter's seat like a squirrel going up a tree for a ripe pecan! We hadn't been driving down a two-track for perhaps 35 minutes when our tracker spotted a small group of blue wildebeest in the brush. As John was the new hunter, the honor of the first shot was his. We drove on past to get the wind right for the stalk, parked, then began the stalk back toward the animals. Janneman our PH, got John to within 80 yards and pointed out a very nice bull to John. He got on the sticks, made the shot followed by the bullet slap. The bull ran maybe 40 yards and piled up in the brush.

John had an animal in the salt. Much back slapping, congratulations and many pictures taken, we loaded the animal and headed for the skinning shed. It was decided that we would have an early lunch, take a short break then head back out to hunt for more. About 3.00 p.m. we headed back out. As this was my fourth hunt with ElandPro, there were only a few animals I wanted. As a result, I wanted both John and Joe as first-time hunters in Namibia to

experience their first African hunt to the fullest. There is only one first hunt and this was theirs. Janneman elected to just stalk through a section and see what popped up. Almost an hour and 15 minutes into the stalk he spotted a small group of zebra.

"Would you like to take a zebra?" he asked John? Yes, indeed as his wife Nancy wanted a zebra skin rug for the living room back home. Once again after a short stalk John was on the sticks and made the shot. His wife had her rug. What a day for my friend. Two great animals in the salt. Joe spent the day hunting with Gerrit Breedt (Janneman's father) but unfortunately did not see any of the animals or the quality of animal he was looking for. As for me, it was a great day watching my friends hunt this great part of Namibia.

The next day Joe finally got in the salt. For some reason warthogs were not seen often. But a nice pig made an appearance and Joe connected with it. Going back out that afternoon with Gerrit, they made a great stalk on a very good black wildebeest with huge bosses, and Joe was again in the salt.

That same day I finally took my first head of game. I'd already taken a great kudu bull on a previous trip, but I had a younger bull come out on me that had high and very wide horns. I decided to



John Vaeth (L) with his blue wildebeest, and Janneman Breedt.



John Vaeth and his springbok.

take him and finally had one in the salt.

Back to the farm after a great day in the bush. Hot shower and a change of clothes, an ice-cold bottle of Windhoek lager and life is good. Share that with

close friends and it doesn't get any better.

The next day would prove to be another outstanding day of hunting. Mid-morning while riding with John and Janneman we stopped short and Janneman took John through the bush to check out an open savanna area. About 40 minutes later a shot rang out and shortly after Janneman called up our driver on the radio to come as John had taken a very good springbok. John had taken to heart my advice to practice shooting off of sticks prior to leaving and it was paying off. He took that springbok at slightly over 200 yards and dropped it in its tracks.

Joe on the other hand wasn't having the best of luck. He was looking for specific animals but having a rough go of it as they weren't cooperating. I told him that the rule of thumb was to take what Africa has to offer. But at least he was having a good time and was a good sport about it.

Back in the field after lunch and John was red hot. I later told him he should buy a lottery ticket when we got home the way his luck was running. It was decided to sit a waterhole that evening. Janneman, John and I did just that. About 30 minutes before sundown a very good kudu bull came out to our right, going to the left. Janneman told John in a whisper, "There is your bull." I could tell by the look on John's face that he was excited having this incredible

Joe Noone and Gerrit Breedt with his black wildebeest.





Joe Noone with his kudu bull.

animal within 70 yards of him.

John slowly raised his rifle to the opening in the blind. Getting on the scope, Janneman told him to take the shot when he was ready. The shot was perfectly placed. The bull ran maybe 50 yards and piled up. John had his kudu. It's such a treat to watch a friend on his first African hunt have the good fortune to take such a grand animal.

Up early the morning of 12 May and after a great breakfast and coffee it was time to head out. About mid-morning it was my turn again. For some reason my personal nemesis has been the blesbok. Oh, I've seen plenty on previous hunts, but always young rams mixed with ewes. No joy to be had. The drought had really hurt these animals and numbers were way down. Gerrit made an exception this day. I was allowed to take a ram if we found a good head.

We stopped the truck well back from an open savanna area as Janneman said blesbok frequented this area. Making a wide sweep to the left through the bush to keep the wind in our favor we spotted five blesbok galloping from our left to the right (never figured what spooked them). I got on the sticks and Janneman pointed out the ram to shoot. At about 120 yards at his whistle, they stopped and looked back. I goofed up! Chalk

it up to being excited at finally getting the chance to harvest a blesbok or the gods of the hunt laughing at me, but I shot over his back. They ran another 60 yards then stopped again to look back. This time I settled down and made a perfect heart shot. The ram ran maybe another 40 yards then piled up. I finally had my blesbok.

After lunch it was back to hunting. Joe was with Gerrit, and they made contact with a very good kudu. Joe made a good shot on the bull and finally had one of

the most sought-after trophies in the salt. A great day all around.

Later that afternoon, John hit the holy grail. He and Janneman moving through the bush spied a great eland bull. John made the shot and hit the bull hard but slightly back. The bull whirled around and ran off into the brush. They tried to trail it up but the sun set and they had to call off and return the next morning. They found the bull dead the next morning. Thankfully the jackals and hyenas hadn't got to it and ruined the hide. A very good bull indeed.

Well, that evening around the fire having sundowners there were many congratulations and tall tales shared with all. Sadly, the realization came that our hunt was quickly coming to an end. But no regrets, as all were having a grand time and I do think Namibia had taken hold of my friends as it had done to me.

At this time, if I may, I had asked to propose a toast to a close friend. I first met Howard Moore many years ago while working at a large firearms dealer in Baton Rouge, La. Howard had a construction company in the Shreveport area and worked like a mule to make it what it was. He finally retired and sold his company so that he could pursue

Janneman Breedt and John Vaeth with the kudu bull.



his life passion of hunting. And hunt he did. From the Himalayan mountains for blue sheep to Alaska and Africa. He lived his dream. He once related a story of his buffalo hunt in Zimbabwe some five years ago. He made a good shot but the buffalo took exception to being hit and came for him. At the fourth shot he dropped it 12 feet off the muzzle! I asked Howard if it was exhilarating. He got that far-off look in his eyes and after a moment said, "No."

But the guys in the laundry tent found out whether their soap could get stains out of cotton. We had talked several times about hunting together but our schedules were always different. I sent Howard a text message inviting him to go along on this hunt. Several hours later I received a reply from his wife. Sadly, Howard had passed away suddenly. He started feeling off, and within two weeks passed away. I was floored! So, this hunt was dedicated to my friend Howard. And Howard, when my time comes to cross the river and pay the ferryman, I hope to see a fire burning and my old hunting friends who have crossed before me. We'll share hunting tales again.

All too soon our last day hunting arrived. Neither John nor I were to collect any other trophies. But Joe would have a last-minute grand hunt. Mid-morning they spotted a really good impala ram.

After a careful stalk as the ram was in a fairly open area, Joe made the shot and had his impala in the salt. That evening hunting a waterhole Joe once again had the chance to take another trophy. A very nice blue wildebeest came to water and Joe took the bull.

That night was spent reliving the hunts we made while at ElandPro. My friends were still in awe at the numbers of different game they had seen on this trip and the experience of hunting African game.

That last night after supper, enjoying sundowners in the lapa and retelling the hunts we made, was special. My friends



Rick Holbert with his blesbok.

had made new friends in Namibia and now had memories to last a lifetime. We stayed up to the wee hours of the morning and finally shut things down and turned in.

The drive to the airport was at a relaxed pace as our flight would not depart until 7:30 p.m. A short 30 hours later we were back to New Orleans airport where we parted ways, going to our respective homes. A great trip had by all.

Rick Holbert is a retired US Army paratrooper and Vietnam veteran, retired civilian law enforcement officer in Louisiana, and has spent the last 20 years as a firearm sales person and firearms consultant. Also helps prospective hunters book hunts in Namibia with ElandPro Safaris. He has two daughters who are avid hunters and shooters. He has hunted in the US extensively since a young age and Namibia for the last 10 years.

Gerrit Breedt (PH) and Joe Noone with his impala.







The hazard of hunting HIPPOS

By Kendal-Ray Kaschula

National Parks had called my dad and me, I was only sixteen at the time, to come to shoot a problem hippo that was eating the crops of the villagers and chasing them when they tried to drive it out of their fields. So, early one Sunday morning, we loaded up the rifles, the knives, and the shooting sticks and hit the road.

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The ranger accompanying us was adamant that the confluence of the river where the hippo was living was not far at all but, as always in Africa of course, it turned out to be just over a hundred kilometers away. Not far indeed...

By the time we arrived it was nearly 8 a.m. and the lowveld sun was already scorching. With any luck, we'd find the hippos sunning on a bank, set up the sticks, and my .375 would do the rest. At least, that's what we thought...

First off, there were no bare banks. Only patches of sand with trees right down to the edge. Secondly, no pools. It was a very full, fast-flowing channel. And, thirdly where the so-called lone bull was supposed to be, there was an entire pod, all of which was completely hidden from our view by massive reeds that towered well over eight feet.

As soon as we were out of the cruiser I made my way down to the water, keeping a safe distance from the edge, in case of over-interested crocodiles, and gave a small, and I mean small, fishing boat that was resting half on the bank, half in the water, a critical once-over. There were at least two inches of murky river water in the bottom, and I couldn't help wondering if that was from a leak, or just water that had perhaps spilled inside and not been cleaned out.

While I was hoping that I didn't have to find out, my father was in deep discussion with the Park's ranger as to how we would go about this hunt, as we couldn't see anything. The ranger simply grinned and turned to point at the boat. "Easy," he said, "we will go in the boat."

The boat. There are paddle boards more boat-like than that one was.

Of course, my father definitely did not want to do this, but I, being young and mad-keen, was absolutely set on shooting that hippo.

So, by means of begging, eyelash-batting, and every daughterly wile I had, fifteen minutes later we found ourselves climbing into the boat after the water had been tipped out. There was an audience



of the locals looking on. The boat rocked from side to side, swaying, before settling low down on the water. Very low.

With dad as my backer or second shooter, plus our ranger as is mandatory, and the fisherman who would be steering the boat with a pole - not an oar - of course the boat was low in the water. Low enough that an extra gram would have had the water spilling in over the sides.

I sat there with private prayers and a mind determined not to dwell on the number of stories I'd heard where crocodiles had jumped and taken fisherman out of boats far higher above the water than ours was.

We pushed off slowly, and twenty yards offshore where the reed banks were starting to close in, I noticed a half-inch of water that suddenly appeared in the bottom of the boat. I put two and two together and my earlier question was answered. The water in the boat was from a leak.

Beside me, our ranger was using one hand to cock his weapon and then started to use the other hand to empty out the water using a metal dog dish which I hadn't seen him take from the back of the cruiser. The horrible grating sound as he scraped the boat bottom trying to scoop out water would alert the hippos long beforehand.

We were navigating slowly through the little waterways that wound between the

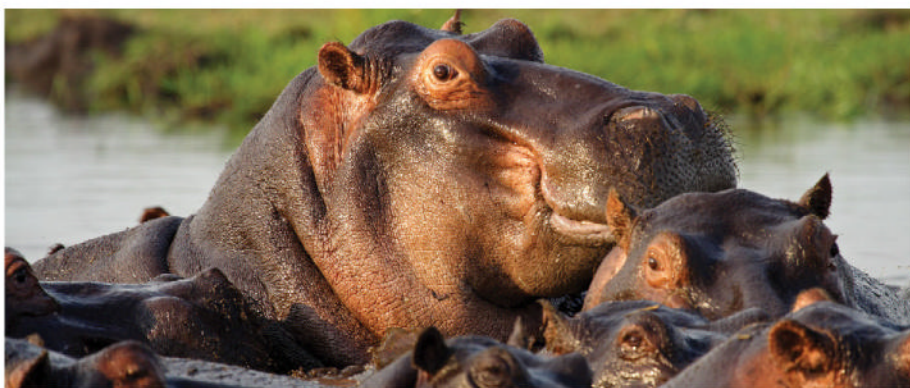
reed banks, and as we pulled around one bend and faced open water, we saw our first hippo. It was a good eighty yards away, ears sticking up, and then, much to our dismay, it dipped below the surface and resurfaced twenty yards closer.

"Back up," my father told our fisherman guide. He was still attempting to do so when the hippo went under and once more surfaced another twenty yards closer.

"Faster," my father said again, but it's not like we could do that in our vessel. Luckily, the hippo either got distracted or decided that an overcrowded boat filled with a bunch of quaking humans wasn't worth the effort of closer inspection because it dipped again and reappeared further out.

We were pushed back into the thick of the reeds, needing to go around a few of the reed islands to find the hippos which we could hear grunting on the other side. The going was slow, but when we rounded the last of the reed banks we found ourselves overlooking the main channel and a line of hippos quietly drifting down it. We immediately steadied against a reed bank, and I took aim, doing my best to ignore the clanking of the dog dish and the water rapidly welling up beneath my feet.

Unfortunately, that particular angle didn't allow me a shot at the bull which was at the back of the pod, so we struck out once more. The only option was to



shoot while on open water. I braced myself on my knee, took aim, and prayed that I'd manage to shoot straight despite the gently rocking boat.

I placed my center X right between the eye and ear of the bull, held my breath, and then squeezed the trigger. The shot rang loud, echoing over the water, and I watched as the bull immediately stiffened, the lead connecting with its mark. Straight into the brain. He spun onto his side, and then rolled completely over until just the tip of a foot was sticking up.

I smiled, my prayers answered as the ranger let out a whoop, along with the fisherman. A mere second later he was already poling us towards the hippo,

an action that my father and I swiftly stopped.

"No, no, no... take us to shore. You can come back." They weren't too happy about that, but I did not care.

As soon as we were on the shore I leapt off our not-so-trusty vessel and onto dry land, realizing for the first time ever how people can actually be happy enough to kiss the ground.

No sooner had Dad and I climbed off, than the boat than the others got back on, more overloaded than before, something I wouldn't have thought possible, and it was joined by an even smaller canoe. The two boats started to make their way back to the half-submerged hippo carcass, desperate to

get it before the current could carry it downstream.

Not only was the hippo being recovered by two barely safe floating abominations, but the vessels were also being escorted by two men on either side who had jumped into the water! And did they get munched? Of course not.

Forty-five minutes later the fleet returned, the hippo secured, tugged behind them through the dark waters. Using the cruiser, we managed to pull the massive bull up onto land, and after the usual picture, the entire carcass was cut up and divided between the local people, a standard practice and a huge help to many African communities, as fresh meat is hard come by.

It was nearly dark by the time we finished and began to make the "short" journey home, leaving swirling waters and hippo pods behind us, and despite the nerve-wracking hunt it had been, I couldn't help but be sorry to leave it behind. Although hair-raising as hunting in Africa can be, I still don't want it any other way.

This, as I understand it, is that unique African Fever that no hunter can ever quite be cured of. 🦒



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LECHWE

with Bow and Arrow

By Frank Berbuir

It was the first week of August 2019, and I was back in South Africa with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. Once more I was hunting with bow and arrow, this time for a red lechwe which was on my bucket list.

We were in the Northern Free State on a nice property consisting mainly of several lakes or large ponds, marshland, sedge grass and swamps – habitats that lechwe like, but that makes it difficult to stalk them. We started early at sunrise. It was a bit chilly, but we warmed up quite quickly while stalking. First challenge was to find tracks or, even better, a lechwe. For quite some time we glassed the area when Izak spotted a lechwe buck just lying in front of the sedge grass near a lake. It was about 400 – 500 meters away, and we made a plan on how to get closer. Slowly we moved in zigzag directions, forward and sideways, using the sparse bushes as cover, continuously checking with the binoculars.

It took time to maneuver and sometimes we even needed to leopard



Challenging hunting area.



The lechwe habitat.

crawl to keep our silhouettes as low as possible, but after a couple of hours tense stalking we got close and remained hidden behind a bush. There were just 30 meters between us and the antelope. However, I had to get around the bush for a clear shot. But as I began to move outside of it, the lechwe stood up, facing us. Probably it got our wind, which was bad luck because as soon as I tried to draw the bow it ran off. That is hunting!

We followed him with the binoculars and focused on where he had disappeared in the high grass before we started to follow him. When we arrived at the spot where the buck went into the grass, we could not see any tracks or hear anything. What to do? We decided that Izak should move slowly into the high grass while I stayed ready at the edge in case the buck came out again. And indeed, a couple of minutes later the lechwe appeared but immediately sprinted away. Izak returned a minute later and once again we followed the running animal with the binoculars.

It was now midday and we decided to give him and us a break, not to scare him off totally. We sat down in the shade of a bush and enjoyed our lunch-hour sandwich and water before we took up the chase once more. We glassed the area where we last saw him and luckily for us we found that he had also taken a rest. He was lying in front of the high grass. Now we needed to work out how to get there without spooking him again. To the right of the animal was a bush as tall as a man that would give us a position to ambush from, but how to arrive there was the question. We could walk back into the high grass, make a bigger loop around the swamp to get behind him and move slowly through the grass towards him to get to the bush cover. In addition, the wind would be in our favor.

But walking slowly and quietly through two-meter-high swampy grass was challenging. You never know what you might run into, and meanwhile it was hot, too. Our stalk took us about two hours, but we made it and were to



Swampy stalking arena.

get behind the tall bush. We knelt down and cautiously looking around the bush we found the hunting gods were in our favor – the lechwe was still there. It was standing and facing away from us. We ranged it at 37 meters.

“Frank, it’s now or never. We will not get closer,” Izak whispered. “The lechwe has not seen us. Get ready.”

I already pulled an arrow from the quiver and nocked it in silently, adjusting the sliding sight. My blood pressure rose, my heartbeat quickened. *Frank, now is the time*, I said to myself. Cautiously I stood up and pulled my bow to full draw. Quietly and slowly I moved two steps to the right to have a clear view and shooting window. I aimed on the vitals and let loose the arrow. A second later, it passed through the antelope’s body. The buck jumped forward and started running. After about 50 meters, he slowed down, then fell. He was dead in seconds.

“Great, Frank, you made it,” Izak

shouted, patting my shoulder. What a fantastic moment. After some nice trophy pictures and getting the bakkie to load the lechwe, we celebrated with an ice-cold beer. *Memories for a lifetime.*

One more time I can only thank Izak for the great organization, his experience and company and all the nice people I had the opportunity to meet during this fantastic time and safari.

Unfortunately, that was the last time in Africa before the corona pandemic blocked all travels until the beginning of 2022. We had already made plans for 2022 for our next hunting adventure when I got the saddest and shattering message from his wife that Izak, at age 39, passed away tragically in a quad accident. An unbelievable loss of a great person, loving husband and father, exceptional professional hunter and truly honest friend. Rest in peace my friend.

Always good hunting, shoot straight, Waidmannsheil and

“Alles van die Beste”. Frank Berbuir





Happy hunter and PH with the lechwe.

Equipment:

Bow: Mathews Z7x @ 70 lbs

Arrow: Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350

Broadhead: German Kinetics Silverflame 125 grain

Optics: Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder

Release: Scott

German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 23 years. Although he has bowhunted in several countries, he has become addicted to hunting in Africa since his first safari in 2004. Frank is a mechanical engineer and risk manager in the automotive industry.

Lechwe, (genus *Kobus*), an antelope species of the genus *Kobus*. The lechwe, a member of the waterbuck and kob tribe (Reduncini), ranks second only to the nyala among the most aquatic African antelopes. The lechwe is one of only three antelopes (including the closely related kob and the topi) known to form breeding arenas, or leks, with a high population density. There are two species of lechwes. The common lechwe (*Kobus leche*) and the Nile lechwe (*K. megaceros*). The three subspecies of the common lechwe, the red lechwe (*K. leche leche*), the Kafue lechwe (*K. leche kafuensis*), and the black lechwe (*K. leche smithemani*), inhabit floodplains bordering marshes and swamps of the

southern savanna, from southeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through Zambia and northern Botswana to Angola. The Nile lechwe lives on the Nile floodplain bordering the Al-Sudd swamp in South Sudan. In South Africa, they are introduced. Lechwes are long-horned antelopes (males only), with a sturdy build. Hindquarters are higher and more massive than forequarters, the neck is long, and the muzzle is short and rather blunt. Their shoulder height is 85–105 cm or 33–41 inches, and their weight is 60–130 kg or 130–290 pounds. Males are 20 percent larger than females. Their lyre-shaped, heavily ridged horns are 45–90 cm or 18–35 inches long. The coat is greasy

and water-repellent. Females have tawny to chestnut coats and look much alike, apart from minor differences in markings. Red lechwe females are the most colorful. They are bright chestnut with white underparts, throat patch, facial markings, and undertail and with black stripes down the front of their legs. The presence of mature males is advertised not only by the sweeping long horns and by head-high proud posture but by darker coats and markings, which are most pronounced in the black lechwe of Zambia's Lake Bangweulu. However, the most extreme contrast is seen in Nile lechwe rams, which are dark chocolate brown with whitish markings that include a large patch on the neck and shoulders.





GUINEA FOWL -

More Than Meet the Eye

By Ken Bailey



Half a dozen beaters pushed methodically through the grass, shouting and waving makeshift flags as they slowly moved slowly. In front of them three gun dogs did what they do best, following their noses on a scent only they could discern. A quarter mile to the west, six of us were spaced along the opening of a two-track trail, shotguns at the ready. I was stationed in the middle of the shooters, roughly 80 yards from the hunter on each side of me. The expectation was a thrill in itself, as I waited anxiously for the eruption of birds I knew was coming. We'd watched 60 or 70 guineas scurry into the expanse of grass before we set up; at some point, soon, they would break noisily from cover, clawing their way skyward to safety.

Still, it came as a bit of a shock when they did flush, the nearest exploding from cover about 75 yards out, followed

in rapid succession by several more. I wasn't counting, though, as I was busy concentrating on the lead bird, swinging as it angled to my right. As I followed through I watched it crumple, then twisted back to pick up a following bird. It, too, fell at my shot, and I hurried to reload as successive flushes neared our shooting line. I managed to get off one more shot before the sky emptied, but missed completely. When the shooting up and down the line subsided, each of us walked to where we'd marked fallen birds, collecting our prizes before gathering back on the trail. A final tally revealed we'd taken 14 guineas, a pretty good haul from our quickly organized drive.

Over the years, I've hunted guinea fowl in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. That's no surprise, really, as they're among the most widely distributed gamebirds in all of southern Africa. What I've learned over time,

however, is that while they may be common and rather pedestrian by some standards, they are arguably the most challenging and sporting gamebird to hunt.

Ducks and geese can be pretty reliably hunted over decoys in grain fields or on staging ponds. Most of the francolin species, even the revered greywing partridge, will generally hold tight for well-trained pointing dogs. Doves and pigeons are slaves to their stomachs and can be counted on to show up wherever food is available. Sandgrouse, meanwhile, are most often hunted over watering holes, keeping to a schedule you can literally set your watch to.

As for guinea fowl? Sure you can pick away at them from distance with a .22, and I've done that when the objective was to collect a couple for the evening's stew pot. But to get within shotgunning range of these natural survivors can be

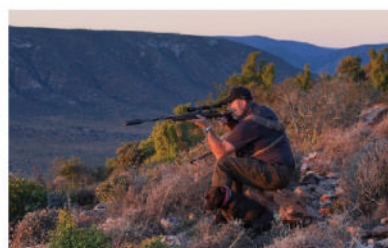
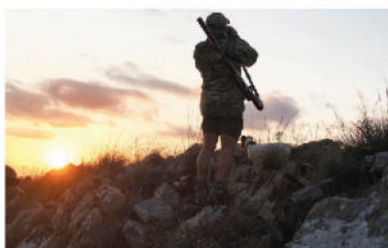
a significant and frustrating challenge.

Walking-up guineas is particularly difficult. In large flocks there are just too many eyes and ears to overcome, and no matter how carefully you stalk them, one or more are almost guaranteed to figure out something's up. Then they'll either run for safety or flush out of range. Either way, more often than not you can expect to fail when stalking these crafty birds. I've enjoyed a few successful sneaks in my time, but the times I've come up empty-handed far outnumber the times I've managed to scrape down a bird or two. Still, it's nothing if not fun trying to sneak up on a flock of guinea fowl, so I'll undoubtedly keep trying when the opportunity presents itself.

To understand what makes guineas such formidable birds to hunt, you need to understand the physical tools they're equipped with and their natural



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tendencies. Beyond having the eyesight of a gunslinger and other-worldly hearing, they can run at an absolutely astounding pace; a wild turkey seems to almost plod in comparison. They're also a gregarious bird, invariably found in flocks from as few as half a dozen to more than 100, and are notoriously chatty, so you can't simply fool one, you've got to fool them all if you're going to get close. Further, they're seldom far from dense cover, so it's not often you trap them in the open. Guineas are born survivors, so those hoping to successfully walk up on them must be patient and persistent. And be prepared for failure.

Pointing dogs can be a great asset when walking-up guineas. They don't hold well in sparse cover, like thin grasslands or crops with little base cover, but they will, on occasion, hold in dense grass or thornbush where they feel secure.

The alternative to sneaking up on guinea fowl is to organize a drive. This is a considerably more effective strategy, but requires planning and several people, both drivers and shooters. Dogs are also an advantage.

Having said that, driving guineas is like herding cats; for every occasion when it works as planned, there are two times when it all goes astray. The basic format is to watch as a flock of guineas toddles into cover, position your beaters in an arcing semicircle around them, make your best guess as to where they'll try to escape and situate your gunners along that path, then have the beaters and any dogs at your disposal move noisily through the cover, attempting to push the birds toward the waiting guns.

Guinea fowl will invariably run from danger at first, but they'll eventually lose their nerve (or become annoyed; who knows how guineas think?) and flush, hopefully towards where the shooters are positioned. It all sounds simple enough, but it rarely goes exactly as planned, so you have to be



prepared to adjust on the fly. Most particularly, shooters must be willing to run quickly to get underneath escaping birds if they choose to escape on a different flightpath than you expected.

Guinea fowl may look a little odd, and toddle about like tipsy grandmothers, but don't mistake that for them being without a keen sense of survival that makes hunting them more than enough challenge and, as often as not, as fruitless as a winter apple tree. In fact, you never really learn to swear until you've hunted guinea fowl. 🦋

The Talla Des Man-eater Resurfaces

By Diggory Hadoke



Born as a child of the Raj to Anglo-Irish stock of modest means, Jim Corbett had free reign over the forests of northern India, as he grew from a boy into a teenager, fully at home under the jungle canopy and intimately familiar with the ways of the beasts and birds lurking within the greenery.



At first a sport hunter, like his more conventional contemporaries, Corbett became less inclined to hunt for the sake of it and focussed on accepting the task of shooting man-eating tigers and leopards when others had failed to do so. In doing so and later recording his reminiscences in print, Corbett became the world's most celebrated hunter.

For his services he would take no fee, but insisted all other hunters vacate the area until he had succeeded in his quest. He walked great distances in arduous conditions, with few possessions and limited equipment, in his search for notorious man-eaters, many with hundreds of victims to their account.

Each time he did so, he took his life in his hands and carried the hopes and

the future safety of countless villagers with him. In his hand, he often carried a Rigby rifle.

The rifle was presented to Corbett in 1907 as a token of appreciation from the authorities for his successful hunt for his first man-eater; the Champawat Tigress, a notorious man-eater, thought to have killed 436 people before meeting her end.

It was purchased from Manton & Co. in Calcutta; a company founded by a relative of the great Joseph Manton, who had apprenticed at James Purdey and Thomas Boss in the early 1800s. It became a successful store, selling the wares of most of Britain's gun and rifle makers.

Corbett's Rigby was a .275 (7x57) magazine rifle. Rigby records can trace it to the original order on 19th April 1905. Manton ordered '3 best Mauser Rigby sporting rifles, Nos. 2508, 2516 & 2517' at a cost of £39. 6s. 0d. It was part of an order which included some second quality .275s and a .350 Mauser, as well as accessories and cases.

The .275 was bought from Manton on behalf of Sir J.P. Hewett, who had a silver oval engraved 'Presented to Mr J.G. Corbett by Sir J.P. Hewett K.C.S.I Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces in recognition of his having killed a man-eating tigress at Champawat in 1907.'

Corbett's Rigby was never destined to become a 'safe queen', it features in many of his thrilling stories of man-eater hunts. Among those tales is that of the Talla Des man-eating tigress and her two unfortunate cubs.

Like many man-eaters, the tigress carried an injury which hampered the hunting of her usual prey, like chital and sambar deer.

She had a deep wound in her leg, caused by the penetration of porcupine quills, which are barbed and impossible to remove. She must have been in constant pain for the eight years she stalked humans, accounting for around 150 souls during her reign of terror.

For decades, nothing more was known about the Talla Des tigress than what Corbett had written in the 1940s. Then, in May 2023, Rigby received a message from a gentleman in Surrey, inside whose suburban home resided the skin of the tigress and within whose family history was some long-lost information about Jim Corbett and the fate of the Talla Des skin.

Before heading for leafy Surbiton, I re-read the story.

It was on April 4 1929 that Corbett set out for the Talla Des tigress. It took several days by train and on foot to reach the village of Talla Kote, from where he began his quest, accompanied by the son of a woman who had been eaten by the tigress, by the name of Dungan Singh.

He soon found two tigers asleep in a clearing, over which he had a good view from his vantage point on a rock outcrop. He shot the first as they slept; being unable to distinguish cub from mother at 120 yards. The second, upon hearing the shot ran up the hill and presented itself broadside, looking back at its sibling, before falling to a second shot from Corbett's .275.

Some 25 years later he wrote 'the cubs had died for the sins of their mother'. They had proven easy but the hunt had only just begun.

The shots flushed the tigress from where she had been resting nearby but she was 200 yards away and running. 'I have never seen an animal fall as convincingly dead as that tiger fell at my shot', wrote Corbett. However, events were to prove otherwise.

The dead tigress slipped down a slope until coming to rest on a sapling above a ravine. After a few minutes she fell and Corbett fired at her body as she did so, out of pure exhilaration. It seemed not to matter at the time but it left him short



of ammunition; ammunition he would later need.

Walking to retrieve the fallen beast, Corbett was alerted to a presence, slowly scaling a bank 400 yards distant, clearly lame, clearly hit, but still moving. His shot missed and his rifle was empty. He could only watch as the tigress limped out of sight.

'Madho Singh came tearing down the hill with a fresh supply of ammunition' but it was too late. Corbett found cut hairs and a blood trail, 'But as night was now closing in and there was not sufficient light...I decided to return to the village...'

After two more days of arduous and





dangerous tracking of the wounded tigress, Corbett found her approaching him, as he rested with his back to a tree. She lay down 100 yards from Corbett's seat, but he could not get a clear shot and had to stalk her again when she moved on.

He continued to stalk the wounded man-eater, a terrifying prospect for a man in robust good health but Corbett was suffering from an abscess in his inner ear so severe that he felt light-headed, and his left eye was swollen so much he could not see through it.

Add to this pain, the heat, the altitude, and the fatigue of tracking in mountains for hours on end without food and you get some idea of how tough and determined Corbett must have been to continue his pursuit regardless.

Overcome with vertigo, Corbett climbed into an oak tree to rest, and it was then his abscess ruptured, venting through his left ear and nose. Corbett resumed his hunt feeling physically more able and less hindered by the infection.

A good night's sleep allowed him to recover further and the next day he got another shot at the tigress when she presented broadside at 60 yards. Corbett's shot was true, but the bullet

passed through the animal without striking anything vital and she sprang forward and disappeared.

In his pursuit of the fleeing tigress Corbett almost launched himself over a cliff to certain death, saved only by grasping a sapling as he fell. After scrambling back to safety, Corbett checked his ammunition, *'satisfied it was one of a fresh lot I had recently got from Manton in Calcutta'* and with a clear blood trail to follow, set off again.

He found the tigress hiding, poised to spring at him, in waist-high bracken and managed to shoot before she launched her attack, *'my first bullet raked her from end to end and the second bullet broke her neck'*.

Corbett tells us that his first shot, fired on 7 April 1929, *'bushed'* on the tiger's shoulder joint, the second, fired as she fell over the cliff, missed, as did the third, taken at 400 yards as she crested the hill. On April 12, his fourth shot, at 60 yards, had *'gone clean through'* without hitting any vital organs and the fifth and sixth shots had been fatal.

So, the tigress was hit in the right shoulder, mid-body and then frontally, twice, in the neck: four bullet holes.

When we visited the owner to inspect the skin, which is somewhat faded but in

better condition than one might expect of an 80-year-old relic that has spent part of its life in India, the bullet holes did indeed correspond with Corbett's account of his shots. The tigress is relatively small but well mounted, in fierce, snarling pose by Van Ingen.

The owner explained that his great grandfather was born in 1875, in India, and was a civil administrator. He had returned to England in 1921 but he and Corbett, childhood friends, had remained in touch. It is likely that Corbett gave the skin to the owner's great grandfather in the early 1940s.

Looking at the tigress, alone in an upstairs room dedicated to her repose, she is recognisable as the same beast photographed back in May 1929. There is a close-up photograph of her with the grandchild of her last victim. The clear 'Y' shaped stripes either side of her head are unmistakable.

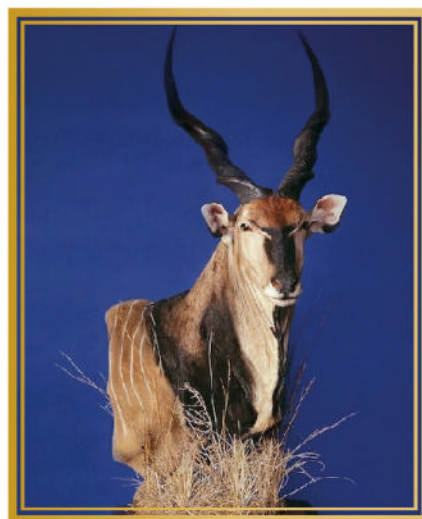
We reunited the Rigby .275 with the tigress for some photographs to record the occasion. They had last met on that fateful day; 12 April 1929, when her life was ended and the villagers of Talla Kote relieved of their terror.

Only one other skin of a Corbett tiger is known to still exist. That was from the Thak Man-eater, which was given to the late Henry Walck of Oxford University Press in New York after Corbett's death.

I uncovered, in a provincial auction in 2021, some lost letters from Jim Corbett to his friend Sir William Ibbotson, among them were some photographs from several of his adventures, including images of the Talla Des tigress and her cubs.

Linking those old photographs and re-reading Corbett's incredible story of his hunt for the tigress and now contemplating her faded skin on the floor of a Home Counties bedroom somehow condensed the last century into a few places and objects. How our world has changed. 🌿

To learn more about John Rigby & Co., visit: www.johnrigbyandco.com.



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Plains game hunt with the LEGENDARY SHARPS 1874

By Erich Mueller

Hardly a Wild West scene is as well known as the long-range shot in the film Quigley Down Under. The weapon used by Tom Selleck as the sniper, Quigley, in the Australian film was a Sharps 1874 with Creedmoor Diopter. It was this film and this weapon that gave birth to what I would call something of a crazy idea: Why not use this breech-loading rifle in an African antelope hunt? For those who are wondering why crazy, you must take a closer look at the history and the technical specifications

The Sharps 1874 flanked by its old muzzleloader brother Henry and young sister in the Mauser system.



The rifles designed by Sharps were built especially during the American Civil War. Later, the Model 1874 was specifically designed for North American big game and given the nickname of the Buffalo Rifle. It was a rather sad chapter for America when professional buffalo hunters nearly eradicated the herds of millions of bison. The popularity of the rifle was due to its simplicity, robustness, and caliber.

The cartridge .45-70 Government issue was used widely as a military bullet. Easy, and available nearly everywhere. It was issued to buffalo hunters free of charge to accelerate the extermination of the buffaloes and therefore that of the Indians. In my research I discovered the Italian weapons manufacturer Davide Pedersoli. Founded in 1958, this company has been dedicated to researching and manufacturing historical weapons since its beginning. Numerous awards are the best proof of the quality and precise ballistic properties of Pedersoli weapons, so it was not hard to find the Sharps 1874 I was looking for and decided on the 1874 Sharps Sporting No. 3 Extra Deluxe.

Polished frame and fittings, nickel silver front stock cap, a specially selected walnut stock with perfect fits, clean blends and gold inlays designed by Bison. When I first held the gem with a

total length of 124 cm, I thought that the idea of this rifle on plains game was really crazy. I had a fantastic rifle in my hands, but with the massive octagonal barrel that alone has a length of almost 82 cm, it also weighed 5.2 kilos.

The next step took me to Ferlach, to my longtime friend Herbert Scheiring, arguably one of the best gunsmiths in the world. The Sharps case block closure, the forged main components, deep drawn barrel, elicited from Herbert an appreciative smile. The supplied Creedmoor Diopter was then mounted immediately and then injected. After only a few shots and thanks to many years of Herbert's experience and the perfect combination of double set trigger, Creedmoor Diopter and tunnel front sight with interchangeable inserts, we had the desired result.

The next step from Buffalo Bill in Africa was an unexpected call. A longtime customer and hunting client of mine, who was also part of the Royal Family in Dubai, asked me to organize a plains-game hunt in Namibia for him and his friends. Since I had already twice successfully hunted in Namibia with him, I already knew his wishes and prepared a safari in the Etosha area, where he was able to hunt the black-nosed impala. Knowing that he was an excellent shooter, I asked him if he wanted to go hunting with a Sharps for those antelopes in Namibia. After only a few YouTube studies came the happy confirmation:

"That's exactly what I've always wanted to try." Said and done!

The organization was completed quickly. I had known my outfitter and PH Marius for several years and quickly had the confirmation for the desired period - early July. I flew Qatar from Vienna via Doha directly to Windhoek. When checking in at the airline, in the gun case, next to the Sharps was my smaller custom-made .30-06 Mauser 98 alone weighed a whopping 17 kilograms. Additional payment was needed. After the normal entry



The diopter sight enables precise shooting at long range.

formalities and the registration of the weapons in Windhoek we went on a five-hour drive north to our camp.

The next morning it was time for a test shoot. We placed the paper disc at 150 meters. The first two shots were taken as usual seated, but the result was not pleasing. Too deep and too far

With the replica of the Sharps 1874, modern ammunition can also be used.



to the right. Rashid just did not feel comfortable to shoot sitting and the next three shots were over sticks. The hit picture was immediately completely different. All three shots were only a few centimeters apart from each other directly in the middle, vertical about 5 cm deep. All top-placed shots. There was no need for readjustment. The difference in height was certainly because we had used a 405-grain bullet shooting in Ferlach, and a 325-grain bullet in Namibia. Don't forget that we have shot over an open sight and at 150 meters with the Sharps. Rashid had earned the first spurs. Paper is one thing, but what about hunting in practice?

Our hunting area bordered directly on the Etosha National Park, with varied terrain, rocky hills, dense bush and open savanna. The main roads lead only to the natural or artificially designed waterholes. From there it was hunting on foot, stalking on fresh track. Our PH Marius had previously told us we might see lions, and this was confirmed on our first hunting day. Not 100 meters in front of our hunting



car we saw a group of six lions. Even when we came closer and no more than 30 feet separated us from the cats, they ignored us. There were only lionesses in this group. Marius pointed to a herd of zebra approximately 300 meters away, the focus of the lionesses' interest. Then somehow the situation changed, and it seemed the lionesses were not too pleased with our presence. They realized that we were attracting the attention of zebras to us and thus to them. They did not creep closer to the zebras. No unnecessary movement. They knew their chance would come. Sooner or later. This incredible experience told us one thing: To be careful when stalking.

We saw large herds of springbok, blesbok, zebra, black and blue wildebeest but also medium sized groups of female Livingstone eland and Marius decided to try our luck with the springbok. The wind was in our favor, and we stopped the vehicle well camouflaged next to a group of trees, about 350 meters from

The original design of the Sharps causes a stir.



the first springbok of about 110 animals and began stalking. Isolated bushes and smaller trees offer us enough camouflage to approach to 150 meters. Marius indicated the shooter and Rashid was ready on the sticks. At 125 meters the shot broke and was down. The remaining herd fled then stopped further away to watch. We waited a few minutes then

went to find the buck. *How effectively the Sharps rifle and the 45-70 cartridge brought down the target.*

Marius told Rashid how in death the springbok's white hair tufts stand up behind the tail root and smell of caramel, a scent that comes from glands under the white hair tufts, and that only a few minutes after death the glands close. Sometimes the springbok raise their hair tufts, arch their backs, jump stiff-legged into the air and thereby release this scent to attract females. After the usual photos with trophy and of course the rifle I could make out another buck. Alone, standing between two trees, tugging at some blades of grass. My guess was confirmed by Rashid and, of course, Marius. A very strong old buck. Short question to Rashid and a nod.

The downwardly pulled lower lever, and down sliding case block showed the cartridge insertion into the barrel. The Hornady 45-70 with 325 grains slid into the barrel. Lower lever up and the massive block closed precisely. The target stick at the correct height. Aim at the buck. The light heat waves that you often feel clearly through a riflescope were not an issue here with the open sight. The calm breathing showed Rashid concentrated, already focused the target. Then the bang! Incredible. Open sight, 262 meters, not a big target and a clean shot. Handshakes

and hugs to the hunter. Rashid and the almost 6-kilo Sharps have found each other here for life! What a start to a safari.

In the evening the plan for the next days were discussed. Black-nosed impala, found only in northern Namibia, is at the top of Rashid's wish list. All those who have experience in hunting impala know how hard it is to hunt this antelope species, and the fact that they belong to the favorite prey of lion and leopard, makes them particularly alert and shy.

Marius knows his hunting ground very well and guided us the next morning to a favorite place of black-nosed impala. We stop the vehicle about 400 meters from a waterhole and cautiously stalk in that direction. Somehow the wind seems to be allied with the impalas and kept swiveling. After two hours we were finally near the waterhole and saw some impala, but only a few females and young. We left the waterhole and I think in this situation, Rashid would prefer to have a short, lightweight rifle and not an almost 6-kilo Sharps!

Suddenly I saw something brown between all the green, and binos confirmed my guess. Just over 300 meters away was our destiny. To make this one-of-a-kind trophy is one thing, approaching a good shooting distance is another. Rashid was already very familiar with the Sharps and perhaps adrenaline made him forget its weight. Carefully, step by step we stalked closer to 80 meters. This time, Rashid used a fork of a tree as a support and he and the Sharps had the prize of a big, black-nosed impala trophy.

Then we decided to do some wingshooting for sand grouse which flew to different waterholes. Fun factor high, effort low and the resulting taste just delicious and a welcome change between all the game meat. The sand grouse were slowly sizzling on the grill as we planned the next few days. We wanted to see if the Sharps would manage larger game species.



The long octagonal barrel is designed for long distances.



We started with a fantastic sunrise, hot coffee and eggs with roasted kudu meat strips, wonderful crisp morning. First, we drove to the waterholes and left the vehicle 300 - 400 meters away, stalking slowly and always against the wind. At the first two waterholes we only found fresh tracks of three eland bulls and a lot of zebras, but no game around, so continued. On the way to the next



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waterhole, we passed open grassy areas and Marius pointed to a group of zebras just over 500 meters away. We stopped in the shade of a tree offering plenty of coverage. The terrain and the wind were perfect. Using the bushes, we stalked to within 200 meters zebras. The herd consisted mainly of mares with half-grown foals and some young stallions. We watched them for a few minutes and were just about to start the way back when suddenly a splendid specimen of an old stallion came out behind two trees. We wanted to try to get closer.

Anyone who has hunted zebra knows how hard these boys are to shoot. But Rashid had proved several times that he was an excellent shooter and had the Sharps very well under control, but a full-grown zebra stallion is a different story from an impala, especially using a weapon 130 cm long and weighing about 6 kilos.

We were got to 80 meters from the stallion, which stood alone on the left of the herd watching over its harem. The small bush behind which we were lying on the ground was not big enough to shoot from with sticks. So, my backpack was turned into a rifle rest. While prone shooting may sound easy, it is significantly more difficult than when



The artfully crafted Sharps does its job uncompromisingly.



Probably the first springbuck doublette shot with a sharps 1874.



standing and shooting from the sticks. The stallion had somehow noticed that not 80 meters away from him something moved in bush. He stood directly facing us. We could see his teeth as he fluttered his upper and lower lips. Very clear for us. He would not turn broadside. His next movement would be to flee, and the zebras would leave us in a cloud of dust.

Marius whispered softly to Rashid: "Go straight on the chest." This is exactly where the heart lies just behind it. I can hardly believe what I see next. The stallion reared up on his hind legs, a 90-degree turn, and he collapsed. That's it. We were covered in dust by the running zebra herd. When the air cleared, we went to the fallen beast. The 45-70 projectile with a 325-grain load was literally a hit. After souvenir photos along with the Sharps we went back to the camp to watch the autopsy to see which path the projectile took. The bullet had gone straight through the heart. It passed through the pectoral muscle and even struck a bone before it pierced the heart. It was congratulations!

But as with any hunting safari, time always goes by way too fast and too soon the last day of hunting knocks on the door. An eland bull was still wanted.



Simply impressive: open sights and such precise shots.

That morning we found tracks of the three eland bulls that Marius knew, an old gray-blue bull escorted by two mature youngsters which the Bushmen say are “askaris”, companions to an old, lone animal. The old bull benefits from the vigilance of the two younger ones and they in turn learn from the experience of the old bull. These three bulls were not half an hour ahead of

us. Eland shooting is one of the biggest challenges for most hunters. Patience and endurance are vital. That zigzag behavior is typical of eland if they are looking for a suitable place where they can settle down. This hacking is of course not to our advantage because it keeps you in the wind.

Over three hours passed as we followed Marius till we saw the three

eland in front of us. The old bull was almost completely behind a bush and we could only dimly see his head with the long big horns. The two askaris were to his left without cover. We may have been too close, or they got wind of us, but they made a 180 degree turn and stormed off. The strong old bull followed the two, and we could only watch as the whole effort of almost four hours of stalking disappeared in the dense bush. It should have been the culmination of this safari: A 900 kilo antelope from a Sharps 45-70 but it was not to be. But there was no sadness about the unsuccessful 10-kilometer stalk, just a kind of pride: We had done it with the Sharps Monster.

We still had a good seven kilometer walk back to the car.

Just before we reached the waterhole where we had parked, Marius stopped. His trained eye had spotted two gemsboks sheltering from the midday heat in the shade of two trees. The unsuccessful eland was forgotten, and hunting fever was rekindled. The gemsbok had not seen us, and Rashid was ready on the sticks in a few seconds. The bigger of the two gemsbok was standing broadside not 80 meters away. Take a deep breath and shoot. The buck jumped and dropped. Although not an eland, a great gemsbok now concluded our wonderful Namibian safari.

We had come to Namibia with a Sharps 1874 with an open sight to test it for its antelope-hunting capability. Yes, the Sharps is long, and it is heavy. It is a single action and has a rather unusual European caliber in 45-70. Thanks to the open sight with diopter and tunnel front sight and the excellent shooting performance and accuracy, we did not regret at any time the decision to hunt with this rifle. Tastes differ, but no one who got to see this rifle on this hunt could resist a whisper of wonder - a classic beauty! What more could one ask for? Now, the next thought is not so far away:

Buffalo hunting with a Sharps 1874! 🦌





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Why the British shotgun?

By Johan van Wyk

Almost without fail, the image of the classic British shotgun is that of a well-made side-by-side in the hands of a neatly dressed gentleman shooter in the game field. Sometimes, the gentleman shooter carrying the gun may even be accompanied by a second, slightly more humbly dressed individual, also carrying a gun but with a cartridge bag slung over his shoulder. This would be the loader, at the ready with the gentleman shooter's second gun and, in many instances, the guns would be a matching pair by one of the famous London gunmakers.



Three different British designs compared. At the top, we have a rare John Dickson 12-bore on their trigger-plate action. In the centre is a Westley Richards hand-detachable lock (or 'droplock') gun dating from 1897. At the bottom is a classic James Purdey Beesley-patent sidelock ejector gun. All three are in 12-bore.

The British shotgun has another side to it as well, though. Not every shotgun that left the showroom or factory in England and Scotland during times gone by was a best quality sidelock; in fact, many were decidedly humbler in appearance and decoration, and the British catered to virtually every taste and budget over the years. To put this in perspective, let's

look at what the British made and how they did it.

ACTIONS

I have already mentioned the sidelock action. It is at the top of the pyramid insofar as gunmaking is concerned for the British and, with a few exceptions, were usually the finest and most expensive models produced by the various makers.

Beautiful wood, extensive engraving, and the finest workmanship were hallmarks of the sidelock and the well-to-do. Also, the cream of British society preferred the sidelock-actioned gun as it was very much the thing to have and be seen with during times gone by.

Sidelock actions can be divided into two categories: bar-action and back-action sidelocks, and the difference lies

in the positioning of the mainsprings within the action. With the bar-action sidelock, the mainspring is positioned in front of the tumbler (better known to the rest of the gunmaking world as the “hammer”), whereas with the back-action, the mainspring is situated behind the tumbler.

Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Bar-action locks can generally be a more elegant, rounded shape, whereas the lockplates of back-action locks can sometimes have a more elongated shape to accommodate the moving parts on the inside.

Back-action locks, on the other hand, are generally somewhat stronger because there is no need to remove metal from the bar of the action (the part of the action that supports the underside of the barrels, just below the chambers) to support the mainspring. For this reason, sidelock double-barrelled rifles were often made on back-action sidelock actions, but this was by no means always the case. Sidelock-acted shotguns, especially best-quality guns, were generally made on bar-action sidelock actions as the more elegant shape of the locks allowed for very elegant engraving patterns.

The boxlock action was the invention of William Anson and John Deeley in 1877. Anson and Deeley were, respectively, a gunmaker and the managing director at the time of Westley Richards & Co in Birmingham. The boxlock action was developed to meet a demand for a double gun action that was not only less expensive than the sidelock action but easier to produce as well. In this, the action’s two inventors succeeded admirably, it must be said.

The boxlock became an accepted staple throughout the British gun trade and in addition to Westley Richards, firms like WW Greener and Webley & Scott made them in very large quantities. Boxlock-acted guns can be found in a bewildering variety of styles and finishing. The majority were well-made working guns, with or without ejectors, and stocked in decent,



The venerable boxlock, in this case a 12-bore by William Evans, made on what is known as a Webley screw-grip action because of the unique rib extension.



This is lovely Blanche 16-bore back-action sidelock shotgun. Because the mainspring is situated behind the tumbler in this design, the locks have a different shape compared to that of a bar-action sidelock.

Elegance personified: a sidelever, back-action sidelock 20-bore by Stephen Grant with Damascus steel barrels.



strong wood. Guns such as this were aimed at the less well-heeled as well as for export to the various colonies at the time such as Canada, South Africa, and Australia, and they were used not only for bird hunting but were called upon for troublesome leopards, snakes, native insurrections, domestic disputes, and a whole host of other problems where the use of a shotgun was called for.

On the very lowest rung of the scale, rough, poorly finished guns were supplied in large numbers to places like India and Africa. With these guns, quality was of no concern, just the fact that they would go bang if a trigger was pulled. Many such guns (and not only boxlock-acted guns but a great many hammerguns as well) were produced by makers such as Greener and Westley Richards, or even imported from

Belgium, had a name engraved on them, and were put back on a ship bound for Ceylon or wherever there was demand for cheap shooting irons. I have often encountered guns such as these in South Africa, and in many instances the lack of quality, proper fit, and finish is readily apparent. The guns in question were also shot off the face by a steady diet of stout 12-bore loads in almost every instance.

The upper end of the boxlock stable was a different proposition, though. Of all the various British makers, Greener and Westley Richards made a speciality of best grade boxlocks (both firms made a variety of guns, from the cheapest to the most expensive). Greener guns were exported to South Africa in quantity and therefore have an almost cult-like following over there. The very best Greener guns, however, were never



The image usually associated with fine British shotguns: a well-heeled gentleman, in this case one of the greatest game shots of all time, Lord Ripon, with his loaders and his trio of Purdey game guns in the field. (Source unknown)

made in very large quantities and are therefore not frequently encountered and quite sought-after by collectors. These guns, called G-Grade guns by Greener, were all slightly unique in their own way and very lavishly engraved indeed. They were made by a special team of workers in the Greener factory and when these men passed on, G-Grade guns became increasingly more difficult to manufacture as the skills required to make them were no longer available. Best-quality Greener boxlocks were every bit as well made and required just as much time as the finest sidelocks. Whenever one shows up for sale, it causes quite a flurry among collectors.

Westley Richards, inventors of the boxlock, went out on a different design limb with their own best-grade boxlocks. In 1895, at the request of Leslie B Taylor, a brilliant inventor,

and the Westley Richards manager at the time (he would become managing director of the company in 1899). Taylor instructed one of the skilled actioners at the company to investigate the possibility of removing the friction-bearing pins through the body of the boxlock action. Removing these pins is no simple matter, however, because they support the action's lockwork and is therefore crucial to the function of the gun. What the unknown actioner came up with in 1897, however, was nothing short of brilliant.

What this actioner came up with, was to fit the lock parts onto the bottom-plate of the action, thus removing the need for pins through the action body. As a bonus, the new design was somewhat stronger as well as a conventional boxlock as the holes through the action body inevitably created a weak spot. The

Westley Richards hand-detachable lock boxlock action, as it became known (alias the "droplock" in the United States and elsewhere), is the gun for which Westley Richards is best known. It is still made to this day in both shotgun and rifle form and is rightly regarded as an icon.

Aside from the boxlock and sidelock, the third action type that may be encountered on a British-made gun has Caledonian origins. It is called the trigger-plate action because the lock work is mounted on the trigger-plate of the action, and it was designed in 1879 by James MacNaughton of Edinburgh. MacNaughton's original design featured a very long top-lever that served not only to open the gun but to cock the locks as well. Another well-known Scottish maker, John Dickson, took MacNaughton's design and refined it, creating an action that was not only extraordinarily beautiful but very strong as well. He called it the "round" action because of the beautifully rounded action bar.

Round-action guns are as a rule beautifully crafted and highly sought-after because of their relative rarity. Some were made with decorative sideplates, others with elegant sidelevers. A few (a very few!) were even made as three- and four-barrelled guns, but few people have seen one of these rarities, much less owned or shot with one.

MATCHING THE GUN TO THE GAME

Aside from superior workmanship, British guns were also tailor-made for different purposes. So-called duck guns were aimed at the waterfowling market and were made on heftier actions and with long chambers that could handle stouter loads. Some firms made a speciality of making duck guns and they are certainly a conversation piece if you know what you are looking at. I owned a boxlock 12-bore duck gun by GE Lewis of Birmingham for a while and although it was beautifully made, was just too much of a good thing for me. It was heavy and very tightly choked and

I sold it to a British dealer after a short while. If you hunted ducks and the other larger waterfowl for a living, though, a duck gun was just the ticket, and many are still in use.

These days, the various clay-target shooting disciplines are dominated by over/under guns, but the situation was slightly different a century ago. The side-by-side was the gun of choice for almost everybody, and even though a few over/under guns were available by makers such as Boss, Woodward, and others, they were not in widespread use at the time and prohibitively expensive. Pigeon guns (called thus because of the live pigeon shooting competitions that were popular before the clay target became the norm) were generally made to shoot ammunition with 70 mm cases (1¼-ounce loads) and were heavier as well: around 7½ pounds for a 12-bore. Pigeon guns were made in fair numbers and are quite sought-after today for both clay-target shooting as well as high birds. They make good game guns as well, provided one keeps in mind that they tend to have a bit of choke.

By far the most numerous type of British shotgun made, however, is the game gun. The game gun was made for driven shooting and was generally proofed for a load of 1½ ounces of shot from 2½-inch chambers and made to weigh somewhere between six and seven pounds. Literally thousands of game guns were made, and they are frequently encountered.

WHY THE ENGLISH GUN?

Over the years, I have owned several very nice English guns, including a London “best” or two, and I willingly admit that I have a very big soft spot for English guns. As far as I’m concerned, they have a certain something about them that sets them apart, as I shall attempt to explain.

First, the better grade British guns were handcrafted from the best materials available at the time by some of the best craftsmen with the benefit of generations of experience behind them. This is the reason for the English gun’s longevity: fine materials and workmanship, which



Two vintage 12-bore British game guns out in Africa doing what they were designed for. The top gun is a Holland & Holland Dominion dating from the 1900, and the gun below is a William Evans boxlock.

in turn is partly responsible for the prices of some of the better British guns. Skilled time at the workbench has always been a rare, expensive, and hard-to-find commodity.

Another thing that sets the English gun apart is in the details that are not readily apparent. To ensure the longevity of the steel used for the action, action bodies were color case-hardened, a vital step of the finishing process. Internal parts on good grade guns were highly polished to ensure that they were free of tooling marks and fitted and functioned together properly. This went a long way towards protecting against corrosion, and on some best guns the internal parts of the action were even gold washed to provide an extra layer of protection against rust.

Another thing to keep in mind is that good British guns are noted for their longevity. A well-made gun in good condition that is properly maintained will give a couple of lifetimes of trouble-free service and, indeed, I know of quite a few British guns that are nearing the 150-year-old benchmark despite very regular use. This is a testament to the workmanship that went into them as well as the quality of the materials used

in their construction. I’m not suggesting for one moment that the quality and workmanship lavished on some of the guns made today in Europe and elsewhere are inferior, but they have yet to withstand the acid test of time, whereas the British gun has already passed this test with flying colors.

To be sure, breakages can and will occur, and setting things right can sometimes be a pain, especially if you live in Africa or some other remote location. There are several skilled people out there who can make replacement parts such as springs and firing pins, however, so barring a total catastrophe of sorts, mending an ailing gun can be done.

Lastly, and this is a purely personal consideration, I think a good British shotgun is one of the most attractive things on the planet. They generally have balance and handling characteristics like nothing else, and a good, well-fitting gun literally comes alive in the hand. When stocked to good dimensions with fine wood and sound barrels, owning and using such a gun is truly a joy, and I get enormous enjoyment out of spending a day in the field with a British gun cradled in my arms. 🦆

Holland's Super Thirty

The .300 Holland & Holland is coming up to its one-hundredth birthday (1925-2025). By coincidence, it will celebrate its centenary when Beretta, now owner of Holland & Holland, observes its 500th. This world of guns is replete with history.

Flossiest of the flossy: A .300 H&H built on a Dakota Traveler (takedown) action by Tony Galazan's Connecticut Shotgun Manufacturing Company. It retails at \$32,000—a bit much for most of us, but not unusual for Holland's Super 30, a truly classic cartridge.



Considering the number of rival .300s that have gate-crashed the scene during that time, one might be tempted to dismiss the .300 H&H as a has-been, and many do. But while its death or displacement has been rumored seemingly forever, it soldiers on—still being loaded by ammunition companies, still being chambered in fine rifles, still highly respected by those who know it.

Originally called “Holland’s Super 30,” later generally known as the .300 Magnum, it’s simply the .375 H&H belted case necked down to .308. As originally loaded by Kynoch, it was offered with bullet weights of 150, 180, and 220 grains, at 3,000 feet per second (fps), 2,750, and 2,300 respectively.

That ballistic performance is solidly in the center of what is offered today in cartridges ranging from the .308 Winchester and .30-06 on the low side, to the .300 Weatherby on the larger. Of course, there are still bigger thirties today, such as the .30-.378 Weatherby and .300 Remington Ultra Mag, but these are not practical hunting cartridges for the vast majority of situations.

For comparison, factory .308 fires a 150-grain bullet at around 2,750 fps, the .30-06 at 2,900, and the .300 Weatherby at 3,500. All can be juiced by handloading (the Weatherby not so much) but the .300 H&H can reach 3,200 fps. With heavier bullets it has a great advantage over such as the .308 because of powder capacity

and encroachment on same by longer bullets.

In terms of accuracy, the .300 H&H said everything it needed to say in 1935 when Ben Comfort won the 1,000 yard Wimbledon match with a .300 H&H built on an Enfield P17 action. Winchester chambered it in its new Model 70 bolt action that came out in 1936, every custom maker offered it, and it has been chambered in the Remington Model 700 and Ruger No. 1, among others.

Ammunition? It’s been offered by every major maker, foreign and American, and is still available from several—including loads with the latest premium bullets.

The question is really this: Why would you get a .300 H&H instead of, say, a .30-06 or a .300 Winchester Magnum? The answer lies in the cartridge’s shape—slim, tapered and deadly as an intercontinental ballistic missile.

One of my enduring memories of my first hunting safari in Tanzania was returning to camp with Finn Aagaard in a small boat. He wanted to signal the camp so he picked up Robin Hurt’s .375 Weatherby and fired a shot. The rifle had been sitting in the baking sun, was almost too hot to touch, and the near-parallel sides of the cartridge froze the action shut. It was several hours, a long soaking in cool water, and the application of a hardwood club on the bolt handle before we got the rifle open.

There ensued, around the campfire and lubricated with copious amounts of “The Famous Grouse,” a discussion



on high-pressure cartridges, parallel case sides, and the boundless advantages of a cartridge that may offer a little less velocity but will not, under any circumstances, render your rifle inoperable.

This is where both the .300 H&H and its parent, the .375 H&H, shine. I've never seen either one make an action stiff to open, and I've put together some pretty hot .300 loads. What's more, the tapered case feeds flawlessly and effortlessly and every time. It can also be fed into the chamber in dead silence, which is necessary more often than you might think.

All of the so-called improved cartridges, with their short, fat cases and near-parallel sides, do not feed easily, and never feed silently, and are prone to lock up the bolt in extreme heat. They are shorter, so they can be fitted into a shorter action. So what?

Most of the advantages of cartridges like the .300 WSM, .300 Ruger Compact Magnum, .300 Remington SAUM, et al, are ephemeral at best. A few more feet per second? A hundred-yard group that's a tenth of an inch tighter? An action half an inch shorter? Sorry, but not one of those so-called advantages—or even all of them put together—is worth the price if it means giving up rock-solid reliability.

When Holland's Super 30 was introduced in 1925, Brits were hunting all over the world, from the Kalahari to the Himalayas to the scorching plains of northern India to the abysses of Abyssinia, to the Serengeti Plain. Holland & Holland knew a thing or two about what

Winchester Model 70, a pre-'64 made in 1952, fitted with a Zeiss Terra 3X3-9x42 scope. As fine a rifle for plains game as has ever been made.



Typical .300 H&H accuracy in the Model 70.

The .300 H&H (center) with the .300 WSM and its parent, the .375 H&H. It's easy to see why the two Holland cartridges feed easily and don't lock up actions in the heat. The WSM may match, or even exceed, the .300 H&H in some ways, but falls far short in others.



worked in those climes, which ranged from thirty below to, sometimes, 120 degrees. (Black buck on the northern plains of India. You can look it up.) From sea level to 15,000 feet, without a gunsmith or a backup for a thousand miles.

My old friend, Tony Henley, was a professional hunter in Kenya and Tanzania, and later in Botswana. His mid-range rifle was a Holland .300 bolt action. The bluing was polished down to a stylish grey, but it was smooth as silk and well looked after. Most of what he had to say on the subject of the newer, faster .300s is contained in the paragraphs above, and it's as valid today as it was 30 years ago.

I suspect, as the anniversary approaches, we will see a few special-edition rifles in .300 H&H, and rightly so. It's a truly great cartridge, with nothing left to prove. 🦒

Of Stern Stuff

By Wayne van Zwoll

Frontiers – African and American – tested hunters and gun-makers alike.



Bespoke double and magazine rifles are still made largely by hand at Westley Richards, Birmingham.

Westley, wrote his successor, “looked you through and through and seemed to see less without than within ... an expression severe, defiant, almost forbidding ... the whole attitude one of compression and power ... armed to grapple with obstacles and to overcome them.”

His father, William Westley Richards, was less intimidating. Born to an old Birmingham family in 1789, he followed a forebear into gun-making and by 1812 had committed to build “as good a gun as can be made.” A man of many interests, William became a civic leader. He was also an avid sportsman and rode to the hounds. He gave generously to charity, and when at his shop a worker floundered under an oppressive mortgage, William secured the deed and gave it to the man.

His inventive mind led to several patents, his first on gun locks in 1821. He was ever testing fresh ideas. One day under leaking skies he opened a collapsible umbrella. When onlookers laughed, he

drew it closed. The subsequent shower soaked him, perhaps bringing to mind Disraeli’s observation that in a free country everyone is allowed mimic his neighbors.

In 1813 William and his father established the Birmingham Proof House for the arms industry. At

No. 82 High Street, William Westley Richards’ shop was distanced from those of other Birmingham gun-makers. Its practices differed too, aligning more with London’s. Most operations were finished in-house, not farmed out to specialists. Instead of building rifles of common form and features, William welcomed custom orders. His competition, he decided, was not local, but in London, where landed sportsmen spent lavishly on firearms.

In 1815 William opened a London outlet at 170 New Bond Street, in the city’s fashionable gun-making hub. He hired affable, quick-witted William Bishop as his agent, an ace salesman soon known as the Bishop of Bond Street. Six years later William patented his copper Waterproof

Safety Primer, a giant step away from flint ignition.

When in 1840 William retired, the company fell to his eldest son, Westley, born in 1814 to his first wife, Anne, shortly before her death.

Westley was an achiever like his father. But while William had an engaging, easy-going manner, Westley was stern and unforgiving. In 1845 he wedded 22-year-old Emma Fane. Their marriage was cut two years later, when a horse threw Emma from the saddle. Westley was left with their infant daughter.

The American frontier posed new obstacles to gun-makers, but similar hazards. In 1816 Eliphalet Remington II, or Lite, had just turned 23. His father had bought a couple of hundred acres above a place called The Gulph in upstate New York. Clearing the land, then building a dam, he added a forge with a smelting furnace. There Lite made a rifle barrel.

Pumping bellows to heat a flat iron skelp cherry-red, he wound it about a mandrel slightly smaller than the finished bore. Heating the tube white-hot, he sprinkled it with borax and sand. Holding one end in tongs, he pounded the other on stone to seat the coils. After it cooled, he filed flats to make the tube octagonal. A gunsmith in Utica charged a dollar to cut rifling.

Making and fitting lock parts proved as difficult. The hammer had to scribe a precise arc, striking flint against the steel frizzen for a brisk, reliable spark. Iron oxide and uric acid colored the steel a popular hazel-brown hue; bees-wax sealed Lite’s hand-shaped walnut stock. Shooting his way to second place at a local match, he agreed to make a rifle like his for the winner – for \$10.

After wedding Abigail Paddock, Lite scoured farms for metal to smelt. He

built more rifles; they sold immediately. Only U.S. arsenals at Springfield and Harper's Ferry were mass-producing muskets.

The Erie Canal, begun in 1817, was completed in 1825. Nearly 500 kilometers long, it spanned upper New York State from Lake Erie to the upper Hudson River, an aquatic link to New York City and the Atlantic Ocean. To market his rifles, Lite traveled most of its length by Canal packets pulled by relays of horses. Total fare: \$15 – meals included!

In 1828 Lite bought land on the Mohawk River near the canal. Short months later, his father was hauling timber from The Gulph to build a house for the young couple. On a rough patch, he fell from his wagon and under an iron wheel. He died that week.

The Gulph was not finished with the family. One August day in 1841, Abigail and their daughter Maria hitched a horse to their light carriage. On the road that had claimed Lite's father, Maria opened her parasol. It popped like a pistol shot. The horse dashed across a stream, smashing the carriage against an oak. Abigail was killed.

The loss devastated Lite, as the death of his Emma would Westley Richards six years later. Both men threw themselves into their work. Lite bought the N.P. Ames Company and the services of William Jenks, who had developed a breech-loading carbine that fed waxed card cartridges. Tragically, Jenks died in 1859 after a fall from a hay wagon on his farm. Lite partnered with sons Philo and Sam to build a new factory to meet unrelenting demand for rifle barrels and locks. The U.S. Civil War fueled more expansion and would bring Remington \$30 million in orders from the U.S. Army and Navy. By 1865 it was boxing nearly 1,000 rifles *per day*. By armistice that April, it had provided soldiers with almost 10 million loads.

For a time after Emma's riding accident, Westley Richards lived at his factory, where after long days on the shop floor he occupied two small rooms. His efforts



Westley Richards' A&D Droplock action reveals no outside pins. Its .476 NE cartridge dates to 1907.

would bring 17 patents, which included improvements on the pin-fire mechanism of Lefauchaux's under-lever gun, shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Westley Richards would invent the first practical top-lever latch for hinged-breech guns. In 1858 he introduced a doll's-head rib extension, a slotted tab that engaged a sliding bolt actuated by the lever. It was patented with improvements four years later.

Lite Remington died at age 70 in the first months of the Civil War. His company struggled to pull out of a precipitous post-war slump. Its powerful Rolling Block rifle equipped hunters who surged west to kill buffalo for their hides, feed crews building a trans-continental railway and

bring to heel plains Indians dependent on the buffalo. A skilled hunter could earn \$10,000 a year. Brazos Bob McRae claimed 54 kills with as many shots at one stand! In a couple of decades, the herds were all but gone. Human scavengers took three million tons of bones from the fly-blown prairie. Remington would prosper making affordable firearms and ammunition for growing ranks of sport hunters.

Westley Richards also added metallic cartridges to his firearms production. Rigby's coiled brass hulls would follow paper cartridges off-stage. Westley bought the Birmingham ammunition firm, E&A Ludlow, in 1870 and within months applied for a patent on a solid

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Elmer Keith's .577 Westley Richards is a fine example of rifles from the golden age of African safaris.

drawn-brass case. While brass cases had appeared stateside with the rimfire Henry rifle, Westley Richards' centerfire cases arrived two years before Winchester's first centerfire cartridge, the .44-40.

Like every arms-maker, Westley Richards sought military contracts. His patents included those for infantry rifles. A bright engineer named Brunel convinced him to try the new Whitworth rifling. Tests led to the British Army's 1866 order for 20,000 capping breech-loading carbines, called Monkey Tails for the shape of the top lever lifted to expose the breech. During Africa's first Boer War (1880-81), British soldiers came to fear Monkey Tails in the hands of lads who, coming of military age, were challenged to hit chicken eggs at 100 steps. These rifles were well adapted to frontiers. Absent cartridges, they could also function as muzzle-loaders!

In 1868 Westley Richards patented a dropping breech-block, hinged at the back. When the British Army adopted the Martini-Henry rifle, its mechanism was so similar as to infringe on that patent. Westley Richards was awarded over £42,000 in royalties.

During the 1860s, Westley's half-brother Charles helped him manage the company. A year after Charles's death in 1871, Westley gave day-to-day operations over to employee John Deeley but retained his position as Chairman. A long, fruitful life ended when Westley Richards died at 83 in 1897.



In 1956 the .458 Winchester (left) disappointed shooters expecting "stopping rifle" performance like that of the .476 Westley Richards. Longer wildcat cartridges like the .450 Watts and .458 Lott provided it.

He could hardly have picked a better successor than John Deeley. Born in 1825 and largely self-educated, Deeley studied both firearms and the business of gun-making. He was an able inventor, helping design a breech simpler and more compact than the Martini's. But a patent in 1875 would bless him and company actioner William Anson with lasting fame.

The Anson and Deeley design employed barrel weight to automatically cock hinged-breech guns. Pivoting on the hinge pin, the barrels activated dogs that engaged the locks. Brilliantly simple, this action had more than a dozen

fewer components than those of most contemporary guns. It was strong, reliable and well protected from the elements. It required no special care and little if any adjustment. Parts were robust and easy to manufacture.

Anson, by the way, was the lead on this project. In 1872, at age 32, he had patented a push-rod forend fastener that's still used. In 1877, after his signature work with Deeley, he left Westley Richards to work under his own shingle. The two men collaborated on projects in 1883 and '84 that yielded additional patents. Anson passed at just 55 in 1895, seven years after his last patent.

John Deeley brought the company out of the black powder era. In the 1890s, as cordite took over, he was awarded £3,000 for his re-design of the bolt head on the .303 Lee-Netford magazine rifle. At his retirement in 1899, another promising employee, Leslie B. Taylor, became Managing Director. About this time Westley Richards' smokeless loads for the 3-inch .500 Black Powder Express led to development of the .500 Nitro Express. It became a popular chambering in double rifles, as did the .470 NE and .577 NE. Ivory hunter James Sutherland, actor Stewart Granger and novelist Ernest Hemingway had single-trigger Westley Richards rifles in .577 NE.

Westley Richards developed its own .476 NE in 1907, a 520-grain .476-diameter bullet at 2,100 fps carrying 5,085 ft-lbs of energy – a near match to 500-grain bullets in the .470 NE and .475 No. 2 NE. Two years later the company announced its .425 Magnum, a rebated rimless cartridge for magazine rifles. Its 410-grain bullet exited at 2,350 fps to yield 5,010 ft-lbs. F.C. Selous used a Westley Richards rifle in .425: "Had I ... such a rifle [when hunting elephant], I could have killed three or four times as many...."

In 1910 Westley Richards introduced the .318 Rimless NE. Much like the U.S. .30-06 in profile and behavior, it hurled a 180-grain bullet at 2,700 fps – but was also offered with a hard-hitting 250-grain at 2,400. It became popular for hunting

plains game, even lions. John “Pondoro” Taylor described a .318 Westley Richards rifle as a delight in hand and as useful a general-purpose medium bore as existed, with a trajectory as flat as hunters would want in Africa. W.D.M. Bell used his .318 on Lake Victoria, firing at cormorants skimming the out-flow. Downing up to eight with 10 shots, he drew attention from onlookers, who were astonished to find he was using a rifle!

Leslie Taylor designed an L.T. capped expanding bullet for the .318, and a similar missile for the Explora “shot & ball gun/rifle” announced in 1905. The bores of this 12-gauge double shotgun were rifled near the muzzles. A pointed 730-grain L.T. bullet from a 2 ¾-inch Super Magnum shell left at 1,500 fps with 3,600 ft-lbs of punch! Famed Norwegian explorer Roald Admundsen ordered two Exploras in 1916.

After the Great War, sport-hunting safaris generated demand for Westley Richards bespoke rifles. India maharajas amassed armories of ornate doubles. Wealthy U.S. sportsmen also came to buy. Kodak founder George Eastman bought two Westley Richards .470s for his first safari, at age 72! Philip Percival and J.A. Hunter were among professional hunters who bet their lives on Westley Richards rifles.

The company’s reputation buoyed it during the choppy economic times between world wars.

Idaho cowboy and mountain man Elmer Keith carried plenty of ballistic savvy under his big hat. His unfiltered opinion found its way around his thick cigars. A colleague speculated Elmer hunted Cape buffalo because, with elephant and rhino, they justified the big-bore rifles he espoused. A single-trigger drop-lock .476 NE was one of five Westley Richards doubles in his battery. He also used a .577.

On one buffalo hunt, he wrote of closing on a fine bull, then, elbows on knees, settling the bead of his .476 on a shoulder knuckle. At the rifle’s blast, the animal threw up his head and thundered off. “He showed no more effect from



In a nimble Mauser, the .318 was popular for plains game. Its 250-grain bullet excelled for wildebeest.

taking that 520-grain slug ... through the heart than if you had touched his rump with an electric gad.” Sweeping the bead under bull’s nose, Keith fired again. To his satisfaction, the buffalo’s shoulders went limp, and he skidded on his chin.

A self-styled hold-over from the Wild West, Elmer had an eye for fine rifles. He admired fine fit and finish, also superior engineering. He could sift subtle mechanical details that distinguished one rifle from the next. While in his day Westley Richards and Holland & Holland got much of the love in safari circles, Keith had his pick of others – Boswell, Cogswell & Harrison, Grant & Lang, Jeffery, Lancaster, Purdey, Rigby among them. Hunting with his .476 was a solid endorsement of both cartridge and rifle.

Incidentally, Westley Richards’ drop-lock breech dates to 1897. It followed the fixed-lock design of earlier Anson and Deeley actions and did away with screws visible from the side. The lockwork was mounted on plates inserted from below. Disassembly didn’t require tools, so the rifle could be cleaned or inspected easily in the field. “When it comes to hand-detachable

locks,” wrote Keith in 1946, “I’ve seen nothing nicer than those on Westley Richards guns.”

Honestly, neither have I. 🐾

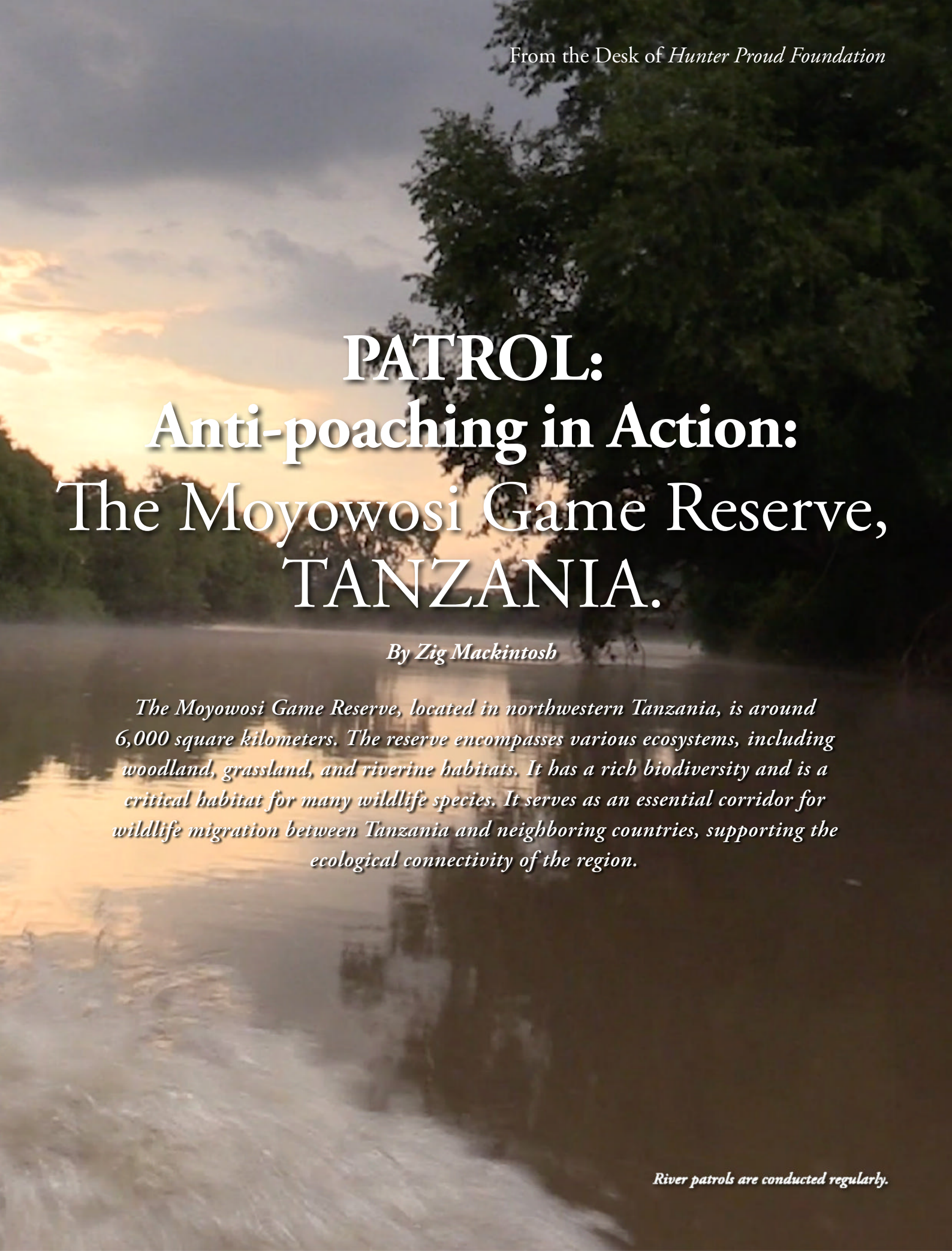
In 1894 Westley Richards moved to a factory in Bournbrook, Birmingham, operating there until 2008.



Birmingham soul

In 1894 Westley Richards moved to a big factory in Bournbrook, Birmingham, and operated there (with a hiatus in sporting arms production during the Great War) until a 2008 migration to Pritchett Street in the city’s gun quarter. There the best of British talent is hard at the task of producing “as good a gun as can be made.” Agencies in London and the U.S. help bring it to discriminating hunters.





From the Desk of *Hunter Proud Foundation*

PATROL: Anti-poaching in Action: The Moyowosi Game Reserve, TANZANIA.

By Zig Mackintosh

The Moyowosi Game Reserve, located in northwestern Tanzania, is around 6,000 square kilometers. The reserve encompasses various ecosystems, including woodland, grassland, and riverine habitats. It has a rich biodiversity and is a critical habitat for many wildlife species. It serves as an essential corridor for wildlife migration between Tanzania and neighboring countries, supporting the ecological connectivity of the region.

River patrols are conducted regularly.



River and aerial patrols are essential for effective anti-poaching operations.

The presence of several significant rivers characterizes the game reserve. The 475 kilometer-long Malagarasi River has its headwaters in the mountains of Burundi. Several tributaries merge to form the main river, which flows through Tanzania, passing through the Mahale Mountains, the Ugalla Game Reserve, and the Moyowosi Game Reserve before draining into Lake Tanganyika.

The river and its associated wetlands support a diverse range of aquatic species and attract numerous bird species. It is one of the largest and most important wetlands in East Africa and was the first Ramsar site declared in Tanzania in 2000. A Ramsar site is a wetland area designated under the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty established in 1971. The Ramsar Convention's brief is to promote the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands worldwide.

The core area of the Ramsar site comprises lakes and open water in the dry season covering about 250,000 ha, with a permanent papyrus swamp of about 200,000 ha and extensive peripheral floodplains that fluctuate widely yearly, depending on the amount of rainfall.

Extensive miombo woodlands and wooded grasslands surround the

wetland habitats.

The site is crucial for large mammals, migratory and resident waterbirds, -ish and plants (with perhaps as many as 50 indigenous fish species) and provides significant livelihood support to local communities.

Major livelihood activities in the area are fishing, safari hunting, honey gathering, harvesting forest products and cattle grazing. Like many protected areas in Africa, the Moyowosi Game Reserve faces several challenges, including poaching, encroachment, and human-wildlife conflict.

Adam Clements Safaris is the current safari-hunting concession owner in the

Moyowosi Game Reserve, and the anti-poaching manager is Tristan Peacock.

In 2021 the company bought a boat for the anti-poaching team to start work on the Malagarasi River. Establishing a presence was the most critical factor. There are no significant villages on the river; the nearest is 30 kilometers away, so few people are there. There was some riverbank cultivation, but cattle rearing is the main agricultural activity.

The team spent the first month on reconnaissance, and Tristan soon realized that there was a lot of poaching in the river system. Refugees from neighboring Burundi compounded the problem.



Tristan Peacock and his anti-poaching team have done an exceptional job in rehabilitating the Moyowosi Game Reserve.



The Red lechwe

Taxidermy & Trophy Solutions

Our Taxidermy & Trophy Solution (TTS) is an A-Z, one point-of-contact service.

It evolved out of the AHG Trophy Shipping business we have run for 7 years.

Our service covers: Collecting your trophies immediately after the hunt and transporting them directly to the taxidermist. If hunted outside South Africa, we'll import them into South Africa. From then, we offer a choice of: *Dip & pack, tan* and *ready-for-mounting* back home, or the *full taxidermy* of your trophies. Your trophies are handled by one of our contracted-in taxidermists, whose quality and experience we stand by. We wouldn't jeopardize our reputation on anything less. Some of their mounts are conveniently on display in Afton Safari Lodge to look at. We keep you abreast of the progress along the way, ensuring you are completely satisfied before crating. They are then ready for export. Giving you options, for both air or ocean export, you can then decide. Overseeing the import clearance with our associate clearing agents in your home country you are free to collect, however where necessary, will arrange the final delivery to your door. It's a one stop service, from A-Z that is hassle free. We guarantee saving you money, so you can hunt more.

Save money. Hunt more



www.taxidermytrophysolutions.com



The Moyowosi Game Reserve was the first Ramsar site declared in Tanzania in 2000.

Working with the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA), the team started working on clearing out the illegal camps, removing and destroying nets and reestablishing authority.

There was little resistance to the operations as the people knew permits were required to fish in the river. The results were a resounding success: with the presence on the waters, it has become a 100% controlled fishing area.

Game scouts on patrols along the river check fishermen for their fishing permits and ensure that fishing camps are pitched in specific places. A good working relationship has developed between the fishermen and the anti-poaching team, and they appreciate the control as the fish size has increased and the yields are more significant. The fishermen have become vital informants providing intelligence



Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority game scouts checking for fishing licenses.



The patrolling footprint extends up to 20 kilometers from the river.

about any poaching activity. The patrolling footprint extends up to 20 kilometers from the river. Helicopter and airplane patrols are conducted not only for anti-poaching but also for game counts.

Meat poaching is predominantly using foot snares. This is not a local practice as this is cattle country, and they wouldn't risk their cattle getting caught in the snares. The poachers are coming in from neighboring countries.

During the first six months of anti-poaching operations, the team observed around 50 head of game when out on foot and nothing was seen from the boat. They spotted only one warthog and not a single buffalo. Since then, there has been a phenomenal increase in sitatunga, buffalo, giraffe, eland, sable, and roan antelope.

There's no evidence of ivory poaching thanks to the conservation efforts of

TAWA, and the elephant population is increasing.

Western Tanzania has never been recognized as a sport-fishing destination. The odd professional hunter and client fished the lower Malagarasi in the past, but there's been no access to the upper Malagarasi. Hunting dollars funding anti-poaching activities has increased fish stocks dramatically, and now sport-fishing is a viable commercial operation offering clients an African fishing experience.

The tigerfish and yellow fish are the predominant game fish. Huge vundu catfish are also caught; all fishing is catch-and-release.

Adam Clements Safaris' anti-poaching team, headed by Tristan Peacock, has shown how a small crew can make a huge difference in a vast ecosystem—a true testament to the value safari hunting brings to conservation.

To watch the video about this anti-poaching operation, go to www.patrolling.org and sign up for free.

To subscribe to Patrol, go to www.patrolling.org or scan the QR code in the logo and follow the instructions. Hunting safari operations in Africa need your support.

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TO THE REPORT**





**Hunt with an Exclusive Group
of African Outfitters**



Adroda Safaris provides clients with the opportunity to hunt across southern Africa in large, diverse habitats and free-range concessions offering true fair-chase hunting. Dangerous game, plains game and speciality species are hunted, often in exclusive areas, harvesting trophies of significant quality. Adroda Safaris also

offers the exciting option of hunting over hounds. Our pack of big-game hounds is renowned for its leopard-hunting ability.

www.adroda.com



A family-owned operation, founded in 1970 by Frank and Jenny Bowker. Hunting has been in the family since settling in the early 1800s. Today

Frank, Meyrick, Alexis and Lily Bowker carry on with these traditions in the original homestead that offers wonderful ambience and warm hospitality to hunting clients. Specializing in dangerous game and Eastern Cape plains-game safaris, many not found elsewhere. Offering walk and stalk, bow, handgun, and rifle hunting opportunities, as well as world-class wingshooting in our exclusive concessions. Check the SCI record book dating back to the 70s.

www.bowkersafaris.co.za



A family-owned lodge in the heart of Namibia, in 18 000 acres of privately owned

bushveld situated two hours' drive, northeast of Windhoek. 25 species, including the majestic sable and roan antelopes where hunts are challenging. The terrain is rocky, with high, table-top mountains and vast valleys. Plus, an exclusive concession on Etosha's south-western border of one million acres. No fences, this habitat offers everything from antelope through to elephant, leopard, lion and mountain zebra. Guests are guaranteed exclusivity when hunting.

www.african-safari-trails.com



Bushmoon Safaris is owned and run by Nicky and Chantel Janse Van Rensburg. Nicky learnt his hunting skills from indigenous Bushmen in Botswana, and after three decades in the hunting and hospitality industry, the couple now offer their knowledge to discerning international hunters.

Based in the Limpopo Province, a 3½-hour drive from OR Tambo Airport, Bushmoon Safaris is situated along the banks of the Molopo River where big-game wildlife thrives.

www.bushmoonsafaris.com



Aru Game Lodges: The Very Best of Namibia.

The scenery is vast, the game wild at Aru Game Lodges, a family-run safari company with two unique, well-appointed lodges — Kalakwa Lodge and Veronica Lodge — both a short drive from Windhoek. With 130,900 acres (53 000 hectares) of picturesque properties, Aru's guests have a perfect mix of the very best wild country and game in Namibia, with Five-star cuisine, world-class wingshooting, and much more - there's truly something for everyone.

Yours in conservation, Danene & Gysbert van der Westhuyzen
www.arugamelodges.com



Byseewah offers a total African experience for hunters, fishermen, and photographers. Hunters stalk game on foot, following the tracks of antelope, hyena, and the occasional leopard. Byseewah prides itself on being family-friendly, and offers photographic safaris and nature walks to those who don't want to hunt. Ken, who

loves to fish and take photographs as much as he enjoys hunting, organizes expeditions to the Namibian coast for sea fish and the Zambezi River for tiger fish. Ken and Lynda treat their guests as family members, bringing clients back to Byseewah year after year.
www.byseewah.com



AXEL ENGMAN SAFARIS

A tailor-made experience with Swedish attention to detail. Raised in the Swedish countryside, hunting ethics are

ingrained and part of the Axel Engman Safaris approach. Varieties of topography on my concessions countrywide, offering a full spectrum of species - plains game, small predators, the Tiny 10 to the Big 5. Tailor-made hunting, fishing, or photographic safaris await you. Whether your first or tenth safari — Axel Engman Safaris offers many years of professional hunting and outfitter experience.

www.aesafaris.se



In the Waterberg region of Limpopo Province, and with more than 23 years of experience in hunting Africa's big game, Chris Troskie

offers legal, tailor-made fair-chase hunts on more than 60,000 acres of land and has access to thousands of prime hunting land throughout the rest of South Africa and Botswana. Depending on the species hunted, terrain can vary from thornveld savannah to riverine bush, mountainous areas and grasslands.

+27 82 859-0771 / chris@ct-safaris.com
www.ct-safaris.com



Bergzicht Game Lodge offers guided hunting safaris on our exquisite game ranch just south of Windhoek, Namibia, with 25 species of plains game on 60 000 acres of privately owned land. We recommend planning your hunting trip to last around 10

to 12 days. We do not take double bookings. To experience the adventure of hunting plains game and (occasionally!) perhaps an angry black rhino encounter, then Bergzicht Game Lodge is the place for you!

www.bergzicht-hunting.com



Owned and operated by Dawid Muller, a well-known Namibian Professional Hunter in the hunting business for more than 40 years. His hunting farm is 60km southwest of Windhoek in the mountainous Khomas Hochland, an unfenced open area where along with neighbours farms which are his to

hunt, offer 40 000ha. Plus, the exclusive unfenced hunting area in the Eastern Caprivi (now Zambezi Region) between the Mdumu and Mamili (Nkasa Rupara) National Parks. Personal attention to every detail, and Dawid's passion and experience explain hunters' repeat visits to Daggaboy Hunting Safaris. www.daggaboy.com



The BoschNel team, Hannes Nel and sons Brendan and Sheldon - with partner, Johan Bosch, offers unrivaled African hunting adventures and an ethical fair-chase experience, giving you what you've been dreaming of. With BoschNel, you get a quality, honest hunt filled with beautiful moments under the African sky.

www.boschnelsafaris.co.za



DIRK DE BOD SAFARIS NAMIBIA.

Dirk de Bod is a Master Measurer for both SCI and Roland Ward. And with over 48,500 acres of private game reserves, one hour north of the Hosea Kutako International Airport, Dirk de

Bod Safaris Namibia is one of Namibia's select hunting destinations, with other concessions in the north and west. For an extraordinary Namibian safari experience and exceptional trophies, plus other tours,
www.safarisnamibia.com



Never before has a destination of such unparalleled luxury been offered to bowhunters. Set against the vast rolling hills of the Karoo region, a five-star oasis surrounded by private bowhunting land is now available for small groups of passionately dedicated bowhunters and their travel companions. With a private chef, master sommelier, fulltime masseuse and photo safari excursions by horseback or overland vehicle, you'll leave with the trophies and memories of a lifetime.

EasternCapeBowhunting.com (Password: hunting)



Exclusive, five-star, and tailor-made: Our fifth-generation family-run safaris offer an exceptional African hunting experience in three biodiverse areas that teem with large herds of a great variety of species. We are located in the malaria-free Eastern and Northern Cape provinces of South Africa. Each area is unique, ranging from sea level up to 6000 feet. Enjoy local cuisine and five-star lodging run by our friendly staff that will ensure an unforgettable experience of a lifetime, and priceless memories.

<https://ezuluadventures.co.za>



Ekuja Hunting Safaris was founded 15 years ago by Drikus Swanepoel. Over the past 15 years Ekuja Hunting Safaris has grown from a family ranch operation into a premier hunting safari destination. With exclusive rights to privately owned concession areas in central Namibia and one of the best elephant hunting areas in Africa, in our communal concession area in northern Namibia, Ekuja Hunting Safaris will ensure not only an exceptional hunting experience, but a memorable one. Drikus is also well known to provide tailor-made safaris for his clients throughout Africa, including countries such as Zambia, Ethiopia, South Africa, Cameroon and Botswana. All accommodation provides our guests with a comfortable stay and professional staff to cater for all necessary needs. www.ekujasafari.com



Game Trackers Africa companies are owned by and operated under the professional guidance of award-winning Professional hunter and outfitter, A. Jaco Oosthuizen himself in Southern & East Africa (Tanzania) while logistics in West Africa's Cameroon are maintained by means of a long-standing collaborating partnership, ensuring that when you hunt with GTA every specific need and requirement is attended to personally. Game Trackers Africa prides itself in specializing in authentic, free-range safaris in remote African wilderness destinations with dedication to community and anti-poaching projects. "Live the African Legacy" www.gametrackersafrica.com



Eland Safaris, a family-based operation, with more than 30 years' of combined experience, is located on the scenic family Paardenberg Farm in the most northwestern part of the Limpopo Province, South Africa, close to the Botswana border. Endorsed by Craig Boddington in 2017, we offer over 25 plains-game species and the Big Five to hunt on our property and concessions, with eland as our big attraction. Eland Safaris is a bushveld paradise which has something to offer everyone. www.elandsafaris.co.za



Your #1 destination for the finest hunting safaris in Tanzania. Heritage Safaris is a seasoned Outfitter operating in joint venture with Luke Samaras Safaris in the glorious Selous Game reserve in Tanzania - one of the last great wilderness areas remaining essentially as it was hundreds, if not thousands, of years ago. We operate on 2 of the prime blocks in the Selous Game Reserve. Combined our blocks consist of almost 300,000 hectares / 750,000 acres of pristine African wilderness specifically set aside for world-class hunting. Tanzania and especially the Selous are considered by many experienced big game hunters as the crown jewel of African hunting. Not only does Tanzania boast a vast game list, but also prides itself on its safari traditions as experienced by the great hunters of yesteryear. Heritage Safaris preserves these traditions of an authentic East African safari. www.heritage-safaris.com



Elandpro is owned by Gerrit and Janneman Breedts, both professional hunters with a shared experience of more than 50 years in Namibia. We are situated in the northeastern corner of Namibia, close to the town Grootfontein. Our hunting area is famous for most of the larger plains game such as eland, kudu, and oryx.

Website www.elandpro.com



Hotfire Safaris is privately owned and owner run. Hotfire, known for its iconic Kudu and Nyala, also hosts many other species in habitat and terrain where they naturally occur and breed. True hunting at its best! We are your guides. We adhere to strict ethics and conservation values when hunting, fly fishing, deep sea fishing, or wing shooting. We promise an honest, epic, and memorable Safari with new friendships made to last. www.hotfiresafaris.co.za



JAMY TRAUT
HUNTING SAFARIS
CAPRIVI - KAKOLAND
KALAHARI - PANORAMA
& WATERBERG

Jamy Traut is a well-respected outfitter in Namibia. A family-run operation dedicated to providing a small number of clients with an unequalled opportunity to hunt Africa's

great game. A variety of areas available in Namibia means a great diversity of hunting and tourism across Namibia. With its ethical and sustainable hunting practices, Namibia has become one of the top hunting destinations in Africa, known for its large diversity in game, open landscapes as well as cultural diversity and habitats. Jamy Traut Hunting Safaris is proud to uphold the traditions of ethical and fair-chase hunting, www.jamyhunts.com



JOFIE LAMPRECHT

Jofie, of Jofie Lamprecht Safaris - a highly versatile and well-connected company - offers professional, personalized hunting, photographic and ethnographic safaris in his native Namibia, Southern Africa's Okavango and Caprivi areas, and in northern India's tiger habitat. Whether for a single client willing to work hard for the conservation trophy of a lifetime, a couple on honeymoon wishing to experience the African bush, or a family looking for adventures and memories, is what he and his wife Maryke and their veteran staff can provide. www.jofielamprecht.com



Johan Calitz Hunting Safaris started business in 1987 and in 2014 was privileged to be entrusted with the management of the NG41 Mababe Community hunting concession in northern Botswana. From 2003, Calitz Safaris elephant trophies consistently featured between two and three of the five biggest elephant taken in Botswana

annually, the biggest weighing in at 104 lbs. Our handpicked, well-trained and dedicated staff and professional hunters are eager to welcome discerning hunters from all over the globe in coming years.

www.johancalitzsafaris.com



John Sharp is one of the most experienced big-game hunters operating in Southern Africa today. While adhering to the strict ethics of fair chase, John epitomises the authentic 'Great White Hunter' of legend. A pilot, a crack shot and an excellent host, John puts the client at the centre of everything he does.

His clients often come back - not because this man will ever guarantee a trophy ('the bush is unpredictable'), but because he lives up to all the legends of the African big-game hunter. As his long-standing friend, author Wilbur Smith writes: "I have hunted with some of the very best professional hunters presently operating in Africa, but John Sharp is my preferred companion and guide in the hunting field."

www.johnsharpsafaris.com



Kantanta
Hunting Safaris

The name Kantanta derives from Tonga, an indigenous Zambian language, that means "Big Black Sable Antelope." Daniele Ventriglia initially started his hunting experience in Zambia in 1990, and Valerio Ventriglia followed a few years later in the Kafue region in Zambia. The company was initially established in Zambia in the year 2010. Because we wanted to expand and continue contributing in preserving wildlife, we later on moved the business to Tanzania in the year 2013, because of the closure of big-game hunting in Zambia. We invite all hunters interested in hunting big game in Tanzania and Zambia to contact us for further information on our hunting destinations and available species. We would like to thank all our clients and clients-to-be for helping us to improve on our services year after year.

www.kantantahuntingsafaris.com



KEIBEK SAFARIS
ESTABLISHED 2006

Keibeb Safaris, founded by Steph Marais in 2006, offers exceptional trophy hunting, luxurious accommodation and uniquely Namibian hospitality. Our private hunting area of 12 square miles

has free-ranging game, no domestic stock fences, with adjoining properties adding 60 square miles and 22 species of game. Keibeb Safaris also arranges customised photographic safaris with a personal guide throughout Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, either by chartered private plane or in a comfortable air-conditioned vehicle.

Contact Steph Marais info@keibeb.na

KEN MOODY SAFARIS
BUFFALO HUNTERS



Apart from plains-game hunting and eco-touring options, Ken Moody Safaris specializes in Cape buffalo. When hunting dangerous game, experience counts. "I have hunted Africa for nearly three decades. I know Africa, and hunting Cape buffalo is my passion." Don't trust your life to part-time buffalo hunters!

www.kenmoodysafaris.com



Welcome to Khomas Highland Hunting Safaris. With about thirty years of experience in operating hunting safaris, we would like to invite you along for an overview of our unique operation. We are looking forward to taking you on a journey to our various hunting concessions, with exclusive accommodation and service to guarantee your ultimate safari experience. Please feel free to have a look at our website and our YouTube channel to get a feeling for your next African safari hunt. **Contact PH Philip Hennings for further information.**

Mail: philip@khomas-highland-hunting.com



Uganda is home to one of Africa's highest mountain ranges, the source of the Nile, and the largest lake in Africa. Lake Albert Safaris offers nothing less than ideal hunting camps, stunning scenery, and picturesque wildlife reserves to complement your unique hunt. Uganda contains endemic species such as the Ssesse Island sitatunga that can only be found on the Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria and are key collectors' species.

www.lodgelakealbert.com



I was fortunate to be raised in a farming community, and have been exposed to wildlife and hunting my whole life.

I completed my Hons. Degree in Nature Conservation, obtained my Professional Hunters license in 2000, and have held unrestricted licenses and hunted in six of South Africa's provinces as well as in the C.A.R., Cameroon, Namibia, Botswana, and Mozambique.

www.mikecurrieadventures.co.za



Madubula Safaris was founded by John Abraham in 1990. As one of Africa's premier operations, safaris are conducted to the highest ethical standards only. No compromise. Providing superior big game, plains game, bird shooting and photographic safaris, our accommodation is in traditional tented camps or luxurious lodges on the finest reserves, providing superb fair chase hunting. Professional hunters are all experienced men, the trackers, skimmers, camp and field staff are all skilled and experts in their field - all are complimented by polite waiters and world-class chefs. All camps and equipment are of the highest standard, well maintained and stocked to ensure a comfortable, relaxed stay. www.madubula.com



Mokore Safaris, established in 1979, with over 40 years' experience, is one of the leading safari companies in Africa. Run by the Duckworth family, situated in the world-famous Savé Valley Conservancy in the south-east Lowveld of Zimbabwe. Home to the Big Five as well as other wildlife in a great variety of terrain.

Mokore Safaris also has the privilege of hunting rights in Sengwa Research Area in north-western Zimbabwe and Coutada 9 in central Mozambique. Sole hunting rights in three of the world's top-quality game areas, with access to others, means Mokore Safaris can tailor-make almost any requested safari within Zimbabwe and Mozambique. www.mokoresafaris.com



At Mashambanzou Safaris you benefit from a collective 50 years' experience and 15 years operational experience in Mozambique alone. Specializing in offering safaris from middle income "once in a lifetime" hunters to the experienced annual safari goer. We own our own Concessions in many of the areas we hunt or partner with the most reputable operators from the Zambezi Delta to the lake shores of Cahora Bassa. Our mission statement is to provide our customers with access to the best hunting areas with the complete range of species at competitive prices with the finest service available.

www.mashambanzousafaris.com



Monterra Safaris is a privately owned, 14 000 acre game ranch in the Limpopo River Valley of South Africa. Established in the 1980s as the exclusive hunting ground of an American business owner, his passion for hunting and conservation lives on as we offer you the exclusive opportunity to make Africa your own.

You will be guided by our professional management team through the entire process of journeying to Africa to hunt its illustrious game. Our ethical hunting and conservation practices have preserved the natural environment here for over thirty years.

www.monterrasafaris.com



Experience true African wilderness hunting in forest and savannah

Hunt in the wild African rain forest, be surprised by elephants and gorillas, or follow the tracks of the majestic Lord Derby eland in the savannah. Go for a unique and unforgettable hunting experience with Mayo Oldiri, the leader in Cameroon hunting! Since 1997, we have been offering outstanding hunts for species that you can only find in very few countries throughout Africa! We are the biggest hunting company in Cameroon with more than one million hectares of hunting area. We look forward to receiving you in camps!

www.mayoldiri.com



Jaco van der Merwe is the PH and owner of Namibia Safari Corporation hunting ranch in the malaria-free Khomas Region, two

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Based out of Miami, Florida USA, Northern Operations Africa is an all-inclusive African hunting outfitter specializing in bongo, Lord Derby eland and

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Rob Lurie Safaris is a family-owned and run business offering bespoke tailor-made safaris. Rob has been in the safari industry for 26, with extensive experience of hunting and guiding in Zimbabwe, Mozambique,

Zambia, Namibia and South Africa, and plans safaris in Uganda, Benin, Cameroon, Tanzania, Mauritius and Greenland. He is currently the Chairman of the Zimbabwe Professional Guides Association (ZPGA). With RLS you will experience all that Africa has to give in ways you have dreamed of - *Come live your dreams with us!*

www.robhuriesafaris.com



Originally established by Zimbabwean PH, Phillip Oosthuysen, Rolling River Safaris LLC. based in North Carolina and partnering with Rasland African Ventures, deals with reputable safari operators in southern Africa, offering exceptional fair-chase big-game and plains-game hunts on millions of acres of pristine land.

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www.sbhuntingsafaris.com



Owned and operated by Ernest and Marita Dyason since 1995, Spear Safaris offers world-class big-game trophy hunting Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Cameroon, under the auspices of well-established outfitters in those countries. Excellent and affordable buffalo and plains-game hunting safaris on our 70 000 acre concession in the north of Limpopo Province, as

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Established in 1998 by two brothers, Jason and Clinton. Both with extensive experience in hunting dangerous and plains game throughout Africa, Stone Hunting Safaris operates in South Africa, Namibia, Ethiopia, Zambia and Tanzania. Offering top quality hunting safaris in the best areas Africa has to offer. Since 1998 Jason has spent over 250 days a year, Clinton – 200, hunting all over Africa in pursuit of top-quality trophies for their clients. They will go out of their way to ensure that all clients will have a great hunt and get the best possible trophies available.

www.stonehuntingsafaris.com



Watts Trophy Hunting Safaris has more than two decades of experience in the hunting and safari industry. Our main camps and hunting areas consist of open savanna, acacia brush and camel thorn trees; there you will find some of the Big Five species and numerous plains game animals. To make every hunter's dream come true, we expanded our hunting expeditions to Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Uganda, and all over South Africa. The extensive variety of animal species and countries give us access to top-quality trophies and allows us to custom-make your safari, varying from the Big Five to conventional game hunts.

www.wattstrophyhunting.com



Thierry Labat Safaris is a very small, personalized company based out of Zimbabwe, but also offers hunts in multiple countries that include Cameroon, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mauritius and Mozambique. We offer personalized safaris to suit the client's budget and main targeted species. Not personally owning areas ourselves means we do not have the pressure of fulfilling quotas, but instead we make sure that we take you to the best area for your needs. Our chief goal is to ensure that the client has an enjoyable and memorable safari. TLS has an 80%+ repeat clientele base which in itself speaks volumes. Our high standard of hunting ethics is of utmost importance, not only to us, but to our industry as a whole, and we endeavor to keep those standards high. When dealing with us, our word is our bond! www.thierrylabat.com



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The mid-50s were also the era in which Roy Weatherby was first really beating the drums for his creations, taking his .257 and .270 Weatherby to Africa and sending back outlandish reports of their effect on everything up to, and including, Cape buffalo.

These high-speed *wunderkind* have been proven, over and over, to work spectacularly sometimes, but fail just as spectacularly at others. Slower, heavier bullets, however, work doggedly time after time—rarely spectacular, but always effective if the bullet's put in the right place or anywhere close.

One can trace the history of “high velocity as super-killer” all the way back to James Purdey's initial work with express rifles in the 1850s, wherein he discovered that lighter bullets traveled faster and sometimes—*sometimes!*—dropped animals where they stood.

Obviously, the Swift was not the first cartridge to be touted this way. In America there was the .303 Savage (1895), then the .22 Savage High Power (1911), then Savage's .250-3000 (1915). Arthur Savage was as much a promoter as Roy Weatherby, and he sent hunters all over the globe to hunt big beasts with small, fast bullets, and followed it up with magazine articles about their wondrous performance.

In one of his articles in *Field & Stream*, Ruark told of going off to the Campfire Club, north of New York, to sight in his rifle, having not held a rifle in his hands since he'd returned from Africa 18 months before. Well, other guys have gone on safari with rifles they've never fired, and tales of their performances are standard fare when professional hunters get together and the whisky flows.

At this late date, it's impossible to tell how much influence Ruark's story might have had on the career of the .220 Swift. Ruark was a hugely popular writer, not just on hunting, but as a syndicated newspaper columnist, and his book was an instant best-seller. I would imagine it was widely read in



Very likely a clone of the rifle Ruark took to Africa in 1951: A Winchester Model 70 in .220 Swift. A very fine combination for its intended purpose—varmints at long range—but a dreadful choice for an African safari.

anti-hunting circles, and presumably that's how the above-mentioned anti-hunting author saw the tale of the hyena that he later used to introduce his own book.

The .220 Swift was discontinued by Winchester only eight years later. It was already banned in several states for hunting deer and similar animals. One thing we can say for sure, that anecdote, on top of the Swift's other travails, wouldn't have helped it.

For the record, I cannot think of a single use for the .220 Swift on a normal hunting safari, although I admire the cartridge greatly for doing what it was designed for, and doing it superbly well. Even after almost 90 years—wildcats and short-lived wonders like the .22 WSSM aside—no cartridge has come along that can do what it will do.

What about today's heavy-for-caliber bullets in .224—the 60- and 70- and even 90-grain bullets some are using for long-range shooting? I still can't think of a use for one in Africa. Sorry.

One has to admire Ruark for putting that story in print, in gory detail. It paints a grim picture of the Swift, but

does not flatter Ruark by any means. At best, he looks like a beginner who took bad advice—which, in fact, is exactly what he was. But at least he owned up to it.

(I can almost hear the salesman in the gun department of Abercrombie & Fitch in New York extolling the virtues of the .220 Swift for Africa. As if he'd know.)

To the best of my knowledge, no other hunter in far-off lands ever returned to mention any failure, of any kind, with whatever *wunderkind* cartridge he was using.

It's ironic that in his attempt at total honesty, to tell the story of a safari as it actually was and “without all the derring-do,” Ruark handed his detractors (and ours) some rather potent ammunition with which to attack him. The story was quoted out of context, and only the hyena's suffering was included, with no mention of Ruark's own reaction and resolve never to make that mistake again. In a way, the hyena had the last laugh—which they are noted for.

Is there a moral? Yes: Be careful whose advice you take, and get to know all your rifles, intimately, before you board the plane. 🦋

THE LAST LAUGH

The .220 Swift in Africa

Many years ago, a well-meaning friend gave me a copy of a book by a noted anti-hunting writer. I don't recall the author's name, or the title of the book—long-since trashed—but one thing sticks in my mind.



The frontispiece, the quote that appears on the very first page, was a passage from Robert Ruark's *Horn of the Hunter*. In it, Ruark recounts an episode in which he shot a hyena with a .220 Swift. The first shot did not do the job, nor did the second. Nor the third. After he'd struck the hyena with seven bullets and the poor critter still wasn't dead, Ruark discarded the Swift, called for his .470 Nitro Express, and finished it off properly.

Disgusted, he informed all and sundry that he would "never again shoot at any animal he respected" with the Swift. To the best of my knowledge, he never did.

When I first read *Horn of the Hunter* in the 1960s, I had no first-hand knowledge of the Swift and was blissfully unaware of the controversies that had dogged it since its introduction by Winchester in 1935. For its intended purpose, which is dispatching varmints such as woodchucks at long range, no better cartridge has ever been developed. Its detractors, however, insisted that it burned out barrels in a few hundred rounds, that its accuracy was erratic, and that it could not be loaded down to counter either of these supposed faults.

One accusation aimed at the Swift that cannot be denied, however, is the complete unsuitability of its 48-grain factory bullet for use on anything

bigger than an underfed coyote. With a muzzle velocity of a sizzling 4,110 feet per second (fps), it was designed expressly to open up extremely rapidly on contact. Crows, prairie dogs, woodchucks, and similar beasts are not very thick. The bullet needs to expand rather than penetrate, because little penetration is required. As well, this virtually ensures that no Swift bullet will ever ricochet; they fly apart on touching so much as a twig, which is very desirable in settled areas.

Should Ruark have known this? Maybe, or maybe not. He was, admittedly, a shotgunner, not a rifleman. Jack O'Connor, in one of his more acid moments, said Ruark "lacked ballistic sophistication." In 1953, when *Horn of the Hunter* appeared, Ruark probably would have agreed with him. It was only later, after spending a good portion of his time in Africa, hunting everything up to and including elephants, that Ruark began presenting himself as an authority on rifles.

Much as I admire the man in many ways, and for many things, he is about the last person I would take advice from when it comes to big-game rifles.

Later on, after the episode with the Swift, he developed an infatuation with the .244 Holland & Holland, a rather ill-conceived creation from the venerable London firm that consisted of the .375 H&H necked down to .243

(6mm). In one article, Ruark said its velocity was so high, and its trajectory so flat, that no adjustment was needed, up or down, for ranges all the way out to 400 yards. Huh? Methinks not.

Ruark even went so far as to say he was getting rid of his other, bigger rifles, and using only the .244 in future. Presumably, he hung onto his .470 in case anything went wrong.

Few people today even know the .244 H&H ever existed, and when you raise the issue with the rifle people at Holland's, they tend to change the subject at the first opportunity.

Trajectory aside, the .244 H&H claimed 3,500 fps for a 100-grain bullet. It was introduced in 1955, and Ruark got his hands on one sometime after that. It's odd that he would take to it the way he did, only a couple of years after his experience with the Swift. In 1955, 100-grain expanding bullets in .243 were nothing to write home about. I don't know what bullet Kynoch loaded it with, assuming Kynoch loaded the ammunition, but I suspect it was not something you'd want in your hands in a tough situation.

One thing the Swift and the .244 H&H had in common was that they were marketed as being astonishing killers of big game as well as varmints, with the usual tales of large animals dropping "as if poleaxed" or "in their tracks" if so much as touched by one of these high-speed projectiles.



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