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UIT DIE WOORD: LUKAS 2:3

"Skielik was daar saam met die engel 'n menigte engele uit die hemel wat God prys."

GAME & HUNT is an independent monthly publication for the broad game industry in South Africa, promoting the synergy between game production, hunting and conservation. Hunters, game ranchers and nature conservationists are provided with quality, informative articles and columns. While **GAME & HUNT** operates in close cooperation with organised hunters, game production and nature conservation organisations, it is editorially and financially independent.

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KOMMENTAAR / COMMENT

Uit die redakteur se pen From the editor's pen



Die jaar lê pens en pootjies op sy rug en ons sien almal uit na 'n welverdiende blaaskans saam met vriende en familie.

In hierdie Kersuitgawe bied ons julle 'n kykie op die tydskrif se geskiedenis en toekoms. Ons kyk met nostalgiese terug na ons beskeie begin 30 jaar gelede, maar ook met opwinding oor wat ons bereik het en vir die toekoms beplan. Sedert sy ontstaan in 1994, het *WILD & JAG* ontwikkel tot 'n publikasie van formaat, 'n gerespekteerde rolspeler in die wild- en jagbedryf, gerugsteun deur 'n sterk sosialemedia-teenwoordigheid. Ons skryf ons sukses toe aan die tydskrif se vermoë om by veranderende tye en tegnologie aan te pas, asook natuurlik aan die getroue ondersteuning van ons lesers en adverteerders die afgelope drie dekades. Baie dankie aan julle almal! (Lees ons volle storie op bl 8).

Speaking of nostalgia, nothing stirs up emotion in the heart of a true hunter like the tradition of hunting. After many hours of practice and endless patience, Johan Smit of *HunTech Pro* took his young son, Jordan, on his first hunt and sums it up perfectly: "Watching him on that first hunt, I saw not just my son but the future of our family's hunting legacy." Parents have a huge responsibility to teach their children the values of ethical hunting and Johan is the perfect example thereof. We share this special story with you in "Passing on a family tradition" on p 42.

En van jagtradisies na Kerstradisies. Die grootste en waardevolste geskenk wat jy jou geliefdes hierdie feesseisoen kan gee, kos niks – net tyd. Maak tyd en doen spesiale dinge saam – versier die Kersboom, hou piekniek, maak jul eie Kerskaartjies, gaan vang vis of stap met die hond. Dis dikwels die eenvoudige dinge wat die grootste vreugde bring. Geen geld kan die goue herinneringe aan dié spesiale tye koop nie.

Op hierdie nostalgiese noot wens die *WILD & JAG*-span julle 'n geseënde Kersfees en voorspoedige Nuwejaar toe. Reis veilig en rus goed uit!

Wildbedryfsgroete

Game industry greetings

Hennie van der Walt



Photo: Thea Venter

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WILD & JAG

Jou Suid-Afrikaanse tydskrif vir JAG, WILD EN BEWARING



Marie en Jan van der Walt

Wendy Greeff

WILD & JAG is 'n prominente Suid-Afrikaanse tydskrif wat spesialiseer in jag, sportskiet, wildboerdery en bewaring. Dit bied 'n wye reeks artikels oor jagervarings en -tegnieke, die nuutste jagtoerusting en die jongste nuus oor die wildbedryf en -bewaring. Die tydskrif speel 'n sleutelrol in die bevordering van etiese jagpraktyke en die reg op vuurwapeneienaarskap, asook wildboerdery en die bewaring van wild in Suid-Afrika.

Jan van der Walt, die stigter van *WILD & JAG*, het tot 2016 as hoofredakteur en uitgewer gedien. Hy was 'n gerespekteerde en geliefde figuur in die wildboerdery- en jaggemeenskap en het 'n groot bydrae tot die blootstelling van jag, sportskiet, wildboerdery en -bewaring aan die Suid-Afrikaanse publiek gelewer. Sy kosbare nalatenskap leef voort in die tydskrif wat deel van soveel gesinne se daaglikse lewens geword het en die impak wat hy op die wilboer- en jaggemeenskap gehad het.

WILD & JAG het oor die jare ontwikkel tot 'n platform waar jagters hul ervarings en kennis kan deel en die belangrikheid van volhoubare jagpraktyke beklemtoon. Die tydskrif sluit ook artikels in oor die rol van vroue in die jaggemeenskap – 'n groeiende en belangrike deel van die jagkultuur.

Die tydskrif het 'n aktiewe teenwoordigheid op sosiale-media-platforms soos Facebook en hul webwerf *Wild & Jag*. TV. Hierdie platforms word gebruik om digitale uitgawes te deel, interaktiewe inhoud soos video's en artikels te publiseer en met lesers te kommunikeer. Op Facebook deel hulle gereeld opdatings oor nuwe uitgawes, spesiale jaggeleenthede en ander relevante nuus in die jaggemeenskap. Hul webwerf spog ook met 'n omvattende inhoud, waaronder insiggewende artikels oor jag, sportskiet, wildboerdery en die nuutste toerusting.



WILD & JAG is 'n gewilde tydskrif in Suid-Afrika, veral onder jagters, wildboere en natuurbewaarders. Hierdie onafhanklike maandelikse publikasie dek 'n wye spektrum van die wildbedryf en bevorder die sinergie tussen wildproduksie, jag en bewaring. Dit het 'n lojale lesersbasis wat aktief aan die gemeenskap rondom die tydskrif deelneem. Hul digitale teenwoordigheid op platforms soos Facebook en *Wild & Jag*. TV dra by tot hul populariteit deur interaktiewe kommunikasie met lesers.

Sedert sy ontstaan in 1994 het *WILD & JAG* aansienlik uitgebrei. Hiermee kortliks 'n oorsig van die tydskrif se groei oor die jare:

- **Beginjare (1994-2000):**

Die tydskrif het begin as 'n nispublikasie wat op jag en wildbewing fokus en het vinnig 'n getroue lesersbasis opgebou. Die publikasie se naam was aanvanklik *SA WILD GAME*. In Oktober 1995 is dit verander na *SA WILD & JAG*, en nóg later na *WILD & JAG*.

- **Uitbreiding (2000-2010):**

Gedurende hierdie dekade het *WILD & JAG* sy inhoud uitgebrei om 'n breër spektrum van die wildbedryf te dek. Dit het tot 'n toename in adverteerders en verspreiding gelei.

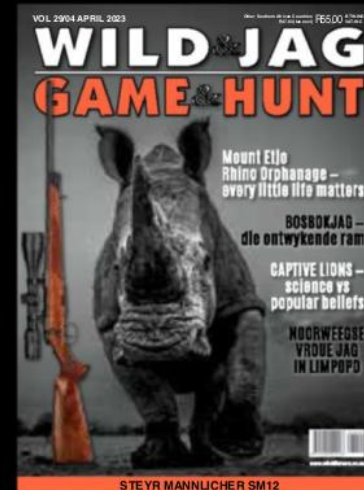
- **Digitale era (2010-2020):**

Met die koms van digitale media het *WILD & JAG* begin om aanlyn inhoud te publiseer, wat gehelp het om 'n jonger en meer diverse gehoor te bereik.

- **Huidige stand (2020-2024):**

Die tydskrif het bly groei en in 2023 die African Excellence Awards se toekenning “*Game Rancher & Hunter Magazine of the Year*” ontvang. Die inhoud en kwaliteit is ook verbeter, wat tot 'n toename in lesers en adverteerders bygedra het.

WILD & JAG se sukses kan toegeskryf word aan die tydskrif se vermoë om by veranderende tye en tegnologie aan te pas, terwyl dit steeds sy kernwaardes van jag en bewaring handhaaf. 🦏





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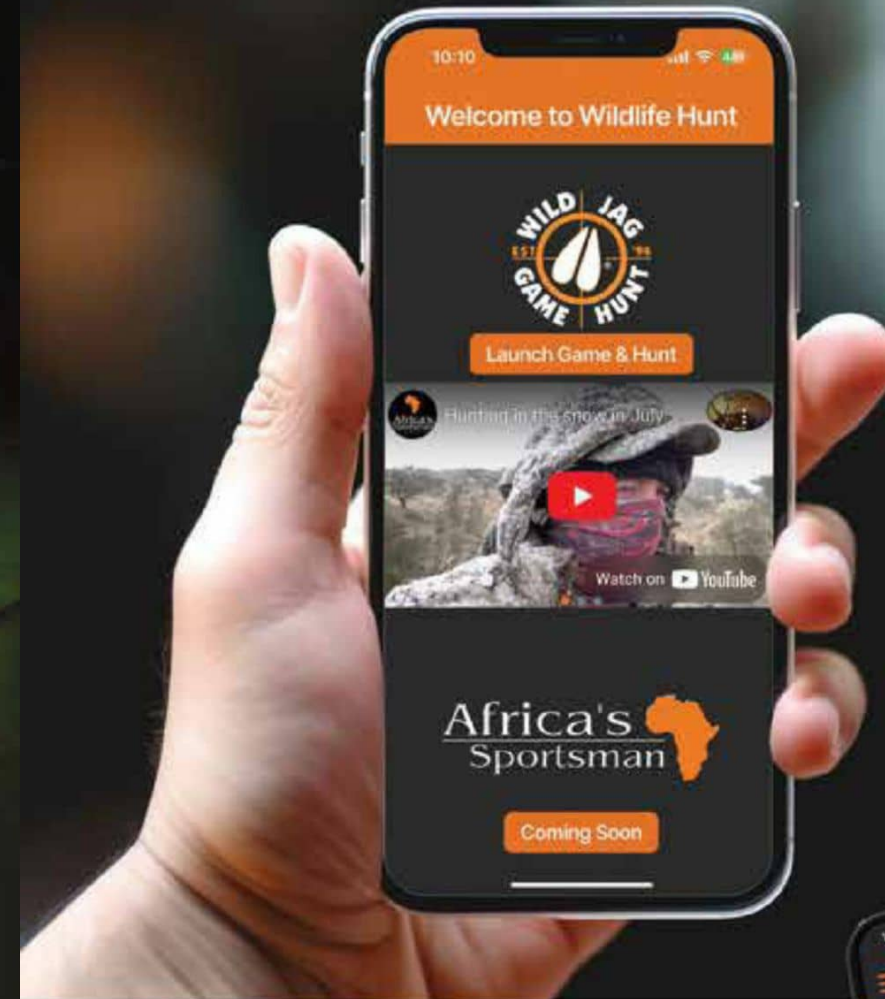


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in 2024 en oor die
afgeloop 30 jaar.



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wonderful holiday!*



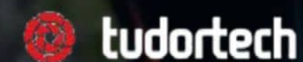
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GREAT FRIENDSHIPS

are born when hunters meet



Sonja Harmse – Muvhimi Buffalo Safaris

Our final hunting clients for 2024 journeyed from Salt Lake City, Utah, with the goal of immersing themselves in the beauty of the African bushveld. Brad and Alisha Neil purchased our donation hunt at the SCI Utah Banquet earlier this year. We collected them from the airport and there was an instant connection. It was their first visit to Africa, and their excitement was palpable. The conversations flowed with ease as we travelled to our hunting concession just outside Dwaalboom in Limpopo Province. Upon arrival at Worcester Game Ranch, owned by Richard Heroldt, we were greeted by our chef, George, with welcome drinks and a beaming smile. He had already prepared lunch and as we sat down to eat, we were blessed with a classic bushveld thunderstorm. The rain was a welcome sight, as the veld had been in dire need of water after one of the driest seasons in recent years. Around 5.30 pm, the rain lightened up a bit, and we quickly headed out to sight in the rifles. After a scrumptious dinner, we turned in for the night to rest up for an early start the following morning.

On Monday morning, the rain continued, and Chris decided that we would walk from our camp in search of impalas. About two hours into our trek, Chris spotted a lone ram, and after an exciting stalk, Brad successfully took his impala. The blustering winds worked in our favour, keeping the ram unaware of our presence, and he went down with one well-placed shot. After taking the customary photos, we returned to camp for lunch and a short siesta. On the cards for the afternoon was finding an impala for Alisha. The weather was unpredictable, shifting from windy and rainy to sunny and back again. We encountered four rams, and Chris quickly had Alisha ready to take her shot. However, the rams were moving around, and Alisha, feeling a bit anxious, was not comfortable taking a shot. As she tried to calm her nerves, the rams spotted us and dashed away. It was a clas-

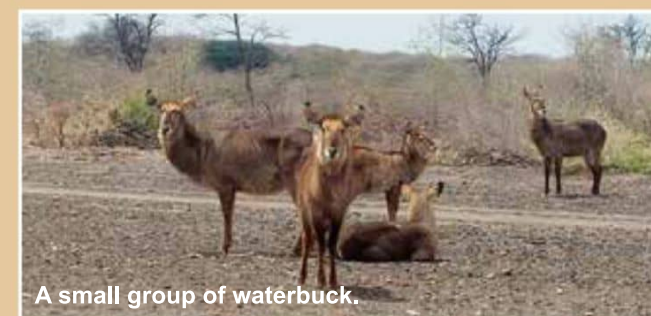
sic case of buck fever that we all know too well as hunters. We continued our walk and came across kudu cows, buffaloes, young gemsbuck bulls, waterbuck, and some warthog sows and their piglets. Just before sunset, on our way back to camp, we spotted two more impalas, but sadly, they did not present Alisha with a clear shot. Chris decided to call it a day, and we returned to camp to savour a delicious springbuck potjie. That evening, another heavy downpour occurred, and we drifted off to sleep, enveloped in the delightful scent of wet earth. A loud noise woke us around midnight. It was impala rams making a variety of roars, grunts and snorting calls, which sounded more like a predator than a dainty antelope! It was quite strange as it was not rutting season, but there were a couple of jackals running around, which must have bothered the impalas.

The hunt is on!



Rueben, Chris, Alisha and Brad

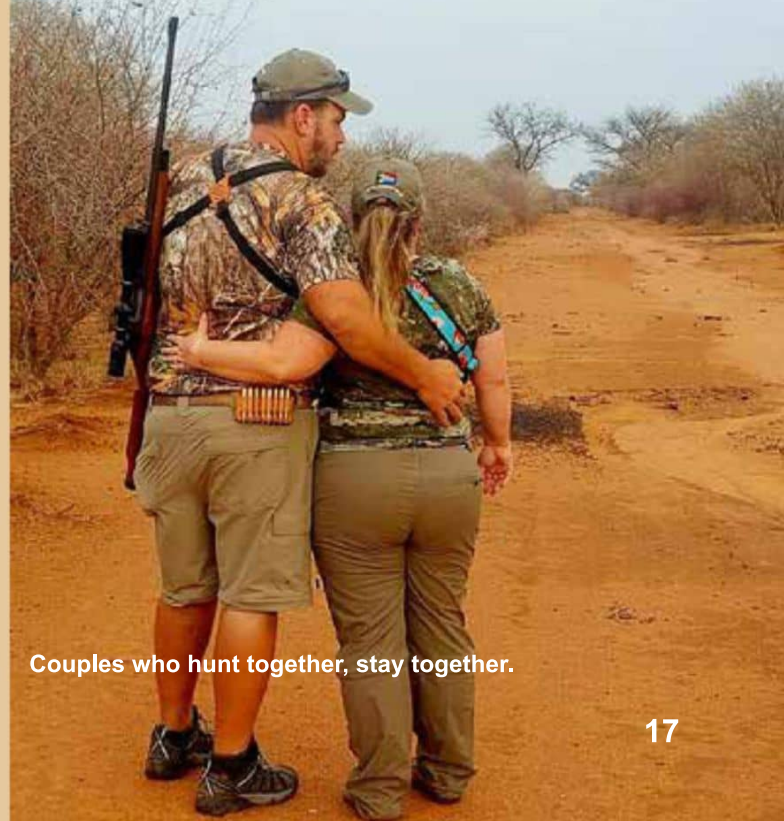
On Tuesday morning, the sun rose majestically over the horizon, illuminating the clear blue skies. We spent the morning attempting to stalk four impalas, but unfortunately, we could not find a clear shot. We also encountered large herds of buffalo. As we made our way back to camp for lunch, we heard the distinctive “chuff” alarm bark of nearby impalas. We carefully navigated through the bush, with the wind blowing from right to left. As we advanced, we witnessed before us a lively scene of impala rams playfully chasing each other, gemsbuck wandering about, monkeys frolicking, and a couple of kudu cows accompanied by young bulls. Alisha remarked that the scene resembled a David Attenborough documentary. We patiently waited with Alisha on the sticks as the two larger rams ventured deeper into the thicket, causing some of the other animals to scatter. A solitary old ram with one broken horn lingered nearby. After observing him through her scope, Alisha decided not to take the shot. Brad and I stood a few metres behind her and Chris when we noticed a kudu cow about 20 metres away, curiously watching us from under a tree. She quickly bolted as soon as she realised we had spotted her. We shared a laugh, realising she had been observing us watching the impala ram! Suddenly, another stunning impala ram appeared. Chris got Alisha back on the sticks, and she successfully took the shot. We were all thrilled for her! Next, we headed to a location where we hoped to find a kudu bull. As luck would have it, we spotted him among the trees, but some waterbuck ewes noticed us and alerted



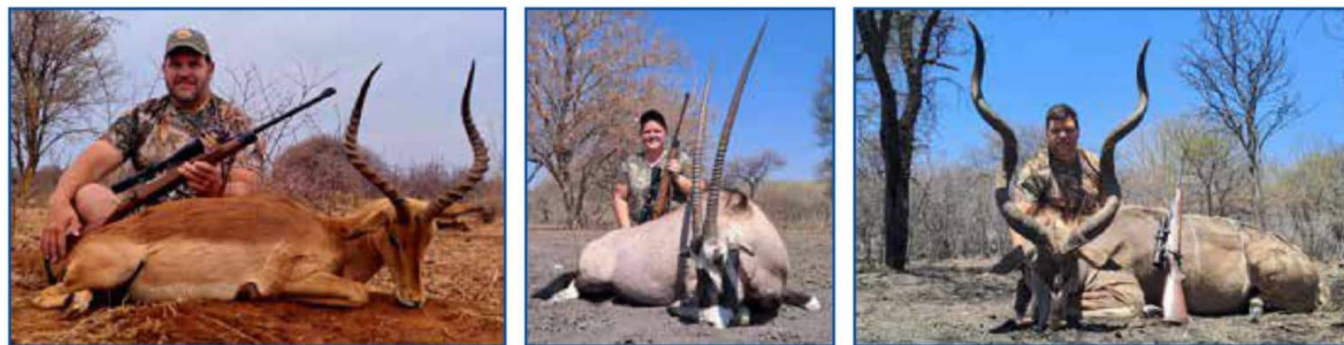
A small group of waterbuck.

the kudu. Chris halted the hunt at this stage to take Alisha's impala to the skinning shed.

Back at camp, George treated us to delicious chicken wraps for lunch. In the afternoon, we set out to find the next animals on the list, which were gemsbuck and kudu. We made our way towards the dam, where we planned to set up a pop-up blind for the next morning. Chris spotted a massive gemsbuck, but it quickly dashed away. We also saw plenty of kudu cows and two young bulls. After putting up the blind, we were heading back to camp when we noticed the same gemsbuck from earlier. Brad was ready with the .30-06 rifle, and Chris was guiding him on where to aim for a longer shot of around 200 metres. Brad signalled that he was ready, but as he adjusted the rifle, he accidentally pulled the trigger. The bullet struck the ground about 10 metres in front of the gemsbuck, causing it to bolt. Brad was frustrated with himself, but



Couples who hunt together, stay together.



Brad and his impala

Alisha with her gemsbuck

Brad with his first spiral-horn antelope

Chris encouraged him to let it go and focus on the next opportunity. Since it was getting late, we made our way back to camp for dinner. After enjoying another delicious meal, we turned in for the night while a herd of buffalo settled in among the trees nearby. Throughout the night, the jackals stirred up a ruckus again with the impalas.

Wednesday morning's breakfast consisted of croissants, cold meats, cheeses and jams. We ate quickly and headed out. The plan was to slowly navigate our way to the blind at the dam, hoping to find some animals on the way. Within 30 minutes, we were on a gemsbuck, but he got away. We ran into impalas and kudu cows, but the bush seemed oddly quiet. We also found fresh zebra dung and tracks but no sign of the animals. At 8 am, we settled into the blind. There was no movement for a while, and then a big warthog boar approached. As we watched, something spooked him, and he bolted. An impala ewe arrived to drink, followed by a troop of monkeys. Some kudu cows with young bulls hovered at the edge of the dam but something startled them, and they ran off. Three young warthogs came in and rolled around in the mud, making us chuckle. Later, the kudu cows returned but seemed nervous and again did not make it to the water.

By 11 am, the heat was intense, and Chris suggested we start heading back. We spotted the same gemsbuck that Brad had missed the day before, but it was facing us and disappeared as soon as it saw the Land Cruiser. We tried tracking a kudu bull and pursued another group of gemsbuck but had no success. We returned to camp for lunch and a break since it was too hot to keep hunting. When hunting again later that afternoon, we noticed some zebras darting across the road we were on. While examining the tracks to see where they entered the dense bush, we caught sight of one at the end of the path. Alisha was ready to take the shot, but it dashed off before she could fire. We attempted to track them down, but it was futile. The rest of the day passed without any luck, making it one of those challenging hunting days where getting a shot felt impossible.

Thursday was time for plan B, as it was the second last day. We spent the entire morning between two blinds at waterholes. A gemsbuck bull was disappearing into the thicket just as we arrived at the first blind. We settled, waiting for his return. A number of impalas, kudu cows with young bulls, monkeys, warthogs and even a jackal came in, but the gemsbuck did not return. At one point, Brad was very tempted to

shoot the jackal, but decided against it, fearing it would scare off the actual animals he was after.

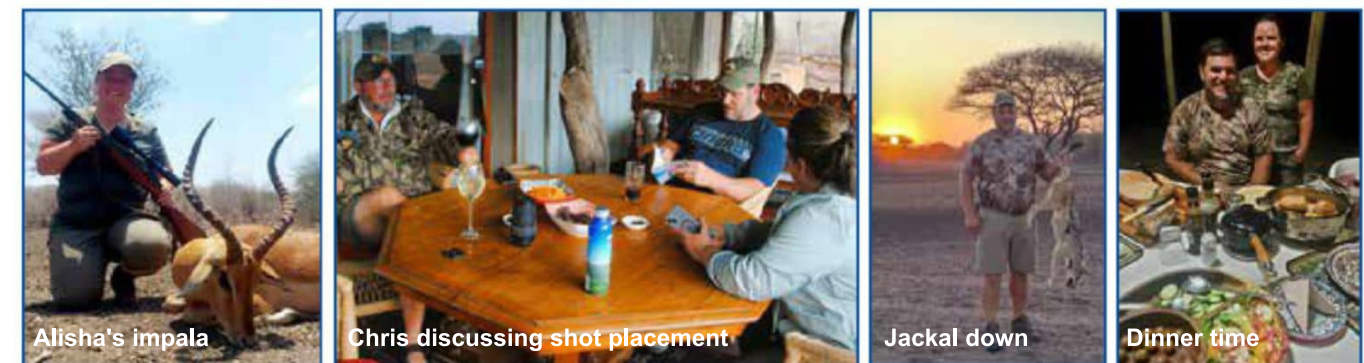
We spent the latter half of the morning at the second blind, which was surrounded by a large herd of waterbuck. Some kudu cows came in again with younger bulls. We even had a rare sighting of a young bull with malformed horns spiralling to the side and down his face. Then some warthogs and three little monkeys appeared. After taking a drink of water, the monkeys got into a tree next to the blind, and one of them noticed us through the opening. He started making loud clicking sounds to alert the other animals. Brad shook his head and exclaimed that the little devil had rattled us out! All the other animals left, except for the herd of waterbuck, who didn't seem to be bothered by our presence. The mature kudu bulls never made their appearance. Just before leaving the blind, Alisha got into a game of peek-a-boo with the little monkey peeking in at us from the tree, which made us all laugh. After lunch, we returned to the first blind, but to no avail. Just as we were about to leave, a jackal appeared. This time, Brad didn't hesitate and shot it. He was thrilled to have gotten his first African predator!

Friday morning arrived, which marked Brad and Alisha's final day with us. We were all feeling a bit tense as we still had to find a gemsbuck and kudu. Chris decided that he would accompany Alisha in her quest for a gemsbuck, while Brad and I headed to the other blind with our tracker/skinner, Rueben, to keep an eye out for the kudu bulls. After a couple of hours, Chris was calling for Rueben to come and help with the gemsbuck. We did not hear any shots and were a tad confused, but then Chris confirmed that Alisha had suc-

cessfully taken her gemsbuck! She was absolutely delighted.

Chris and Rueben took the carcass to the skinning shed and returned to join us. Not too long after that, Chris, who was looking through his binoculars, told Brad to get ready, as a big kudu was busy making his way towards us. Seconds later, he shook his head and said the kudu had turned around and was walking off in another direction. But then another two bulls appeared, one of which was good to harvest. Right then, Brad noticed the first bull. He was approaching from the left. Chris took one look and told Brad to take the shot if he was comfortable. The shot blasted through the air, and the two men dashed out in the direction of where the bull was standing. Alisha and I followed and saw the kudu where he was lying down. His head was still up, and he tried to stagger to his feet. Chris told Brad to take another shot and then it was all over. It turned out to be a magnificent trophy bull, with one horn measuring 54" and the other 53". Brad was over the moon! The rest of the day was spent searching for a decent warthog boar. We spotted several, but most were either sows or young boars still growing.

That evening, we enjoyed a delicious feast of gemsbuck fillet and impala backstraps, harvested by our hunters and expertly prepared by our chef. The following morning, after breakfast and completing the necessary paperwork, it was time to pack up and leave. On the way out, we stopped for some shopping and shared a final lunch together before heading to the airport. We had an amazing time with these two individuals from afar, who arrived as strangers and left as friends. We are already looking forward to reconnecting with them in 2025 when we visit the US. 🦋



Alisha's impala

Chris discussing shot placement

Jackal down

Dinner time



Buffaloes watching us

"Ná my besoek aan Spektrum Gehoor het my lewe verander. 'n Nuwe wêreld het vir my oopgegaan. Die tegnologie en diens is ongelooflik!"

Hennie van der Walt
Hoofredakteur & Uitgewer
Wild & Jag / Game & Hunt

Gehoorbekerming
Gehoorapparate
Gehoortoetse

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY



It was one of those perfect bushveld mornings – the kind where the air is crisp at sunrise and you can feel the anticipation building.

Kallie, Sarel and I have been planning this trip for weeks.



We set out just after dusk after some coffee and a few condensed milk Ouma rusks.

Sarel, ever the optimist, brought his new rifle, the Ruger he'd been bragging about for weeks. "This thing's so accurate," he boasted, "you could shoot a fly off a kudu's back at 200 metres." Kallie and I just rolled our eyes the way you do when your friend gets a new toy and suddenly thinks he's James Bond. Still, Sarel had the confidence of a guy who'd been to the range more often than he'd braaied a chop.

We walked for what felt like hours, with only the sound of our boots and dry leaves rustling in the wind in the otherwise quiet bush.

Eventually, we spotted him. A massive kudu, standing tall and proud. The sunlight was hitting his horns just right, making him look like the king of the veld. I nudged Sarel and whispered, "Time to put your money where your mouth is. Take the shot."

Sarel, nerves of steel, took a deep breath and lined up the shot in his sights. Kallie and I held our breath. Time seemed to slow down, just like in the action movies.

You could hear the wind rustle through the grass and the faint hum of mosquitoes around us – Sarel fired... and missed.

The kudu didn't even flinch. He just turned his head, looked at us with what seemed like a smug expression, and finally trotted off casually into the bush like he had somewhere better to be. No stumble, no collapse.

"I thought this thing was supposed to be a sniper rifle, mate!" Kallie chirped, laughing. But Sarel smirked and, cool as ever, slowly lowered the rifle: "Bagged it! Poor fly never stood a chance."

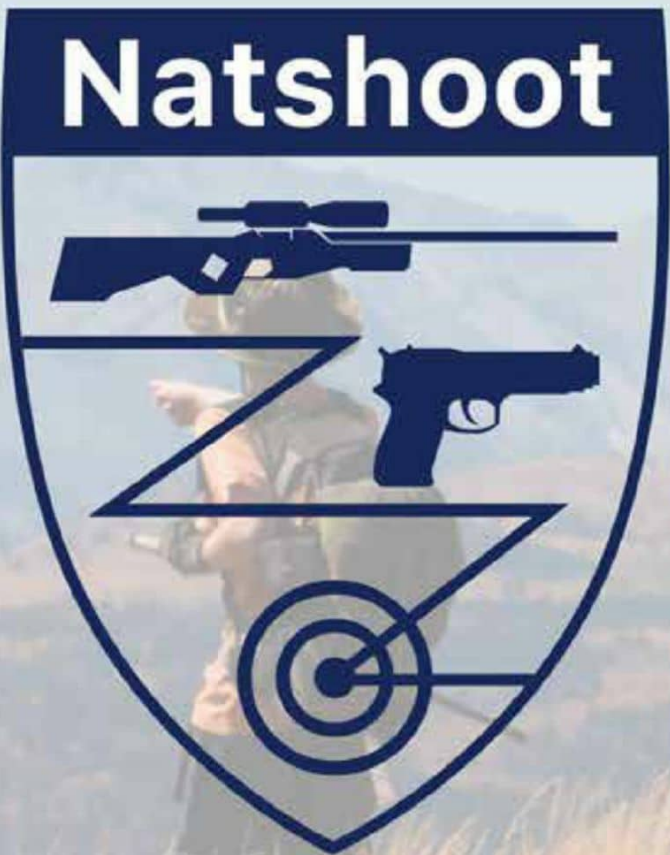
We stood there in disbelief, and for a moment, nobody dared to say anything. Until we all roared with laughter. So, we headed back to camp, empty-handed but with a story we knew would get taller every time we told it.

Sometimes, it's not about the kudu – or the fly. It's about the freedom, the distant sound of the Cruiser warming up, the quiet stalks, the laughs with friends, campfires, and the smell of coffee and gun oil. And to be honest. I'd take that over a trophy any day. 🦋



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There's something about a giant, armoured lizard with dozens of large teeth and a penchant for eating people that sends a shiver down one's spine.

Levi Hill



There really is nothing like a man-eater to keep you on your toes. Despite the fact that they would run for the murky waters, the minute they sighted or winded us, our entire party was on edge as we worked up and down the riverbank trying to catch one of these sunbathing dinosaurs unawares.

Hunting crocodile is, in many ways, an experience all of its own that I'm not sure I can liken to anything else I've hunted. I've taken alligators in America, but that in and of itself is

also unique. We used nylon lines attached to huge fishhooks and hauled the beasts in close to the boat – once they'd taken the bait – to put a .22-calibre bullet in their brain pan. Let me tell you, being within arm's reach of a live and very unhappy 13-foot alligator in a 12-foot boat will give you two things: nightmares and a boat rapidly filling with yellow water.

Crocodile hunting is no less nerve-racking even though you're on land and able to run away. For one, those local trackers all run faster than me and, for two, so do crocodiles!

Levi and his father, Buddy Hill, with their respective crocodiles. One measured just shy of 13 feet, and the other a few inches over.



My dad shot the crocodile closest to the camera. Locals were preparing the scene for a photo shoot, including a rock for dad to sit on, when an even larger croc, attracted by his comrade's blood, came calling.

I was hunting crocodile in northern South Africa with Limpopo Big Game Safaris on a tributary of the Sand River near the Nzhelele Nature Reserve in 2021. My PH was Bossie Mostert, a man who's becoming something of a legend among the American safari crowd for having the scrotum of an impala as a cover for his gearshift knob. He also survived an attack from a wounded Cape buffalo some years ago and has the scars to prove it. You can find a video online of him "walking on water" when a big croc pops up while he's wading out to retrieve a hippo.

Bossie is certainly an interesting character, perhaps one of the more interesting I've met on safari. You can tell for certain that he loves life and his job, and while he's a bit gruff and rough around the edges, he's also quick to laugh.

That day, we spent the morning trying to bushwack a very large crocodile that was "holed up" in a pool in the river where the local people liked to fish for tilapia. Apparently, the big croc was making life hard for the fishermen. I got one look at him – he dwarfed my 13-foot, 5-incher. I couldn't believe it when we got to the spot. The big lizard heard us coming, or winded us, and with a splash disappeared into the depths of the pool.

The pool was about 16 feet long and almost narrow enough to jump across at one point. How deep I couldn't guess, but the water seemed clear enough so you could almost make out the bottom. Yet a croc pushing 16 feet disappeared in its depths like a penny dropped down a well.

We tried repeatedly to ambush the big bugger but failed each time. He always smelt, saw or heard us coming. A more wary crocodile you haven't seen.

We worked our way up and down the main body of the river above a dam where the waters ran wide and deep. From a distance, crocodiles dotted the riverbanks in twos, threes and fours. The plan was to glass them with our binoculars until we found a specimen we liked and then stalk close enough for a shot. "Close enough" meant 20 yards or less because of the small target area for "braining" one, and because a wounded one that made it to the water would likely be irretrievable. He'd likely be eaten by his kinfolk before we could even think of trying to recover him.

We made several stalks up and down the river that morning before finally finding two large specimens sound asleep in the sun. We were within 15 yards when Bossie put dad's rifle up on the sticks and whispered to him to shoot the "big one"



Two crocodiles make for a full bed for a Land Rover. The two 13-foot beasts were shot within minutes of each other as the second came to eat the remains of the first.

behind the eye. He told me to follow up with a shot as soon as dad had fired.

Now, I'm not sure who was wrong and who was right, but my dad and I apparently had different ideas about which the "big one" was because when he fired, the one I was watching ran for the water like a scalded ape and the other just lay there, cool as a cucumber. It turned out that was the one dad shot. "You didn't shoot," he said. "Well, I thought you were shooting the other one, and when he ran, I thought you'd missed," I replied.

Bossie told dad to give the big croc another one in the same spot. If the first shot brained him, the second one brought him back from the dead – the second the bullet struck, he went absolutely bonkers, tail thrashing, driving him further up the bank onto land.

It took several minutes for the thrashing to stop. I believe dad and I each shot him once more behind the back leg to break the tail. It took even longer for any of the crew to muster the courage to get close enough to make sure he was dead.

Finally, Bossie inched his way over and poked the big lizard in the eye a few times with a leg of the shooting stick before he declared it safe. But it was anything but safe. As we stood around talking, our tracker was busy setting up a big stone for dad to sit on for photos and spreading dirt over the small stream of blood running from the big croc down into the water.

Everyone stood there with their backs to the water except me. I happened to be looking right where the sand bar we were standing on met the water when, not more than 4 inches from shore, the snout and head of an even larger crocodile suddenly surfaced from the murky water like a ghost rising out of a tomb.

One second there was nothing, and the next, a 13½-foot crocodile... How they could possibly disappear in water that could not have been more than a few inches deep, I have no

idea, but I was suddenly jumping up and down, pointing and blabbering.

Finally, the word "crocodile" tumbled out of my mouth. Everyone turned to look and suddenly, two guides, Bossie's son and dad were sailing past me, nearly toppling me over.

And that's when our tracker, Moses, came out of the brush, busy about his duties with a double handful of dirt to spread over the blood. He was oblivious to what was happening and trotted right down to the water's edge a mere 2 feet from the croc that was beginning to inch his way onto land, the blood attracting him like a magnet. Everyone started screaming at Moses in unison.

"Run!"

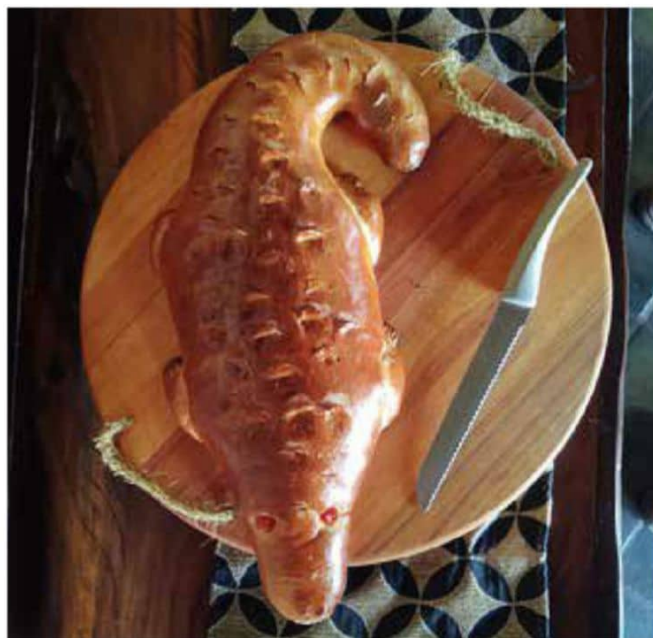
"Move!"

"Look out, you bloody fool," Bossie barked.

Turning to come nearly nose-to-nose with the croc, Moses let out a yelp like a frightened bunny rabbit and jumped about 10 feet in the air. His legs were pumping before he came back down to earth, and for a moment, he hovered in place, a running man reminiscent of Fred Flintstone or Scooby Doo, pedalling air as fast as his little legs could churn. Then he just shot past our group like an arrow from a bow and disappeared into the brush.

We stood there gaping for a moment as the big lizard continued his slow march up the bank, practically licking his lips at the sight of his fallen comrade. "Well, hell. That's a big one too," Bossie expounded. "Let's shoot him!"

We ran around to get a side shot at the monster and, at less than 10 yards, I hit him in the side of the head with my .325 Winchester Short Magnum. (On a side note, the Brownie BLR lever action is the equivalent of an 8mm Short Magnum. It has made two trips to Africa, and nothing I've shot



The cook at Africa Wild Safaris, where the team hunted, prepared a special loaf of crocodile bread with lunch to celebrate the occasion of two large crocs being taken minutes apart.

with it has gone more than a handful of yards before dropping. It is also the only lever gun any of the PHs I've hunted with have ever seen on safari.)

The crocodile also went berserk at the shot to the brain and dad suddenly yelled to Bossie, asking if he should shoot as well. "Shoot him behind the back leg. Break the tail," came the reply. Dad was touting a Ruger M77 in .375 Ruger with a shortened barrel and a muzzle brake. I was reloading to take a third shot when, suddenly, I saw the barrel come up even with my head just inside the peripheral vision of my right eye.

It's the last thing I saw before the world exploded and I found myself stumbling to keep my footing and screaming as the roar of the muzzle blast nearly toppled me to the ground. I dropped my rifle and stumbled up the bank, screaming swearwords as I went. A headache was already mounting, and the world had gone almost silent except for a pounding in my head and a sudden churning in my stomach that immediately turned into a bout of vomiting.

I stood hunched over, vomiting and holding my shattered right ear for I don't know how long before I realised dad was standing beside me talking. As his words gradually changed from a garbled cacophony into intelligible sounds, I realised he was asking if I was OK over and over.

"I'm sorry son. I didn't realise I was that far behind you," he said.

I was having trouble even seeing as the blast seemed to blur my vision. "Did I get him?" I asked.

"Yes. He's lying right where you shot him."

"Are you OK?" Bossie wanted to know, coming up and handing me my rifle.

"No."

"Well, you got him. I've never taken two big crocs so close together before," he added. I turned to look and there, on the bank, not more than 2 feet from dad's croc, lay mine.

That evening, as we sat around the campfire – me nursing a beer and my only slightly dulled headache and still-ringing ear – I asked dad what he planned to do with his croc. For perspective, my father had at that time exactly one taxidermy trophy in his home – a female gemsbuck he shot in New Mexico on the once-in-a-lifetime hunt that a friend, who was a budding taxidermist, mounted for him for free. His hunting shed was full of skulls and horns the likes of which could make three or four chandeliers, but he never paid for taxidermy. It was "too damned expensive", he always said.

"So, what are you going to do with your croc?" I asked. He sat gazing into the fire for several moments before replying, "I think I will get a full-body rug like Jim Ellison has." Jim was a friend of ours who'd been on safari 10 times and had a crocodile rug in his trophy room. "Are you serious?" I asked. "You realise that's like \$3 500." "Yup," was all he said.

Today, I have two 13-foot crocodile rugs in my storage unit. I have nowhere to put them, but each time I see them, I think, "It sure must have meant a lot to my dad to pay that kind of money for a mount." 🦎

Levi Hill is an award-winning journalist, outdoorsman and gunsmith from Jal, New Mexico. He began shooting at the age of two and writing for press while in high school. He can be reached at levi@africassportsman.com.

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IS DIT DIE MOEITE WERD? vir seker!

Custodians (CPHC-SA)

Adri Kitshoff-Botha

Jippie, dis Desember! Vir baie van ons is dit 'n tyd van lekker kuier, eet, drink, lag, sand, see, son, visvang, stap of somer net tuis ontspan sonder die daaglikse gejaag. Maar wie van ons loer nou nie tussendeur na ons e-posse nie? Daar is heel moontlik 'n e-pos met 'n faktuur aangeheg vir jou 2025-ledegeld by 'n jagters- of enige ander vereniging. Dis dan wanneer baie mense waarskynlik wonder: Is hierdie lidmaatskap regtig die moeite werd? Natuurlik lê die antwoord opgesluit daarin dat jy tevrede is met wat jy in ruil vir jou ledegeld ontvang. As 'n ledevereniging wat 'n spesifieke professie ondersteun, glo ons nie dat hierdie waarde noodwendig aan korting op aankope van een of ander aard gekoppel moet word nie, maar eerder aan jou die sekerheid moet verskaf dat jou vereniging alles in hul vermoë doen om jou belange, en in ons geval jou beroep, te beskerm.



As 'n ledevereniging is Custodians se lede en die voortbestaan van hul toekoms die **enigste rede vir ons bestaan**. As 'n mens dus sou terugkyk op ons aktiwiteite die afgelope 12 maande, is dit duidelik: Ons fokus op die belange van ons lede, hetsy jagondernemers, professionele jagters, spoorsnyers, kamp personeel of andere in die volle waardeketting.

REGULATORIES het 2024 afgeskop met groot onsekerheid binne die professionele jagektor oor 'n klaarblyklike moratorium op die uitreik van tydelike invoerpermitte vir vuurwapens tussen Suid-Afrika, Mosambiek, Eswatini en Lesotho. Ons glo dat Custodians en ander verenigings se skakeling met die Sentrale Vuurwapenregister 'n groot bydrae gelewer het om hierdie struikelblok uit die weg te ruim sodat beroepsjagters en kliënte weer hul jagte sonder enige hindernis kon onderneem.

Die konsep-NEMBA-wetsontwerp wat vroeër vanjaar gepubliseer is, het wye reaksie ontlok. Regulasies, norme en standaarde, verbodskennisgewings (*prohibition notices*) en biodiversiteitsbestuursplanne is alles onderhewig aan die bepalings soos vervat in NEMBA (Wet op Nasionale Omgewingsbestuur: Biodiversiteit). Custodians moes dus baie ernstig oorweeging skenk aan hoe enige bepalings in hierdie konsepwetsontwerp moontlik die toekoms van die professionele jagektor, en dus ons lede se lewensbestaan, kon beïnvloed,

hetsy positief of negatief. Ná insette van ons lede, waardevolle gesprekke tydens 'n WRSA-werkswinkel, en uiteindelik ons konsultering, tesame met ses ander entiteite, met 'n regsmaatskappij wat in omgewingsake spesialiseer, het ons uiteindelik omvattende kommentaar op die voorgestelde wetsontwerp gelewer.

Custodians-lede, en dus uiteindelik die professionele jagektor, se belange is altyd eerste gestel tydens elke ontmoeting met die nasionale en provinsiale regering, hetsy oor biodiversiteitsplanne vir luiperds of renosters, die ekonomiese strategie vir nasionale biodiversiteit, 'n voorgestelde wildsertifiseringstelsel, STATS-SA se biodiversiteitseconomie-satellietrekening- (BESA-)inisiatief, 'n voorgestelde boogjagbeleid, die nuwe professionele jagregister of SA Toerisme se kennisgewing om inligting te bekom van die Suid-Afrikaanse toerisme-besighede waartoe ons lede ook kon bydra. Jagondernemers en professionele jagters wat nog nie die registers in die nuwe formaat (2024) het nie, kan ons gerus kontak.

Tydens die Nasionale Departement van Omgewingsake se Biodiversiteits- en Investeringsindaba in Maartmaand het ons HUB, Adri Kitshoff-Botha, op die Biodiversiteitsfinansieringspaneel gedien. Ons boodskap was baie duidelik dat die enigste bewese, volhoubare hulpbron in die wildbedryf die volhoubare gebruik van wild is, hetsy deur ekotoerisme of jag.

PLAASLIK en binne ons benadering van oop gesprekke en beraadslaging, het Custodians in Meimaand vergaderings

belê met prominente wild- en jagverenigings in Suid-Afrika, asook toerismeorganisasies en ander entiteite. Die professionele jagektor se bydrae tot toerisme in ons land moet nooit onderskat word nie. Ons bywoning van SATSA (SA Tourism Services Association) en TBCSA (Tourism Business Council of SA) was derhalwe ook baie waardevol. Ons het net weer besef hoeveel uitdagings en geleenthede ons as jagbedryf met die Suid-Afrikaanse toerismebedryf deel en hoekom die bou van verhoudings en samewerking uiters noodsaaklik is.

OP INTERNASIONALE VLAK het ons die jaar afgeskop met 'n geleentheid om Suid-Afrika as voorkeurjagbestemming by Dallas Safari Club se konvensie te bemark, gevolg deur ons bywoning van die Safari Club International-konvensie.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse professionele jagbedryf het die afgelope jaar asem opgehou oor die voorgestelde, of in sommige gevalle die geïmplementeerde, verbod op die invoer van jagtrofeeë vanuit Afrika na sommige lande in Europa. Custodians is een van slegs twee jagverenigings in Suid-Afrika met lidmaatskap van CIC (Council for Game & Wildlife Conservation) en hierdie uitdaging was een van die belangrike besprekingspunte tydens CIC se jaarlikse byeenkoms wat ons vroeër vanjaar in Portugal bygewoon het. Ná afloop van die kongres het ons ook verdere gesprekke gehad met lidverenigings van die internasionale SUO-groep (*Sustainable Use Organisations*), waartydens die belangrikheid van boodskappe teen antivolhoubare-gebruik-narratiewe bespreek is as deurslaggewend vir die bevordering van volhoubare gebruiksbeginsels wêreldwyd.

Suid-Afrika was vanjaar vir die derde keer sedert die AWCF (*African Wildlife Consultative Forum*) se ontstaan die gasheerland. AWCF is 'n inisiatief van SCIF (*SCI Foundation*) en word sedert 2002 op 'n rotasiebasis deur Afrikalande aangebied, waar belangrike sake soos die sosiale aanvaarding van jag in Afrika, olifantbestuur en -bewaring, die rol van jag in Afrika se wildelewe-economie en baie ander relevante sake onder die vergrootglas geplaas is. Dit was vir Custodians 'n voorreg om weer eens deel daarvan te kon wees, asook om net 'n paar dae later aan die *African Wildlife Economy Colloquium* deel te neem.

ONDERSTEUNING AAN ONS LEDE is vir Custodians kritiek belangrik en ons is dus trots op die volgende eksklusiewe voordele en dienste wat ons aan ons lede bied:

- Mediese noodontruiming as deel van hul lidmaatskap deur toegang tot SATIB24 Crisis Call: Dit bied gemoedsrus aan

Custodians-lede dat professionele noodbystand nou oral in Afrika vir beroepsjagters en hul personeel beskikbaar is.

- 'n Vakleerlingskapprogram (*apprenticeship programme*) waardeur Custodians-jagondernemers aan nuut gekwalifiseerde beroepsjagters die geleentheid bied om praktiese ondervinding op te doen ter voorbereiding en afronding van hul beroep as professionele jagter.
- Die toekenning van professionele jagterstatus in terme van die vuurwapenwet (seksie 16A), waarvolgens professionele jagters hul vuurwapens kan lisensieer vir die uitoefening van hul beroep as 'n professionele jagter.
- Endossering van vuurwapenaansoekmotiverings, beide in terme van professionele jagterstatus (seksie 16A) en vir besigheidsdoeleindes (seksie 20).
- Konsepdokumentasie om te gebruik as basis vir grondeienaar/jagondernemer- en jagondernemer/professionele jagtersooreenkomste.
- "RPL (*Recognition of Prior Learning*)". Custodians het 'n ooreenkoms met 'n geregistreerde diensverskaffer aangegaan, wat aan ons lede die kans bied om 'n nasionale professionele jagterskwalifikasie te bekom deur die RPL-proses. Dit is egter belangrik om te beklemtoon dat dit tans nie 'n vereiste is vir die aansoek van 'n professionele jagterspermit by provinsiale natuurbewaring nie. Baie beroepsjagters het egter aangedui dat hulle wel graag hierdie kwalifikasie sal wil bekom.
- Deur ons voorkeurvooertuighandelaar-ooreenkoms met McCarthy Toyota kwalifiseer Custodians-lede eksklusief vir addisionele korting op spesifieke modelle bo en behalwe die ToyotaSA-handelaarskorting.
- Ten einde 'n beter begrip van die professionele jagbedryf te kan kry, het Custodians se Uitvoerende Komitee vroeër dié jaar besluit om ons eie Nonkie Kunene vir die bywoning van 'n professionele jagterskursus te registreer. Ons is uiters trots op Nonkie se deursettingsvermoë en die uitstekende resultate wat sy in die kursus behaal het. Ons glo die investering in ons personeel is uiteindelik tot voordeel van al ons lede.

Ter afsluiting wens ons elke WILD & JAG-leser 'n rustige, vreugdevolle en geseënde Kersseisoen toe. Mag 2025 jul wildste verwagtinge oortref! Kontak ons gerus vir verdere besonderhede oor ons spesiale vereniging, Custodians! admin@cphc-sa.co.za / ceo@cphc-sa.co.za





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HUNTING AN ICON

WITH AN ICON



Laurence Jennings

Legends are defined by what they have done over time, and the only judge will be history itself. If you take a step back and look at the history of African hunting, especially the great African hunters of years gone by, you will see what I mean. Growing up, I read all the books I could find on hunting in Africa. Books on wild places filled with magnificent trophies and vast numbers of game, and the men who hunted these great beasts. But what got my attention were the rifles that made these men the great old African hunters they were.



One of these rifles stood out for me, a true African calibre in all its glory – the .318 Westley Richards. What deepened the mystery surrounding this calibre was that I hadn't met anybody who owned one and had never seen one myself in 30 years. Then, one day in 2023, I was talking to Derick at Wildman Centurion. He mentioned that oom Pierre van der Walt's rifles were there, one of which was

a .318 Westley Richards! I have known oom Pierre for several years, and the word "legend" definitely comes to mind.

After holding that rifle in my hands and talking to oom Pierre about it for a long time, he said he might consider letting it go if I wanted it. Well, I jumped at the opportunity! It was a boyhood dream come true. After a few months of waiting, I finally owned my own .318 Westley Richards.

More about the .318 Westley Richards

The .318 Westley Richards was one of the most popular medium-bore cartridges used in Africa, even after the introduction of the .375 Holland & Holland.

The .318 Westley Richards, also known as the .318 Rimless Nitro Express, is a rimless, bottle-necked, medium-bore cartridge intended for big-game hunting throughout the British Empire. The bullet diameter is actually .330"; the naming is due to British nomenclature, which sometimes names cartridges by their land diameter rather than the more commonly applied groove diameter.

Westley Richards offered solid soft-point or the revolutionary LT-capped bullets in two loads, the more common being a 250 gr bullet with a listed speed of 2 400 fps, whilst a lighter load firing a 180 gr bullet at 2 700 fps was also offered for lighter game. The 250 gr bullet possessed high sectional density and thus excellent penetration.

My rifle is built on a Newton 1916 action, one of the rarest actions in the world today. The barrel is from Hart Rifle barrels in the USA and the walnut stock was imported from Morocco. This rifle is a piece of art, history and passion all folded into one. The craftsmanship is superb, and it shoots like a dream.

With oom Pierre's help, I worked up a load that performed very well. My load was 54 gr of N560 Vihtavuori, pushing a 250 gr Claw bullet at 2 300 fps. I had very good groupings at 100 metres.

The next step was that the .318 needed to go hunting, but what animal to choose? It had to be an icon of the African veld, one that stood the test of time! Maybe a big old dagha boy, a majestic old kudu bull or perhaps a massive blue eland bull.

I was invited on a hunt in the Waterpoort area of Limpopo. This property is known for its big impala. The more I

thought about it, the more the impala as an icon started to make sense. They are the caretakers of the African veld and most predators feed on them. Impalas are the first quarry of many hunters in Africa. A big herd of impala grazing, with one big ram watching over them, is a great sight to behold, not to mention hunting them during the April/May rut, an experience in itself. In my book, the impala is definitely an icon of Africa or a big contender at least.

The property we hunted was home to over 4 000 impalas, as indicated by the last game count. It is a massive piece of earth with amazing numbers of wildlife. I wanted to hunt at least five or six rams with the .318 Westley Richards on this trip. It would test the rifle's capabilities after being locked up in a safe for many years. To be quite honest, I wanted to see what it could do under hunting conditions. I really wanted to hunt with it regularly in future, and this would be the perfect test to see if it would be a safe gun or a working gun.

The first morning out, we saw several animals, but as luck would have it, there were no impala rams. At about 9:30, as we came around a bend on the game trail, we found a lone impala ram standing to our left, looking at us. Raising my binoculars to my eyes, I could see the straight points and that it was an old, mature ram. I went down on one knee and took aim. The ram's shoulder was obscured by some brush, but I felt that the 250 gr would be ok at this distance. He was slightly quartering towards us at this point.

At the shot, the ram spun around and took off at full speed. I was a bit confused, as I expected him to drop on the spot. Taking up the tracks, we found him 20 metres away. The shot had hit a little behind the shoulder, but the 250 gr Claw did the job, and I had my first animal with the .318. It was a beautiful specimen, and on top of that, the setting and morning walk were perfect. I could not have dreamed of a better way to start my journey with the .318. After taking some pictures, we



dragged the ram to the road about 70 metres off and radioed the camp to come and collect him.

While waiting for the bakkie to arrive, I spotted a big ram crossing the road about 300 metres away. I immediately grabbed the .318 and shooting sticks and went after him. We found him feeding in very thick cover and waited. It seemed like he would feed at a slight angle away from us into some more open veld. After watching him for about 20 minutes, waiting for him to present a shot opportunity, nine other rams joined him. It was a bachelor group of rams and an amazing sight.

Eventually, the ram walked into the opening, quartering away from me. I placed the crosshairs on his ribs and squeezed the trigger. He ran approximately 10 metres and then collapsed under a cluster of black-thorn trees.

The .318 had performed excellently and I was very pleased. It had proved itself as a working rifle with a great balance – easy and light to carry, accurate and a pleasure to shoot and hunt with.

By the third day, I had shot five mature impala rams and was about done. If the opportunity presented itself for a truly massive ram, I would take it, but I felt content after an excellent hunt. The .318 had performed better than I ever expected, and I was in seventh heaven!

The last afternoon we were driving around, picking up the last guys after their walks. As luck would have it, we went through an area covered by white rocks and with very little grass when Pieter spotted a big ram with a herd of females. It took me maybe a second to see that he was right, and after a quick stalk and an even quicker shot, the ram dropped in his tracks. Walking up to him is something I will never forget. I have never seen a ram like this before; by far my biggest to date.

Hunting impala will forever be special for me. They are crucial to the life cycle of so many of Africa's ecosystems. For me, the impala truly is an icon of the veld, and to have hunted this icon with another icon like the .318 Westley Richards was an amazing privilege. A big thank you to Pierre van der Walt for this piece of African history. I will take good care of her! 🦌



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Cleve Cheney

WHY DO THEY ATTACK HUMANS?

PART 1

My memory is like a sieve or selective at best because I often remember things in my life that were of no real consequence while sometimes forgetting events, especially the details, that were important and occasionally life-threatening or life-changing. I suppose it is the process of growing old that is starting to kick in. Where am I going with this? I am trying to recall all the times I have been charged by dangerous and non-dangerous animals (so-called) so that I can piece together the circumstances that led up to the event. By doing this, I could perhaps figure out why they charged (attacked). I could also determine why, in some instances, they charged up to the point where I had no other option but to shoot them in self-defence (Figure 1) and why, at other times, they charged but stopped and then turned and ran.

FIGURE 1:
A white rhino shot in
self-defence



FIGURE 2: A mere 20 m on foot from a bull elephant. No anger or negative response. Why not?



FIGURE 3: This white rhino, only 20 m from me, shows mild curiosity but no aggression.

I have been charged on numerous occasions by, in order of frequency, white rhino, elephant, buffalo, lion, black rhino and hippo. I have never had the experience of being charged by a leopard because most of my “on foot” bush time was during the day, and leopard are creatures of the night by nature. I did of course see leopard on foot during the daylight hours, but perhaps they felt vulnerable outside their preferred time of activity and were quick to slink off into the thick stuff, sometimes with a soft growl. That does not mean leopard do not attack humans. On the contrary, they do. Fortunately, I have not been on the receiving end.

Some of the charges and events leading up to the charge I can remember quite clearly. In other instances, my memories are vague. Luckily, I have kept a daily “ranger’s” diary for many years. Some of the charges I recorded in detail. Later on, I now realise, I became somewhat blasé and thought it no big deal that I had been charged (again) by white rhino or elephant or whatever, and my diary became somewhat cryptic: “charged by elephant bull along the Matjulwane Spruit – managed to turn it”; no details of what led up to the incident. And so, I am trying to assemble pieces of a puzzle – not only of my own experiences but also those of trusted work colleagues and friends who had similar encounters, as well as some that I did not have but would like to factor into the overall equation to reach some rational explanation as to why wild animals charge or attack humans. It should also be stated that some animals that are not listed under the “dangerous game” category may also, under a certain set of circumstances, charge with the intent of “causing grievous bodily harm” (to you, that is). Another question that needs to be answered is why tamed wild animals sometimes attack humans.

I have always been fascinated by wild animal behaviour. After having spent my life working with them, I have come to four fundamental conclusions:

1. Animals are individuals and manifest behaviour according to their personal character traits.
2. Animals can think and reason – they are not dumb and do not just act on instinct.
3. Animals can remember.
4. Animals possess the innate ability to discern intent.

UNPREDICTABLE INDIVIDUALITY

The overarching fact is that animals have character and behavioural traits that are very similar and comparable to humans. Some are moody and morose, while others are happy. Some are short-tempered and get angry very quickly, while others are patient and tolerant. Animals can be sad or joyful. Some are suspicious, while others are accepting. Think of any well-known human character trait and you can be sure there will be an animal equivalent. How they develop their individuality is likely akin to how humans do it – a complex combination of genetic heredity, environmental factors and experience. Why is it that sometimes I could stand 20 m from a bull elephant or white rhino and it would be unperturbed, gaze benignly back at me and then nonchalantly walk off? No anger or aggression (Figures 2, 3). And why is it that sometimes a lion or one of the other Big Six would charge at me from a distance when I was no threat to them and was not too close or harassing them in any way (Figures 4, 5)?

Thinking and reasoning

To think of animals as unthinking, unreasoning, “dumb” creatures is to be in denial of reality. It deprives us of appreciating them and does them a great injustice. Their capacity to think and reason is often the driver of behavioural responses. Obviously, there are also instinct-driven components – the need to find food and water, to procreate or to find shelter. These “base” levels of living and behaving are primal and common to all, whereas learned behaviour, based on the capacity to think and reason, is on a higher level of existence and sets one individual apart from the next.

The end result for each and every animal is a unique individual for which there is no “works for or applies to all” formula. Therefore, one cannot predict with any level of certainty how any animal will respond to a given set of circumstances. Each individual will respond to a situation in a way it sees fit – based on the character traits of that animal (brave, bold, fearful, timid) and how it perceives the circumstances. It may be influenced by internal and external factors but ultimately will make up its own mind as to what action to take.



FIGURE 4: What caused this lion to charge?

Thinking, reasoning and personal, individual makeup can be the only way to explain why animals of the same species, age group and sex may respond entirely differently when exposed to similar circumstances, and why an individual may react in a predictable way one day and entirely differently the next. One day, animal A will wake up feeling well rested, healthy, strong and in a good mood and will respond to a set of circumstances in a predictable fashion. A day later, the same animal may be tired, feeling unwell and in a surly mood and respond entirely differently to the same set of circumstances. Animals are just like humans in many respects.

Therefore, to say that lions will respond to a given set of circumstances in a particular fashion, or that an elephant will act in a particular fashion when you throw a stone at it, or that a herd of buffalo will behave in a certain way when approached on foot, etc, are generalisations at best. And generalisations cannot only be dangerous but can prove fatal.

MEMORY

Animals have the ability to remember. This is not the salivating-at-feeding-time gong of Pavlov's dogs; that is a conditioned reflex which only occurs after being subjected to repeated stimuli. Some animals can remember a single incident that may never be repeated. The memory of the event may elicit a positive response in the individual if the experience was pleasant or a negative response if it recalls the event as

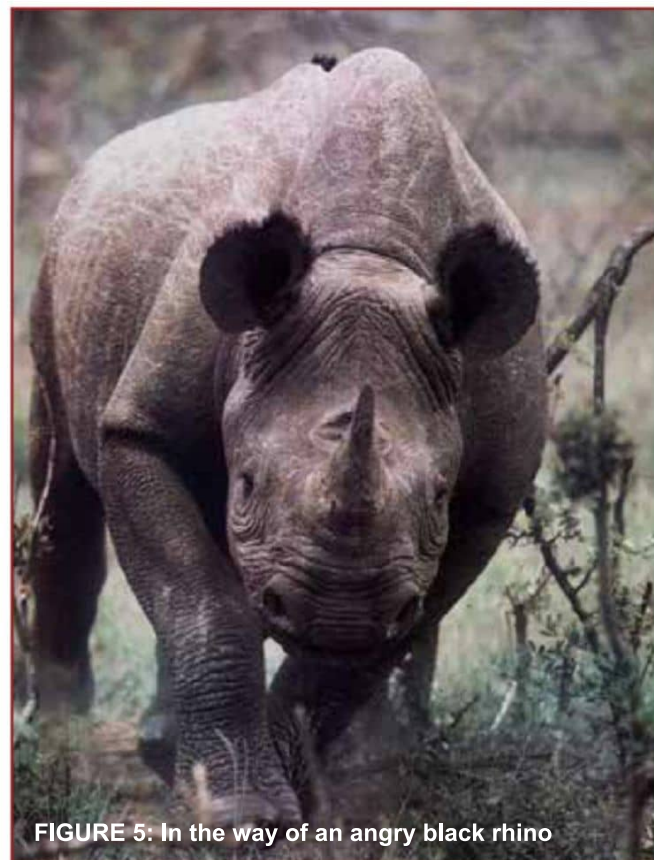


FIGURE 5: In the way of an angry black rhino



FIGURE 6: Buffalo moving off as I approach them.

being unpleasant. This involves a much higher intelligence level than a conditioned reflex, and all indications are that some species have a greater memory capacity than others.

DISCERNING INTENT

Discerning intent means that animals somehow know when you are intent on hurting them, e.g. hunting or culling (Figure 6), and when you have no ill intentions towards them but are happy just to watch them (Figures 7, 8). Note in Figures 2 and 3 that I am unarmed, and the elephant and rhino are quite content to just stare back at me. When they discern you as a threat or danger to themselves, their companions or their young, an aggressive response may ensue (Figure 9).

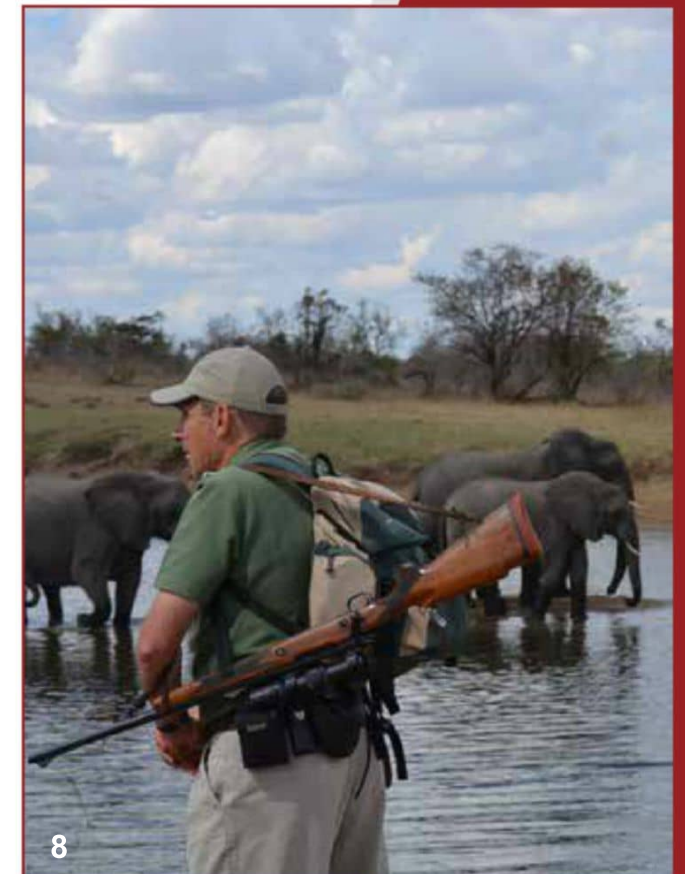
And so, with the foregoing in mind, we will look at some of the generalisations as to why animals attack humans in the next article. There are external and internal factors which will determine how an animal will respond to a given set of circumstances, but these will be influenced by the uniqueness of the individual and its ability to discern intent and remember, think and reason.

FIGURE 8 (middle right): A breeding herd of elephant, sometimes belligerent at the approach of humans, but in this instance, quite content to continue bathing and drinking.

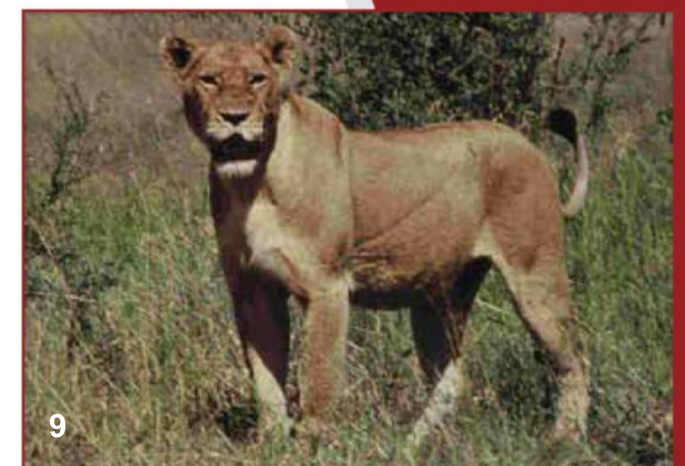
FIGURE 9 (bottom right): What caused this lioness to adopt this aggressive, threatening posture?



FIGURE 7: These buffalo are quite content to just stare back at us. No aggression.

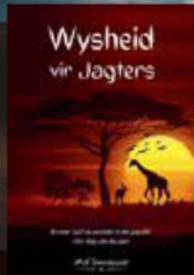


8



9

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Jordan taking aim at the small target



The excitement after each shot

I've always taken Jordan with me to the shooting range since he was small, introducing him to rifles and helping him get familiar with handling firearms safely. These early trips were more about exposure, letting him watch and learn so that when the time came, he would feel comfortable taking a shot.

Jordan turned five this year, a milestone in more ways than one. I had told him that as soon as he could hold a rifle, he would be ready to start learning how to use it – safely, of course. At five, he was finally ready, and both Beulah and I decided it was time to introduce him to his first hunt. We chose a porcupine as his first target, a small pest that often interferes with the bait we set for bushpigs. This moment marked the beginning of what I hope will be a lifelong bond between my son and the natural world, just as it has been for us.

The day started like any other, but there was a palpable excitement in the air. We began by taking the Brno .22 LR from the safe, a rifle that would soon become Jordan's introduction to a hunter's life. Our goal for the day was simple: help Jordan understand the basics of handling a rifle, aiming and taking a precise shot. However, what I really wanted was

for him to feel the same thrill and respect for hunting that I do every time I take to the field.

We set up a target at 30 yards, trying to simulate the scenario he would face later that evening. I wanted him to feel comfortable, not just with the rifle, but with the environment in which he would be hunting. Whether it's sitting in a blind overlooking a bait pile for bushpigs or out in the open stalking game, comfort and familiarity are key. I knew that if Jordan could learn to stay calm and composed in this controlled setting, he would be better prepared when the time came for the real thing.

As I stood there with the rifle in my hands, explaining the steps to Jordan, I realised how special this moment was. This wasn't just about hunting; it was about passing down something that runs deeply in our family's veins. I placed the rifle in a death grip, ensuring it was secure, and pointed safely towards the target. I then lined up the scope so I could see the target clearly and turned to Jordan, giving him his first lesson in proper rifle handling.

"Put your cheek on the stock, my boy, and move your head forward until you can see the full circle in the scope," I instructed him. He listened intently, eager to follow every step.

Passing on a FAMILY TRADITION

Johan Smit



Growing up immersed in the world of hunting and fishing, my son, Jordan, has had plenty of exposure to the lifestyle my wife, Beulah, and I cherish. It's a way of life for us, something that goes beyond just a hobby or a weekend activity. The lessons of patience, responsibility and respect for nature are ingrained in everything we do. I always hoped that one day, our passion for the outdoors would be passed on to Jordan. This year, that hope became a reality.



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Jordan at three years old after he had taken a shot with my Tikka UPR 6.5 Creedmoor

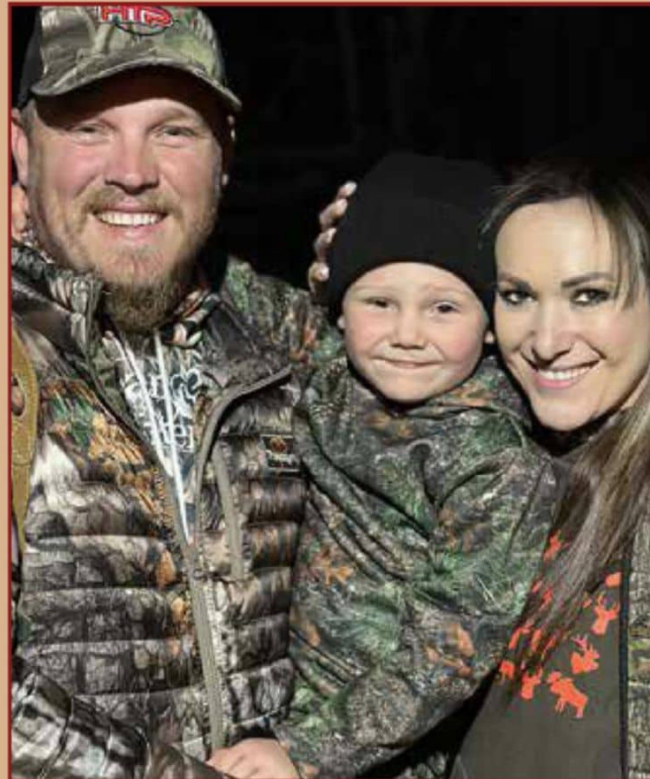


“Dad, I’m ready to go hunt!”

His small face, filled with concentration, pressed against the stock as he adjusted to see the scope clearly. Once he had the hang of it, I guided his hand towards the trigger guard, making sure he understood the importance of keeping his finger off the trigger until he was absolutely ready to shoot.

He responded confidently, “Okay, Dad.” With that, I loaded the rifle, explaining that once I closed the bolt, the rifle would be “hot” and ready to fire. Jordan nodded, excitement visible in his eyes. I asked him if the crosshairs were in the middle of the target, and when he confirmed, I told him to gently squeeze the trigger.

Jordan did exactly as I had instructed – his shot hit dead centre. My heart swelled with pride. At that moment, I saw not just my five-year-old son but the future of our family’s hunt-



The moment we all have been waiting for!

ing tradition taking root. He had listened carefully, absorbed every word, and applied it perfectly. I knew then that he was ready for the next step.

We spent the rest of the afternoon in the backyard, honing Jordan’s new-found skills. I gradually made the targets smaller, forcing him to focus more and adjust his aim precisely. We even got down to shooting at a target no bigger than a bottle cap. Each time, Jordan hit his mark dead centre, and I couldn’t have been more impressed.

As the sun began to set, I turned to Beulah and said, “Tonight, we’ll take Jordan out for his first hunt.”

It was time. He had practised, learned and proved himself. Now, we just needed the right opportunity, and we both agreed that the time had come for him to harvest his first animal.



Jordan, ready to go on his first hunt



The moment the porcupine was shot



My proudest photo yet with Jordan



Grandpa Corrie was there to witness the hunt.

Once darkness fell, we headed out to the blind, with Jordan practically buzzing with excitement. This was different from the practice runs earlier in the day. For one, he would be shooting under the cover of night, using a Nitesite mounted on the Brno .22 LR to track his target on a screen rather than through the scope itself. This set-up was slightly more advanced than what he was used to, but I knew he could handle it.

We sat in the blind, the cool night air settling around us. It wasn’t long before we heard movement at the bait site. I switched on the Nitesite, and there it was – the porcupine, right on time, sniffing around the bait. Jordan shifted in his seat, clearly excited, and I could feel my heart racing too.

“Okay, my son,” I whispered, “just like we practised.”

I helped Jordan load the bullet, reminding him once more to keep his fingers off the trigger until he was ready. He listened carefully, keeping his focus on the task at hand. I told him to aim right between the porcupine’s eyes since it was facing us. He lined up his shot perfectly, the crosshairs steady on the screen.

“Can I take the shot, Dad?” he asked, his voice steady.

“You can take it,” I said.

And with that, he squeezed the trigger. The shot rang out, followed by the unmistakable rattle of quills as the porcupine reacted. It staggered but stood up again. Quick on the reload, we prepared for a follow-up shot. I told Jordan to aim for the heart this time. With his second shot, the porcupine walked off into the lantana bushes.

Beulah and I both agreed it sounded like the porcupine had crashed, but because it had walked off, I decided it would be best to wait until morning to track it. Jordan, worried he might have made a mistake, asked me if something had gone wrong. I reassured him that he had done everything perfectly and that we would find his porcupine the following day.

Jordan woke up early the next morning, eager to find his first harvest. The excitement from the night before hadn’t faded; if anything, it had grown. We grabbed our gear and

headed out to the spot where we had last seen the porcupine. Beulah, known for her tracking skills, quickly got on the track. It didn’t take long before we came across it, just a short distance from where Jordan had taken his second shot.

His face lit up with pure joy. It was the kind of happiness that only comes from achieving something truly meaningful for the first time. There it was – his first animal, and I couldn’t have been prouder.

For Jordan, this was more than just his first hunt; it was his introduction to a world that has been such a fundamental part of our lives. For me, it was a chance to share something special with my son, to teach him about responsibility, respect for animals and the importance of patience and precision. He didn’t just learn how to handle a rifle or take a shot – he learned the values that come with hunting.

As we stood over his first porcupine, I couldn’t help but think of all the hunts we would share in the future. Jordan’s journey as a hunter had only just begun, but already, he had shown promise, patience and a love for the outdoors. He might be young, but in that moment, he was every bit the hunter I hoped he would become.

Looking forward, I can’t wait to see how he grows into this world. Whether it’s taking down larger game, learning the art of tracking, or spending long days by the river fishing, I know Jordan has the heart and the spirit for it. Watching him on that first hunt, I saw not just my son but the future of our family’s hunting legacy.

And so, it begins – Jordan’s first hunt was a success, and with it, a new chapter started in our family’s story. There’s something truly special about passing on these traditions, watching the next generation pick up where we left off. I couldn’t be prouder of Jordan, and I can’t wait to see where this journey takes him.

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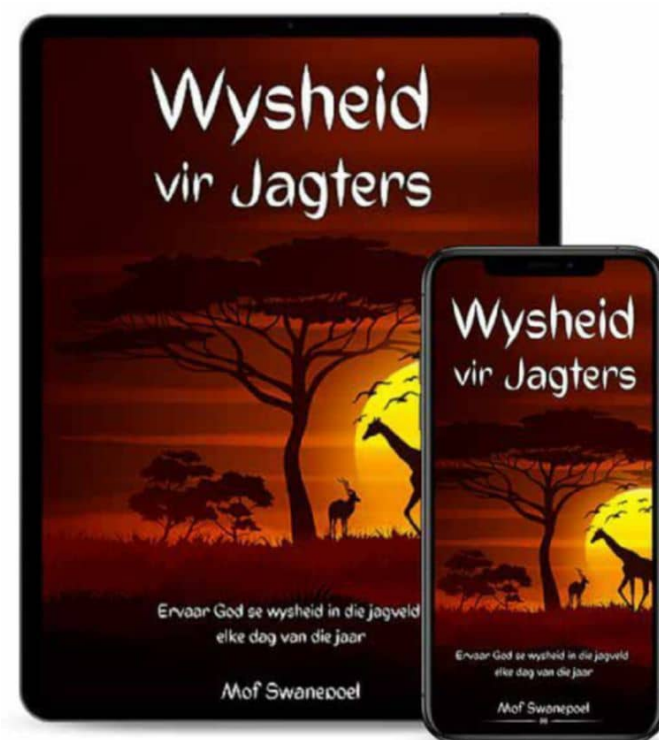


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DIE IDEALE KERSGESKENK

Wysheid vir Jagters

– Mof Swanepoel



Hierdie boek is geïnspireer deur praktiese ondervindings in die jagbedryf en in die jagveld. Die doel van die boek is om die jaggemeenskap met die Woord te bedien op 'n manier wat almal duidelik sal verstaan en sodoende hulle lewe te verryk.

Dit is in eenvoudige taal geskryf wat selfs vir kinders verstaanbaar sal wees. Mense op alle vlakke van die samelewing sal baat vind daarby om die boek gedurende hul stilte tyd as 'n studiegids saam met die Bybel te gebruik.

“Vertrou op die Here met jou hele hart en steun nie op jou eie insig nie. Ken Hom in al jou weë, dan sal Hy jou paaie gelyk maak.” Spreuke 3:5-6

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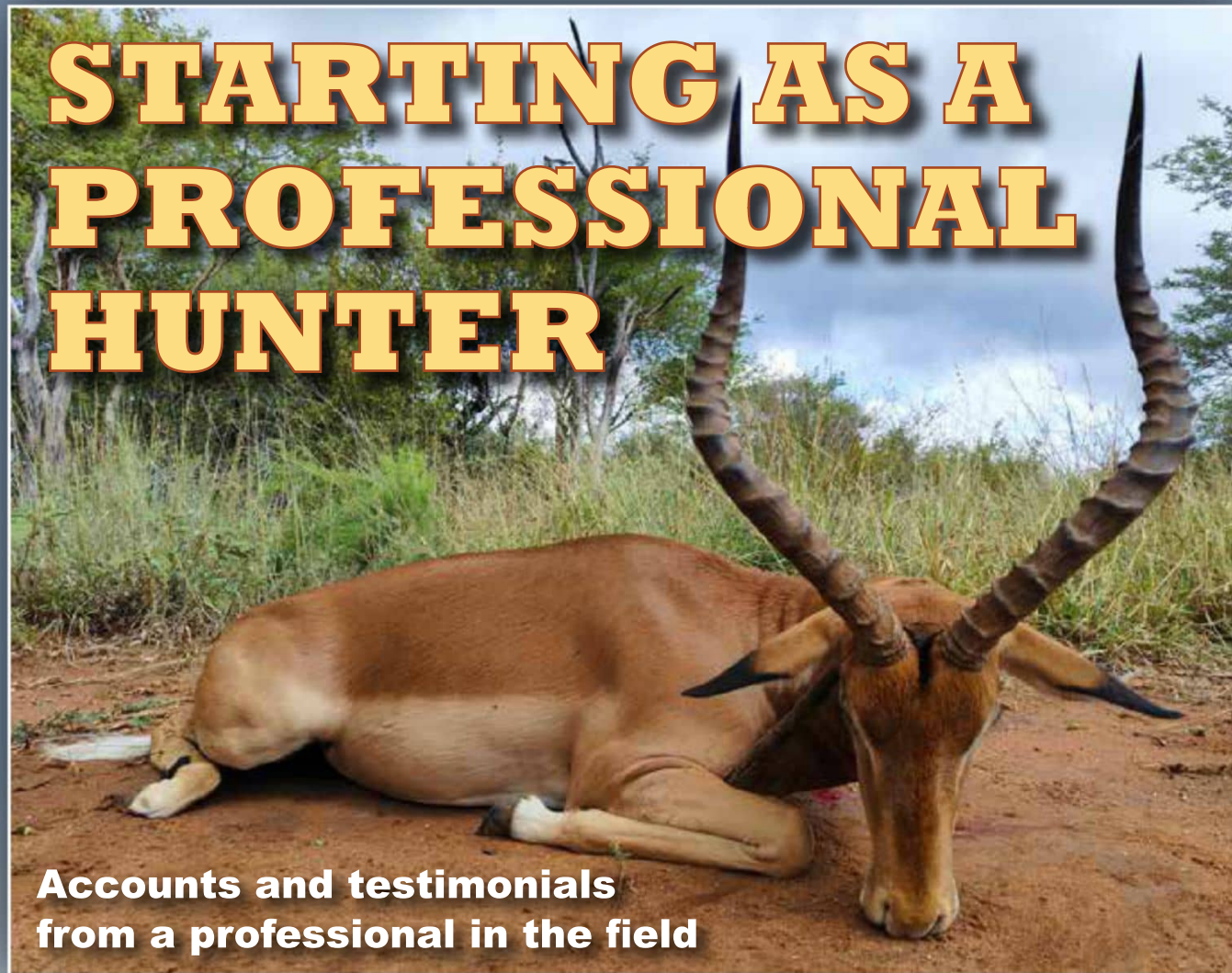
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Johan Wilsenach

Often, we are “prepped” for failure, almost like an attempt to lighten the blow when things don’t work out or our plans fail. This “prepping” can be done by loved ones, mentors, idols or random strangers, but who can blame them. In a society where jobs are extremely scarce and everyone is battling with their finances or to find a job, it justifies the external fear, criticism and uncertainty but leaves a feeling of hopelessness and disappointment. This article aims to give true and motivational accounts of finding your feet as a professional hunter (PH) in this amazing industry and highlights the fact that you do have a future there. However, it requires dedication and a passion for hunting and wildlife.

The journey of a PH is exciting. You will see and experience vivid growth the more you hunt and the more you work with clients. It truly comes down to the more you do something, the better you will be at it. However, this “more” takes time, patience and the willingness to learn and understand that your time will come.

This year marked my first year as a full-time freelance PH, and what a year it had been! I jumped into my first season mid-February with European clients, way ahead of the traditional hunting season. My year had seen a combination of American, African and European clients, as well as bow- and rifle hunters. Though I had an unbelievable year thus far, I faced great worries last year when stepping out of university into a vast open market with thousands of PHs in the field. In addition, I had to shadow-work with outfitters, farm managers and game breeders for the past four years.

I started this year full of uncertainty, not knowing anything and relying on friends and family within the industry to give me a taste of what it’s all about. I also sent my CV to several WhatsApp and Facebook groups and hunting outfitters but received no feedback. I had no idea what this year would hold until I got the opportunity to occasionally help on Lentegeur Wildlife, a large game farm catering for local and international clients. I guided three European groups for them in February and continued staying on the farm for the whole of March. Helping out turned into well over 150 days of hunting that filled my year, along with other hunts from various outfitters. The point of my story is that opportunities don’t come around often, but when they do, you’d better grab them with both hands, or someone else will.

What do these opportunities look like and how do you grab them? My Lentegeur employment this year resulted from a three-week internship four years ago with the farm manager, Hanru Strydom, now the owner of Lentegeur. During my holiday, I wanted to learn more about the industry I wanted to

make my career. I worked hard during those three weeks and stayed in touch with Hanru. He invited me to come and help where needed while trying to find my feet, and it turned into more work opportunities.

Another example of using every opportunity is when I learned that Motsomi Safaris, an outfitter powerhouse, needed a PH on short notice. At first, I was doubtful about contacting them, but later took a leap of faith. And boy, did this newly opened venture pay off! Never doubt yourself or your capabilities. Outfitters are more willing and open-minded than you might think, but once you get your opportunity, you must give it your all by being willing, a team player, and allowing your passion to lead the way.

The worst mistake any of us can make is to compare ourselves to our family members, peers or idols – not only in the way we conduct our work but especially in the way we will start out as a PH. I previously wrote an article on Jan du Mondt, who had a unique start as a PH. He is a well-known dangerous-game PH with many years of experience and dangerous-game quarries notched on his rifle. His start was dream-like, being thrown in at the deep end of dangerous-game hunting early in his career and having to learn as he went along hunting every animal. Most of us dream of hunting Africa’s Big Five and following in the footsteps of old legends and their tales of past hunts. In reality, and in today’s modern world, however, it takes time and patience to reach this stage.

Jan du Mondt kicked off his career in style, but it was in a day and age where hunts were slower paced and the emphasis was placed on quality over quantity, where you grew with your company. Today, quantity and quality are equally valued by clients, and they expect you to know all about everything to find work with a company or get the chance to hunt higher-value game. With this said, realising you will start out at the bottom and slowly work your way up through the ranks,



As mentioned in the article, the change is drastic when starting off as a PH, but so is your growth. These two blesbok images were taken three years apart, with the most recent on the left. It is small things like your photography skills, or bigger things like client interaction and business conversations that grow with time, but it takes patience and is a process you should embrace.

being fed a bone every now and again is a crucial piece of realisation. In this case, a bone refers to going along on dangerous-game hunts. Buffalo hunting remains very common, and a vast number of other dangerous-game hunts take place across Southern Africa more often than we know. However, it is becoming a niche market and a dying profession; dying because dangerous game no longer pays the outfitter's bills, but plains game does. Dangerous-game hunting is exhilarating, fun and a huge privilege, but nowadays, very few outfitters conduct enough of these hunts to be able to say it is their bread and butter.

Dangerous-game hunting can be your passion, but the quicker you realise that making it a profession is but a dream, the quicker you will set yourself up as an exceptional plains game PH with great dangerous-game knowledge and experience when the opportunity arises. In hindsight, it's better to make a living from plains game and also hunt dangerous

game than to hunt only dangerous game and struggle to live. Make the right choices early on and learn as much as possible rather than trying to scramble to the top of the ladder before you are ready. It doesn't mean you shouldn't try reaching for the stars, but unnecessary and career-altering mistakes creep up on you easily, and that is where you must be strong. No job is more important than your future career, so do not let someone take chances and jeopardise your PH licence.

My uncle and hunting mentor gave me the following advice at the end of last year: What makes a good PH does not depend on the number of clients you have guided, your years of experience or how many members of the Big Five you have harvested.

Your success as a PH is determined by every single hunt, where on some hunts, you are good and on others, less so. A good PH is consistent from one hunt to the next, as is the service he/she provides and the ability to work on a hunt-to-



The reason we should start off as apprentices and learn before guiding clients on a hunt. This was my second buffalo bull hunt as an apprentice, which went south quickly. Long story short, the bull charged the dangerous-game PH and me after a long stand-off in some thick brush. I was proud and thankful that I survived my first charge unscathed, but it didn't mask the emotions of fear and feeling unprepared. No matter how safe you are or how thorough you prepare mentally, you will never be 100% prepared. That's where experience and time come in. Learn and don't pretend to be ready before you really are.



Don't rush into things! I chose these images as they represent growth and the realisation of my dream. They symbolise a young PH who was given a chance to learn, resulting in growth that ultimately led to his career. What once were solely apprenticeships and learning opportunities are now what I get to do almost every day. Be patient!

hunt basis. It's easy to tire or lose sight of things once you do several back-to-back hunts, but a fellow PH once told me this is when your passion for hunting kicks in and separates you from the rest. You can be a good PH even though you have a lot to learn with very few hunts behind you, but that's the fun part in any case – to never stop learning!

The message I want to convey through this article is that you do have a place in this wide-ranging, wonderful career of professional hunting. Times have changed, but when old

doors close, new ones open. Never feel discouraged about how long the process takes or how long it takes to reach your goals. The most important part is to start. Head out, create opportunities for yourself and grab them with both hands. Network with as many people as possible, as it will undoubtedly bear fruit in the future. I don't have any regrets about choosing this as my career – it's simply awesome! Enjoy your journey, and remember, an expert at anything was a beginner once. 🦌

MYTROPHYROOM

Maak elke jagtog 'n blywende herinnering

In 2023, terwyl ek om 'n kampvuur gesit het, het ek begin dink oor wat ek aan die jagbedryf kan bied wat uniek is. Die wêreld van jag het oor die jare baie verander en ek het besef dat tegnologie 'n groot rol kon speel om die jagervaring te verbeter. Só het die idee vir 'n app ontstaan – 'n hulpmiddel vir jagters en vissermanne om hul prestasies en avonture op 'n unieke en nuttige manier vas te vang.

Ek wou 'n manier skep om jagters se ervarings op 'n persoonlike maar private manier te dokumenteer. Elke jagtog is uniek en hierdie oomblikke moet met respek bewaar word. Ek het veral gedink aan my seuns en hoe ek my eie jag-en visvangervarings met hulle wil deel. Dit gaan nie net oor 'n foto van die trofee nie, maar oor die hele ervaring wat daarmee saamgaan.

Ek het besef dat ligging en weerstoestande 'n groot rol in elke jagervaring speel. Daarom moes die app dit vasvang, saam met besonderhede soos die dier se gewig, die skootafstand en die tipe geweer. Dit sou 'n volledige rekord van elke jagtog skep, en wanneer ek terugkyk, kon ek die hele prentjie sien. Net soos jagters, geniet vissermanne dit om hul vangste te dokumenteer. Ons het dus 'n visvangkomponent ingesluit wat die grootte van die vis, die ligging en weerstoestande vaslê – 'n volledige rekord van elke vangs.

Wat My Trophy Room uniek maak, is dat al die data privaat bly. Jy besluit of jy dit met vriende of op sosiale media wil deel, maar die keuse bly altyd joune. Ons werk ook aan funksies soos kunsmatige intelligensie wat outomaties inligting soos horinglengte vanaf foto's kan skat. 'n "Track my hunt"-funksie, wat jagters se roetes kan volg, word ook ontwikkel vir toekomstige opdatings.

My Trophy Room is vir jou geskep om jou jag- en visvangavonture op die mees volledige en private manier te dokumenteer. Ek is trots op hierdie projek en nooi jou uit om deel te word van hierdie reis. Laai My Trophy Room af en begin jou eie trofeekamer bou – vir jouself en die nageslag.

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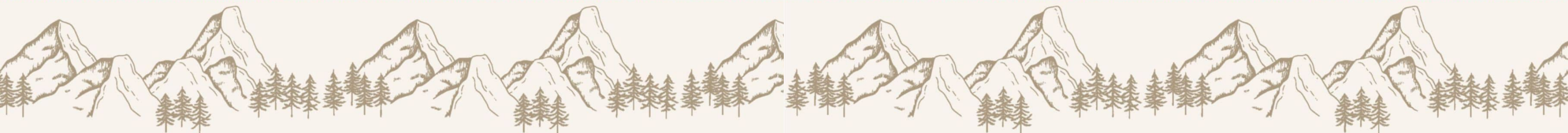
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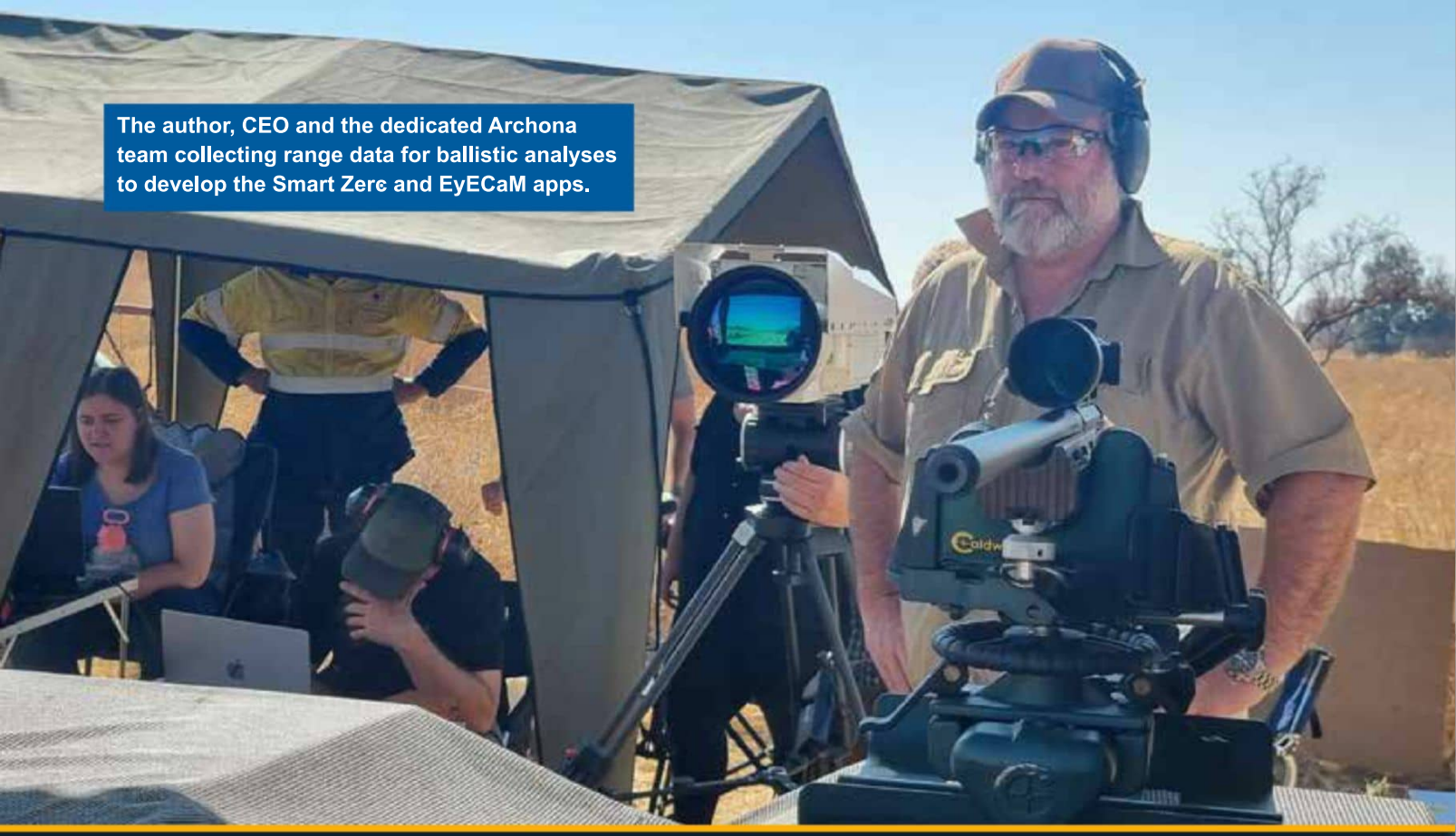
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My Trophy Room



The author, CEO and the dedicated Archona team collecting range data for ballistic analyses to develop the Smart Zero and EyECaM apps.



DEBUNKING GUN STUFF

Part 9: How to SMART ZERO your scope for match shooting

Christophe Roelofse

In part 7 of this series, in our quest to understand the precision accuracy matrix (PAM), we looked at circular error probable (CEP) and median error radius (MER) for decisive considerations based on the expected benefits (objectives and outcomes) for LRS (long-range shooting) and ELRS (extended long-range shooting). In Part 8, I explained the hunting Smart Zero method for the most reliable, lowest hunting miss error margin. In this article, we will discuss the Smart Zero method for match shooting.



Why does the Smart Zero method work?

Because it surmises the value of shot group results: To confirm the **probable** (1) zero and (2) stability of the mean POI factor of the rifle, measured against the (A) relative point of aim (POA), also known as mean radius (MR), to minimise the miss error / median error radius (MER). Thus, the **zero** is based on the most probable (predictive) point (CEP) of impact according to the actual statical performance of your rifle.

Circular error probable (CEP)

The circular error probable or “circle of equal probability”, with normal (Gaussian) distribution, is a measure of the firearm’s platform precision as a “measure of error” in an enclosed circle / radius (for example, a 1 MOA angular measurement size at distance) centred on the probable point of impact (POI), in which it is expected that 50% of rounds will impact within the enclosed area / 1 MOA. Think of CEP as the MER as a

measure of precision. CEP can be defined as the square root of the mean square error (MSE), pooling the PAM sum of all sources of variance error (such as azimuth, etc), geometrical-ly corresponding to the radius of a circle within which 50% of rounds will impact. The other 50% will naturally disperse in a radial pattern, 43,7% will impact on the next MOA circle, and 6,1% on the next MOA circle.

Basic shot group for precision analysis

Ideally, the GP-POI (“group for precision”) shot group should be radial (a round pattern), whether it represents practically one hole, a clover or an infinitely bigger group print. It is implicit that other shapes suggest irregularity; vertical shot patterns are associated with (too) high velocity and horizontal shot groups with (too) low velocity, as a default conception.

Low count / small shot group data sets

We already discussed the significance of small data sets’ prejudice towards “false positive” results, especially for a mean-radius-zero exercise. Statistically, equating the circular error probable (CEP), a 3-shot group will practically always have a variety of the metrics elements (e.g. SD) deviating 60-70% up (worse) or down (better) within the parameters of the full 30-shot data set, from the **average SD** – a significant speed and POI variation. A 5-shot group will deviate 40-50%, a 10-shot group 30-40%, a 20-shot group 20-25%, and a 30-shot group 15-20% in relation to the full shot data set average, e.g. a 50-shot group with 10% deviation. This basic “statistical model” validates and supports the realistic **Smart Zero method**, based on a theoretical default 30-round data set for precision rifles, whilst there is a rational model for 10- to 20-round data sets for hunting rifles in terms of acceptable loss/miss risk.

The Smart Zero sport shooter is equipped with advanced metric knowledge

Caveat, the multitude of ballistic metrics variances he knows: (A) The twist rate of the rifle (e.g. 1:9” twist, e.g. for bullet stabilisation). (B) Bullet details – weight, length, BC, etc. (C) Velocity and barrel length (e.g. for bullet drop). (D) The angular measurement scale MOA/MRAD of the scope. (E) Weather elements like wind, pressure, etc. (F) The relative range/distance of the shot / match.

GP/GA-POI exercise

Usually, with most precision rifles, the “groups for precision” (GP) point of impact and “groups for accuracy” (GA) follow the same practical exercise since the sport-shooting firearms are usually well “benched” for the practice of field target, PRS, etc. The Smart Zero technique is my standard (default) rifle zero methodology model for GP-POI (groups

for precision), since we first need to establish the capability and performance of the rifle before moving to the application (deployment) – GA-POI (groups for accuracy). I will endeavour to demonstrate the Smart Zero method for match rifles.

PHASE 1: SMART ZERO FOR PRECISION

Set up the rifle

Ideally, the rifle must be set up neutrally – free from external forces, in a shooting sled on a very sturdy platform like a concrete shooting table. While multi-role rifles have bipods upfront and LRS/ELRS rifles have A-frames, bench rifles, of course, have fire-control rests, etc. Since there are 60 MOA in 1 degree, the most important metric is to keep your rifle perfectly upright – square to the target. **Top tip:** ADP (advanced digital precision) anti-cant rifle level (Archon Optics) in MOA/MRAD. If your body supports the rifle for recoil, be in a square position to the rifle (sitting, standing and prone) because your body angle to the rifle introduces a bending moment and, therefore, a POI shift in the opposite direction of your off-cast angle to the rifle.

Standard Smart Zero method

GP-POI (groups for precision point of impact), target: Select a printed target design that is not sport-shooting-discipline-specific according to your scope’s angular measurement MOA/MRAD. Example: Make sure the target measurements are the 29,1 mm precise block increments in 1 MOA at 100 m. **Top tip:** POAT (point of aim targets) from Roland Target Systems (RTS). Use a spirit level or the anti-cant rifle level from your rifle to make sure your target is properly squared “upright”! Confirm the preferential distance – actually 100,00 metres (in South Africa). I use a “point of aim target” (POAT) for this exercise.

Standard Smart Zero match shot string method

4 shot strings of 5-10 shots each: In parts 6-7, we discussed shot groups for scientifically valid statistics. The ideal is 50 shots to ensure a < 10% precision. Let’s assume the rifle POI is already “on paper” within 2-3 MOA on target. Start collecting shot group data by shooting on the POAT (point of aim target), on the bottom left (step 1 POA 1) – 1 MOA colour block. You can enhance your technical aiming experience by adding POAT “focus correction and highlight” stickers to assist with precision POA aiming and parallax adjustment. Shooting and timing for sport-shooting rifle application, intended to shoot longer shot strings over a period of 1-20 minutes, follow the course breakdown. Shoot the remaining shot strings – resume with (step 2, POA 2) top left, (step 3, POA 3) top right, (step 4, POA 4) bottom right, each time allowing for cooling intervals similar to a match course between the 4 shot strings. If the POI is within 2-3 MOA (practical reasons),

do not adjust your scope during these 4 shot strings. Remember, you are actually shooting a 20+ shot group only in 4 different spots on the target to see and assess your groups better at a tempo simulating match conditions.

Validate Smart Zero

Step 5, POA 5. Complete steps 1-4. Then, calculate the mean radius (MR) of each of the 4 shot groups, as well as the average. The **Smart Zero** app will calculate the optimised centre of your predictive POI median error radius (MER) grouping, with the minimum (smallest) miss radius ensuring the smallest amount of risk to miss. Mean radius calculations are tricky, and a thumb-suck guess/estimate defeats the entire exercise. Adjust your scope accordingly and complete step 5, POA 5: Shoot the same 5+ shot count at the same pace/timing as in the centre of the target.

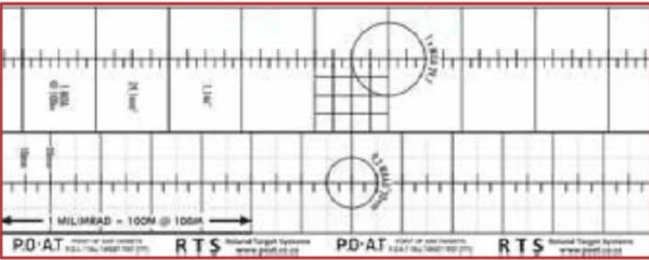
Validate Smart Zero at distance

Step 6, POA 6/7 >. You may use the existing target (or a new target), mark all the step 1-5 shot holes, and set up your target at precisely 200 or 300 m, exactly square as before. Add your **Smart Zero** GP-POI 100 m information into a ballistics calculator and use the bullet drop simulation information results to adjust your scope for elevation. Remember, past 100 m, the environment has a profound impact on ballistics, such as wind. Your POA is centre target; the POI radial grouping should be around your POA. If the entire group moved left or right, it is probably a wind factor. The aim is to recalculate your MR and compare the percentage size measurement to the 100 m; theoretically, it should be the same percentage/angular measurement, only scaled to distance. If the MR holds true at 200/300 m, the zero at long distances should scientifically hold true, caveat all the PAM matrix elements and your ballistic solver's simulations. To validate the zero at distance, use a tall target test (TTT) at 100 m.

Tall Target Test (TTT)

Ideal for LRS (long-range shooting) and ELRS (extended long-range shooting) preparations. Once the scientific Smart Zero GP-POA steps 1-5/6 are complete, move to the TTT at 100 m to confirm the POI at elevation from zero according to your ballistic solver simulations. We assume the tall target is set up squarely vertically and the rifle is securely upright. The tall target delineations are perpetual (uninterrupted) string targets on a 3 or 6 m roll. Simply tear and sticker up the MOA/mil length required, for example a 90 MOA for .338 LM for the 1 Mile test. Select a start point (zero aim) and first dial your scope in increments of 10 MOA or 3 MRAD to see if the scope tracks to the correct markers. Then, dial your ballistic elevation solution on the scope. Example: .308 Win 178 Hornady Match at 2 771 fps – 1 000 m = 35 MOA, 1 mile/1 610 m = 91 MOA, 2 000 m = 146 MOA. Your reticle should rest on

the appropriate elevation marker. If the target is appropriate (safe), assure yourself of the angle/elevation, and fire a shot at each simulated elevation setting for the intended distances. If the impacts are on the correct elevation markers, your zero is scientifically precise (valid) and should hold true for supersonic distances (LRS), but extended (subsonic/ELRS) ranges must be verified. I prefer using POAT–TTT targets because it is very convenient and accommodates both MOA and MRAD.



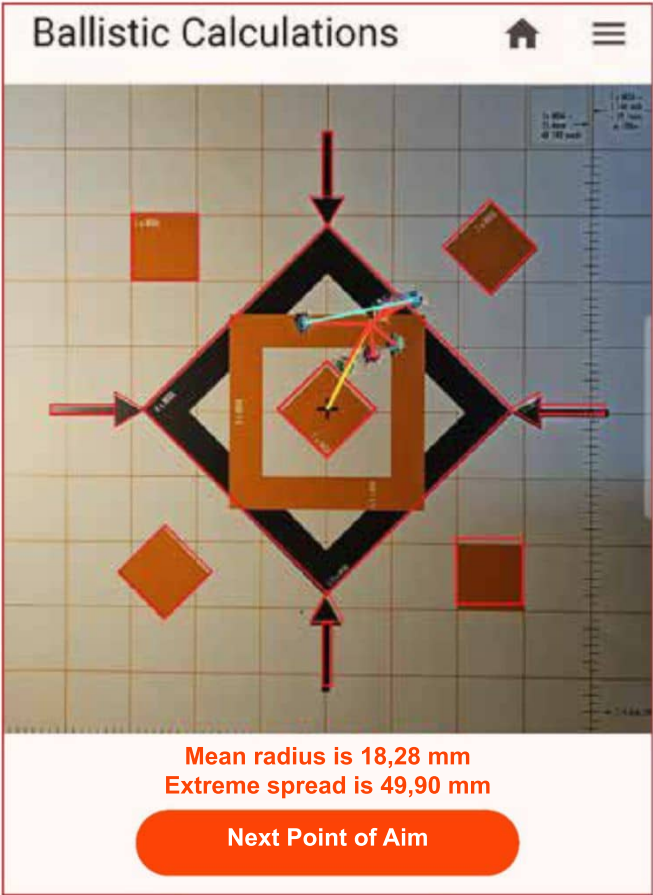
PHASE 2: SMART ZERO FOR ACCURACY

GA-POI (groups for accuracy), especially for disciplines like PRS/field target, etc; shooting for accuracy / actual field application

First, complete your scientific Smart Zero GP-POA steps 1-5 and/or steps 6/7 above, which will confirm your rifle's optimal zero point and give you confidence (insight) in your rifle's performance probability. This second phase is all you! Remember our references to the precision accuracy matrix (PAM), where accuracy is "external ballistics" and, of course, one major element (metric) in accuracy is the athlete ("shooter"). Shoot at your intended match (proficiency) distance, e.g. a 3x3-shot GA-POI group for accuracy, for example in the actual competition positions, perhaps 3 shots prone, 3 shots sitting (or barricade) and 3 shots standing (or barricade). Measure up your group MR and compare it to your average from the benched GP-POI data set. The difference between the scientific precision (the gun's optimal performance potential) and these application results is a clear indicator of the improvement requirement/potential of your shooting skills to improve accuracy.

One large group data sample for match shooting

Shoot a complete match string of shots in the same time. Example: ELRS match: 15 shots/9 minutes; shoot either 15 shots at the same POA or 3 different groups of 5 shots. It works well at distance, for example at 300-500 m on targets and Smart Zero analysis or at event distances (1 000 m, 1 mile, 2 000 m) with tools like the EyECaM spotting scope eyepiece camera or EyECaM spotting scope app from Archona Arms/Optics (www.archona.co.za), which is specifically developed for practical applications. If you do it at close range (100 m with tight or overlapping shots), the problem is "virtual patterns" giving false gravity to where there is a con-



centration of shots, and thus a superficial mean radius centre (see part 6, page 67, 68). The Smart Zero app "match feature" is specifically designed for precision rifles simulating match conditions.



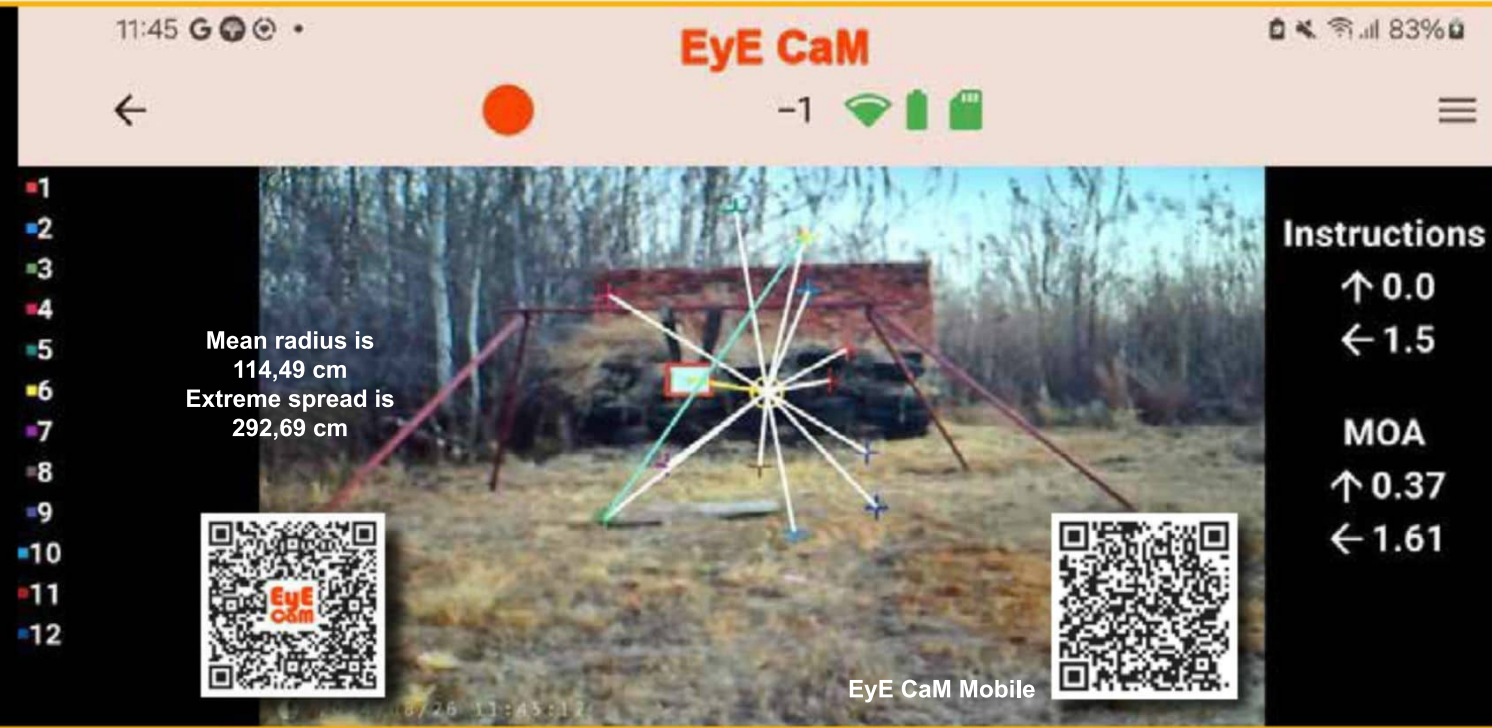
Top tip

The predisposed knowledge of the ballistic veracities of MR/ CEP/MER, etc, is the very reason and motivation why I am contentiously partial to my first choice: **Hornady bullets**, because of their drag variable reduction technology (DVRT) that increases deviation reliability (decreases the miss shoot radius).

The **Smart Zero** technique/app will ensure the smallest miss error margin to beat the statistical odds every time! In the next part, we will discuss Smart Zero for sport/match shooting and the value of the TTT target system from POAT, and take a look at the EyECaM ELRS spotting assist app. We will also refresh on some long-range external ballistic metrics in our PAM quest.

Till next time, safe shooting! 🎯

▼ The EyECaM spotting scope app is a world-first ELRS spotting assist app with shooting range and event management features.



EDUCATIONAL END GAME?



Martin Hood, Legal adviser: Firearms

Many of you will be aware of the situation created at the end of June 2024 when several qualifications, including firearm and security training qualifications, were not extended by our previous and now departed Minister of Education. This resulted in the Professional Firearm Trainers Council (PFTC) obtaining an interim order to reinstate the old qualification, as did the Security Association of South Africa for the training qualifications for security officers.



At the beginning of August 2024, the Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) began developing what is known as a skills programme for firearm training. This raised the ire of the PFTC because only it is mandated to quality-assure firearm training, and in terms of the recently extended, renewed SASSETA mandate, that mandate does not include firearm training. Therefore, the PFTC formed the view that the steps taken by SASSETA were intended to circumvent the High Court order against them, which restored the mandate to the PFTC to continue quality-assuring firearm training.

Consequently, a second urgent application was launched against SASSETA and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) to stop the drafting and implementation of a skills programme. The grounds for the urgent application were that it constituted contempt of court by contravening the original 11 July 2024 court order and that SASSETA and the QCTO had contravened their own gazetted policies, which requires that, prior to formulating and implementing a skills

programme, there needs to be the establishment of a need for such a programme, and that to establish a need, consultation with stakeholders is necessary. In addition to this, the PFTC contended that SASSETA did not have a mandate to quality-assure firearm training.

When the answering papers were filed, the state role players argued they were acting in good faith and could not be in contempt of court. The PFTC accepted this and did not proceed with the contempt issue but proceeded with the application for the interdict. When the matter was called in court, the presiding judge, who had acquainted himself with the papers, indicated he did not believe the matter was urgent. The matter was argued, and during the argument, the judge expressed several opinions. These opinions are not binding but nonetheless provide insight into the conduct of the state role players.

He indicated, for example, that if the conduct of state role players contravened the 11 July court order, this would be contempt of court. He further said that a contravention would be, in essence, the development of a skills programme

that in any way overlapped with the content of qualification 50480. At the same time, documents were subpoenaed from the state role players that clearly showed that the content of their proposed skills programme was very similar to that of qualification 50480.

The judge even went further and expressed his dissatisfaction with the way in which the state role players had conducted themselves. He indicated there was no rationale set out in the court papers or elsewhere why a skills programme was necessary with the existing PFTC quality-assured qualification 50480. The matter was struck off the roll due to a lack of urgency, but the judge did not deal with the merits of the matter. In fact, as I have stated above, he gave a good indication that he believed the merits were in favour of the PFTC.

Many of you might ask the rhetorical question, what has this got to do with me anyway? The answer is that the legislated policy requirement for a skills programme is that this skills programme must take place over a period of two weeks. In contrast to this, the current firearm training takes between two and three days, depending on how many actual firearm qualifications a student wants to complete. For example, if he wants to complete the legal test and one other unit standard, such as handgun, this generally will take about two days, including the required range shooting time.

If you want to do additional unit standards, this could push the training time to as long as three days, including time for

self-study at home. A skills programme of two weeks, on the other hand, besides there being insufficient course content to spread such a course over two weeks, would quadruple the training cost because of the additional number of days required and, in many instances, would cost more than the cost of the actual firearm that someone wants to license. This will be a complete disincentive to new firearm owners, who would have to take time off work to go and do in two weeks what could be done in a much shorter time. It will also lead to the exploitation of security officers, who could no longer afford to do the training privately and fund it themselves, and they would become beholden to their employers to fund such training. Employers, in turn, might be inclined to cut corners to reduce the cost of training. The PFTC and many others perceived the steps taken by state role players as gun control by other means because this will stop new entrants into firearm ownership, as training and, therefore, ownership become prohibitively expensive.

Quite interestingly, many people have criticised the PFTC for the cost of training. Yet, ironically, it is the PFTC that is fighting to stop the cost of training increasing.

The PFTC will continue to fight the development of the skills programme, bearing in mind the comments of the judge, which did not go down very favourably with the state role players and their legal team even though the matter was found not to be urgent.

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WENNER: DEHAN LOUW – Koedoebul; Steyr-Mannlicher .30-06 Sprg (180 gr-Hornady RN); plaas Zandfontein, Nylstroom (Modimolle), Limpopo; 200 m



DONOVAN SNYMAN – Wit blesbok; .300 WSM (180 gr); Deneysville, Vrystaat



PIERRE HODGSON – Elandbul; .30-06 Sprg (180 gr-Norma Bondstrike); Hopefield, Wes-Kaap; 242 m



EVAN SCHOONBEE – Blouwildebeeskoei; .303 Brit (180 gr-Sellier & Bellot); Marble Hall, Limpopo; 60 m



EWAN VENTER – Blesbokooi; 6mm XC; Alpetra Natuurreservaat, Bulgerivier, Limpopo; 100 m



WILLEM VERMEULEN – Swartwildebees; Steyr-Mannlicher .270 Win (130 gr-Sierra Pro-Hunter); Tsoswana, Oos-Kaap



ASTIN MICHAEL – Warthog; CZ .308 Win (150 gr); Nanni Game Farm, Swartwater, Limpopo; 120 m



GABRIELLA MICHAEL – Warthog; .308 Win (150 gr); Pete le Roux farm, Waterpoort, Limpopo; 150 m



ROCKY MICHAEL – Waterbuck; CZ .308 Win (150 gr); Anro Safaris, Vaalwater, Limpopo; 140 m



MAGDA STANDER – Springbokram; HOWA .243 (100 gr-Hornady Interlock Bowtail); Uurpan Jagplaas, Schweizer-Reneke, Noordwes; 204 m



JOHAN MULLER – Volstruis; .243 Win (100 gr); Ukilima Ezinkulu, Wolmaransstad, Noordwes; 150 m

THE CHEETAH

Acinonyx jubatus



J du P Bothma

The cheetah and puma lineage diverged 6,7 million years ago from the common cat ancestor in Asia and migrated to North America over the Bering Land Bridge, where the puma ancestor developed 4,9 million years ago. The cheetah almost immediately developed from the puma ancestor into *Miracinonyx trumani*, which closely resembles the modern cheetah, and *Miracinonyx inexpectatus*. Based on fossils, a cheetah-like carnivore lived in Texas, Nevada and Wyoming in North America until 10 000 years ago.

The cheetah would have become extinct globally if it did not migrate back to Asia, and from there to Africa when Eurasia and Africa made contact and the Mediterranean Sea dried up some 6 million years ago. The oldest fossils of the living cheetah were found in the Laetoli fossil beds of northern Tanzania, where it lived some 3,4 million years ago. *Acinonyx pardinensis*, which was as large as but much lighter in weight than a small lion, once lived in western Europe, while *Acinonyx pleistocaenicus* lived in China and *Acinonyx brachygnathus* lived in India and China a little more than 3 million years ago.

The oldest cheetah fossils in South Africa are 3,5 to 3,0 million years old but they were larger than the modern cheetah, which first appeared around 1,9 million years ago. Among the living cats, the cheetah has almost no genetic diversity. However, genetic analysis revealed that the cheetah can partially reconstitute its genetic diversity by a rapidly evolving mitochondrial DNA, which has allowed it to survive in Africa and as isolated populations in Iran.

The German naturalist Johann Christian Daniel von Schreber first described the cheetah scientifically as *Felis jubatus* in 1777, based on a skin from the Cape of Good Hope. The British anatomist and naturalist Joshua Brookes created the name *Acinonyx* because the cheetah is not a hissing cat (*Felis*) or a roaring cat (*Panthera*). The name *Acinonyx* was derived from a combination of the Greek words

akinitos for “immobile” and *onyx* for “nail” and refers to the limited ability to retract the claws fully. The epithet *jubatus* stems from the Latin word *iuba* for “crested” and refers to the cheetah’s mane. The common name “cheetah” originates from the Sanskrit word *chitra-ya*, which means “variegated, adorned or painted”. In the past, the cheetah was often called a hunting leopard, as in the Afrikaans *jagluiperd*, because it was tamed and used for hunting.

The four subspecies that are recognised taxonomically are: the south-eastern African cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus jubatus*, the north-western African cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus hecki*, the north-eastern African cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii* and the Asiatic cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus venaticus* that still occurs in central Iran.

Description

The cheetah is a lightly built, spotted cat with a small, rounded head, short nose, deep chest, long, thin legs and a long tail. It has a shoulder height of 67 to 94 cm and a head-and-body length of 1,1 to 1,5 m. An adult’s body mass of 21 to 72 kg varies markedly with age, health, region and gender, but the males are larger and heavier than the females. A short, rough mane of at least 8 cm runs along the neck and shoulders. This mane starts as a cape of long, loose blue to grey hair in juveniles and is more prominent in the males.



Photo: Thea Venter

The small, short, rounded ears are tawny at the base and the edges and have black patches on the back. The eyes with round pupils are set high. The pronounced tear streaks, which are unique to the cheetah, run from the corners of the eyes down the nose to the mouth. The exceptionally long, muscular tail has a bushy white tuft at the end and is 60 to 80 cm long. Its first two-thirds are covered in spots, while the final third has four to six dark rings.

The general background colour of the coat is golden-yellow or tan but may vary from tawny to greyish-white and bright reddish-fawn. It is covered with around 2 000 evenly spaced, solid black dots that have a soft, furry texture. The belly, limbs, chin, throat and upper lip are white and there is some white above the eyes. The king cheetah of southern Africa, with its three wide, dark stripes from the neck to the tail, is a genetic mutation, while cheetahs with fully black or white coats are rarely found in Kenya and Zambia. The Saharan or north-western African cheetah is the smallest of the living cheetahs. It often has no tear marks and the coat of short hair is nearly white. Its spots fade from black on the spine to brown on the legs, while the face may have few to no spots.

The claws are blunt due to the lack of protection, but the large and strongly curved dewclaw is remarkably sharp. A high concentration of nerve cells occurs in a band in the centre of the eyes, which significantly sharpens the vision and enables the cheetah to swiftly locate prey. The cheetah is unable to hiss or roar due to the presence of a sharp-edged vocal fold in the larynx.

Distribution

The cheetah occurred throughout Africa, Europe, Asia, China and India 2,0 million years ago. It became extinct in the Middle Pleistocene, which lasted from 781 000 to 126 000 years ago, but survived in the Middle East after the African and Asiatic cheetahs became separated geographically some 67 000 to 32 000 years ago. Three of the last wild cheetahs in India were shot in 1947 by Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo of Surgujia.

Habitat

The cheetah appears to be less selective in habitat choice than other cats but prefers regions with a great availability of prey, good visibility and minimal chances of encountering the other larger predators. It seldom occurs in tropical forests and mostly inhabits savannas in eastern and southern Africa.

Habits

The cheetah has a flexible, complex social structure. Individuals typically avoid one another, but the males may fight over territories or access to females in oestrus. The females have minimal interaction with other cheetahs, except with males that occasionally enter their ranges, or during the mating season. The females tend to move around alone and search for prey in large, undefended ranges, while the males establish small territories in areas with abundant prey.

Some males are territorial and the male siblings of a litter may stay together after weaning to form a coalition for life and collectively defend a territory to ensure maximum access to the females. However, biologically unrelated males are also allowed into a coalition. The coalition males groom each other and call if any member is lost. The members have equal access to kills when hunting, and possibly also to females who may enter their territory. Coalition males are notably healthier and have better chances of survival than the solitary ones.

Unlike the lion and leopard, the cheetah is active during the day, with peaks during dawn and dusk because these larger carnivores will kill cheetahs and steal their kills. The cheetah tends to avoid larger predators when they occur together. In highly arid regions, such as the Sahara Desert where daytime temperatures can exceed 40 °C, the activity might increase on moonlit nights when prey can be sighted easily, although this creates the danger of encountering larger predators.

Cheetahs have a broad repertoire of calls and sounds that often differ from those of other cats. When excited, such as



gathering around a kill, they communicate with a high-pitched chirp that sounds like an intense bird call and lasts less than a second. A cheetah also makes a shrill, staccato call that can last up to two seconds, purrs like a domestic cat but much louder, and bleats when in distress.

Cheetahs also communicate by scent and a male will often investigate a urine scent-marked place for a long time by crouching on his forelegs and carefully smelling it. He then raises his tail and urinates on a tree trunk, stump or rock, and other cheetahs might repeat the ritual. The females may also scent-mark but do so less prominently than the males. Touch and sight are other ways of communication, while social meetings involve mutual sniffing of the mouth, anus and genitals. Individuals groom and lick each other's faces and rub cheeks, but seldom lean on or rub their flanks against each other.

The cheetah is an induced ovulator and may breed throughout the year. It is sexually mature when 18 to 23 months old, and a female can have her first litter when she is 2 to 3 years old. Urine scent-marking by the males increases when a female in the vicinity comes into oestrus. Even the males in coalitions fight with one another for access to a female in oestrus. There is no courtship, and mating begins with the male approaching the female, who lies down while chirping, purring or yelping. The male immediately holds the female's nape securely with his mouth and they copulate. They then ignore each other for a while but copulate three to five times a day for the next two to three days before parting ways.

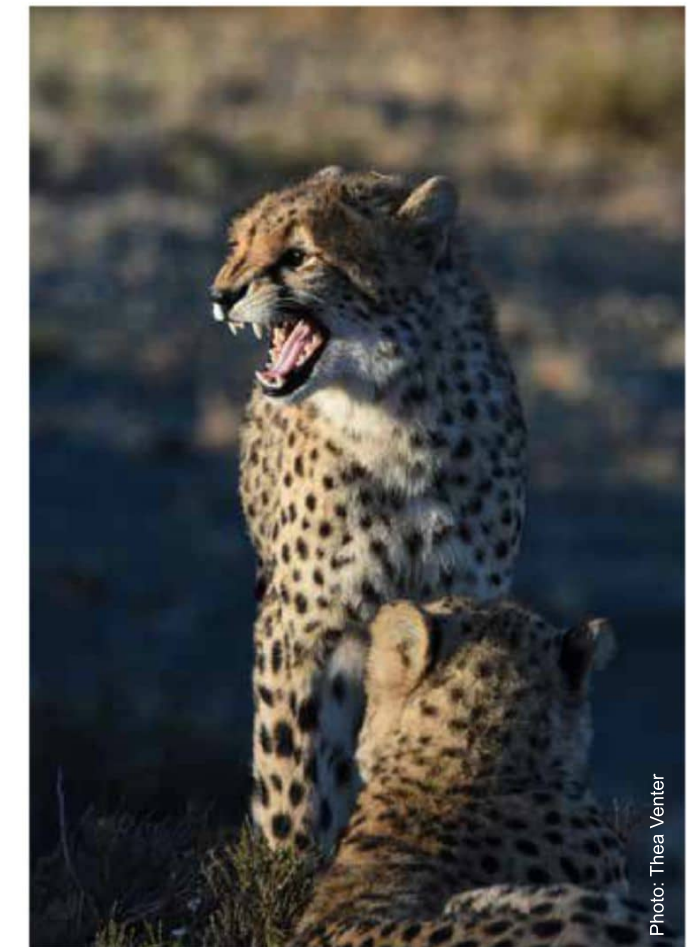
After gestation, which lasts nearly three months, a litter of one to eight cubs may be born, but three to four cubs are more common. The cubs are born at intervals of 20 to 25 minutes in a sheltered place, such as thick vegetation. Their eyes are closed at birth and open when they are four to 11 days old. The newborn cubs, which might spit and make soft, churring noises, start walking around when they are two weeks old. Their nape, shoulders and back are thickly covered with a mantle of long bluish-grey hair which is shed as they grow older. This mantle or mane gives a cheetah cub the appearance of a honey badger, which predators tend to avoid.

Cheetah cubs are highly vulnerable to several predators during the first few weeks of life. Consequently, the mother hides her cubs in dense vegetation for the first two months and nurses them early in the morning. She stays within a

kilometre of the den, frequently visits her cubs, moves them every five to six days and remains with them after dark.

The cubs start to come out of the den when they are two months old and trail after their mother wherever she goes. She probably uses the alternate light and dark rings on the tail to signal the cubs to follow her. She then nurses them less and brings them solid food. Initially, the cubs are wary of a carcass but will gradually start eating it. They may purr as their mother licks them clean after having eaten. The female will catch and release live prey in front of her cubs to train them to hunt. The cubs improve their hunting skills by chasing, crouching, pouncing on and wrestling each other, but the attacks are seldom lethal. They are weaned at the age of four to six months and are independent at around 20 months but may remain together for a few more months before parting ways. The females stay close to their mothers, while the males move away. A female wild cheetah's lifespan is 14 to 15 years and her reproductive cycle typically ends when she is 12 years old. A male generally only lives for up to 10 years.

Predation is the leading cause of cheetah cub mortality. In areas with a low density of large predators, such as the farmlands of Namibia, around 70% of the cubs reach maturity. However, in areas with numerous large predators, such as the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, the survival rate is only 17%. Deaths also occur due to fires, starvation when the mother dies or abandons her cubs, and pneumonia because of exposure to inclement weather.



Hunting and water use

The cheetah is a pursuit predator that hunts primarily throughout the day, sometimes with peaks at dawn and dusk, to avoid larger predators like lions, which mainly hunt at night. In the Sahara Desert, however, cheetahs hunt after sunset to avoid the high temperatures, and those in the Maasai Mara Game Reserve in Kenya do so mainly to escape lions.

The cheetah predominantly uses its keen vision to hunt and scan for prey from elevated resting sites or low branches. It stalks close to its prey from concealment in cover or lies hidden in cover and waits for the prey to approach. When stalking, it assumes a partially crouched posture, with the head held lower than the shoulders, and moves slowly. The chase of up to 500 m typically lasts a minute. Unlike in the other large cats, the short whiskers do not play a role when catching prey.

The cheetah has developed many anatomical and physiological adaptations to speed and has large thigh muscles and longer legs than would be expected for its size, but they decrease the ability to climb. The collarbone is greatly reduced and is only connected to the shoulder blade with ligaments. This allows the shoulder blade to swing back and forth with each stride, increasing the stride's effective length and acting as a shock absorber. The stride length is also increased by the flexion and extension of the spine, which extends the cheetah's back when running. This allows the hindlegs to push against the ground for a longer time and the forelegs to reach far out. It causes the hindlegs to land further forward than the forelegs and adds up to 76 cm to the stride length.

The mean stride length of 7 m at a speed of 90 km/h is the same as that of a galloping horse. The best estimate of the cheetah's top speed is 112 km/h, but it can only be maintained for short, explosive sprints when the respiration rate rapidly increases from 60 to 150 breaths per minute and heat production increases more than 50 times. The sprint duration is determined by the amount of heat the body can store before its core temperature reaches a dangerous level of

around 40 °C, although around 90% of the heat produced by sprinting is stored.

At high speeds, a cheetah uses its compact, hardened paws with webbing between the toes, fully extended claws and long tail to allow it to make rapid switches in direction. The only way an antelope that is being chased by a cheetah at high speed can escape, is to repeatedly twist and turn rapidly until it exceeds the capacity of a cheetah to maintain its high-speed chase. The cheetah decelerates quickly in just three strides towards the end of the hunt to 23 km/h.

The cheetah lacks the raw strength to bring down its prey and instead catches it by hitting the prey's leg or rump with the forepaw and using the strong dewclaw to knock it off balance. It usually hunts area-specific, small to medium-sized prey, but male coalitions will take larger prey. The carcass is taken to a nearby bush or under a tree, where the cheetah rests and pants heavily for 5 to 55 minutes before starting to feed. Other cheetahs that did not take part in the hunt might start feeding immediately. They typically start eating the hind-quarters and then progress toward the abdomen and spine. The skeleton is left almost intact after feeding. The cheetah rarely scavenges for food but might lose up to 14% of its kills to larger carnivores.

A cheetah can go for up to 10 days without water because it obtains moisture from the tissue of its prey.

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Dr Flippie Cloete

LIVE GAME AUCTION PRICE TRENDS

Overall, the latest auction statistics reveal a complex market landscape influenced by various factors. Certain species or categories, such as males, females or animals marketed as part of a family group, are gaining value, while others reported a decline compared to the same time last year. Despite these gains and losses, average prices remain relatively stable. This variation is partly due to the quality of the animals but also reflects the reputation and standing of the auction house. Larger, well-established auction houses that host frequent events and have built a reputation for excellent service tend to achieve better results. These houses have developed a loyal clientele over time, which not only stimulates demand but also attracts higher-quality animals from an offering perspective, helping them navigate challenging market conditions.

Game ranchers are, however, beginning to feel the impact of climatic conditions from the past year, particularly the late rains before winter and delayed spring rains, which have negatively affected vegetation. This situation is further exacerbated by recent veld fires in Limpopo that destroyed thousands of hectares of land used for wildlife ranching. Together, these factors are arguably among the most significant influences on current market conditions. To date, the negative effects have been somewhat offset by the prospect of above-average summer rains due to a La Niña weather pattern. If this materialises as predicted, it could bode well for the industry, particularly regarding demand and subsequent prices at live game auctions. Nevertheless, the interplay between auction dynamics and climatic conditions is just one aspect of the complexities within the wildlife market, making it challenging to make accurate predictions about future price trends.

The average price trends for selected plains game species are presented in **Table 1**. As noted, some categories have increased in value over the short to medium term, while others have seen a decline compared to the same time last year. Interestingly, the average prices in October 2024 for female animals or those animals sold as part of breeding groups, excluding kudu, are higher than the year-to-date average. This suggests that current average price levels are greater than those achieved in several months leading up to October. In contrast, the average price for adult males in October 2024 is generally lower than in previous months. These trends may be attributed to a decreased supply, as the capturing season has effectively come to an end. Additionally, adult females sold at auction in October are often in an advanced state of pregnancy, providing buyers with a two-in-one proposition. Conversely, the conclusion of the hunting season typically leads to lower demand for male animals, resulting in a slight decline in prices.

TABLE 1: AVERAGE PRICE COMPARISON FOR A SELECTED FEW PLAINS GAME SPECIES, OCTOBER 2024

Species	Average price Oct 2023 (R)	Average price Feb-Oct 2024 (R)	Average price Sept 2024 (R)	Average price Oct 2024 (R)
Blue wildebeest (family)	4 787	4 461	4 311	4 686
Blue wildebeest (cows)	4 888	4 863	5 147	5 083
Blue wildebeest (adult bulls)	7 741	9 899	9 156	8 640
Gemsbok (family)	13 772	12 738	11 923	23 000
Gemsbok (cows)	18 500	13 836	20 500	13 865
Gemsbok (adult bulls)	15 431	15 095	16 999	15 611
Kudu (family)	6 125	6 987	5 802	6 611
Kudu (cows)	6 642	8 124	8 114	6 500
Kudu (adult bulls)	19 285	28 069	25 444	18 667
Impala (family)	1 752	1 917	1 993	2 017
Impala (ewes)	1 928	1 898	1 918	1 984
Impala (adult rams)	3 537	5 031	4 821	4 226

The mixed trends in average prices for higher-value species can largely be attributed to the quality and quantity of animals sold (**Table 2**). In October 2024, aside from a few roan antelope cows, only sable antelope were presented and sold at formal auction. Generally, prices for similar-quality animals remained stable. However, there was an increase in average prices for adult roan antelope, sable antelope and buffalo

bulls over the year. This notable growth in the average prices of adult males can be linked to demand surpassing supply, with supply levels that remained consistent.

TABLE 2: AVERAGE PRICE COMPARISON FOR A SELECTED FEW HIGHER-VALUE GAME SPECIES, OCTOBER 2024

Species	Average price Oct 2023 (R)	Average price Feb-Oct 2024 (R)	Average price Sept 2024 (R)	Average price Oct 2024 (R)
Roan antelope (cows)	–	23 223	33 812	15 000
Roan antelope (heifers)	–	23 533	21 625	–
Roan antelope (adult bulls)	37 000	68 609	70 650	–
Roan antelope (subadult bulls)	–	23 208	36 500	–
Sable antelope (cow)	11 875	15 842	15 679	11 000
Sable antelope (heifers)	–	18 353	14 500	9 000
Sable antelope (adult bulls)	38 260	48 501	54 984	42 625
Sable antelope (subadult bulls)	10 000	14 979	13 523	–
Disease-free buffalo (cows)	36 041	95 513	98 175	–
Disease-free buffalo (heifers)	–	32 121	45 249	–
Disease-free buffalo (adult bulls)	86 741	140 781	182 784	–
Disease-free buffalo (subadult bulls)	37 142	41 234	46 286	–

The average prices for most colour variants have shown minor fluctuations around a relatively stable average over the past 12 months (**Table 3**). However, the current average prices for these variants are slightly lower compared to the months leading up to October 2024, indicating that prices were higher earlier in the year. Despite this decline, average prices remain higher than those recorded during the same

period last year, suggesting that the market for colour variants and demand remains strong, even with an increase in supply.

TABLE 3: AVERAGE PRICE COMPARISON FOR A SELECTED FEW COLOUR VARIANTS, OCTOBER 2024

Species	Average price Oct 2023 (R)	Average price Feb-Oct 2024 (R)	Average price Sept 2024 (R)	Average price Oct 2024 (R)
Golden blue wildebeest (cow)	6 385	6 997	7 746	6 778
Golden blue wildebeest (heifer)	5 900	5 308	–	6 500
Golden blue wildebeest (adult bull)	14 403	19 525	17 370	13 423
Golden blue wildebeest (subadult bull)	8 225	9 038	7 500	10 250
Black impala (ewe)	6 585	8 517	9 304	8 159
Black impala (adult ram)	8 166	17 458	17 939	14 528

Similar trends can be observed in the prices of other species, such as nyala, tsessebe and lechwe. Lechwe appear to be the only species that has lost some value compared to prices achieved in the past year, while the other species have either maintained or gained value over the same period.

In conclusion, most species have experienced minor fluctuations around a relatively stable average over the past 12 months, indicating a maturing market, particularly for colour variants. This bodes well for the future of the industry. It is also clear that attention is shifting, with several marketing campaigns already underway for the 2025 season. This suggests high confidence in the market, as the current financial performance of the wildlife industry outperforms other land-use options. This trend is likely to curb the shift from wildlife to traditional or mixed livestock farming. Such stability is crucial for the industry, as it provides a solid foundation for consolidation and long-term growth, ultimately transforming comparative advantages into competitive and sustainable land-use practices.



**FIONA'S BEST LODGES
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Fiona Kruger, a freelance writer and well-known South African lodge consultant • Fionasbest.kruger@gmail.com

Holiday guests

Whether your venue is a lodge, bed & breakfast, restaurant or tavern, you likely will be open for business during the holidays. Seriously, they don't call it a "holiday" for people to stay home! Everyone looks forward to going away, with "going" being the definitive word. After all, families and couples travel, vacation and dine out more during the holidays. Thus, understanding and embracing each season will increase business and add charm to your establishment at these very special times of the year.

Holiday strategy

For some, a holiday can be defined as any special time off work or school. However, for most of us, a holiday is a yearly scheduled time of reverence to remembrance. Christmas, New Year, Easter, Heritage Day and Valentine's Day are just a few of our celebrated holidays. All have different meanings to different people, as well as a level of importance.

When it comes to our service industry, I like to divide the calendar into the seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter. These four seasons should all call for some sort of

stylised decor, displays or decorating. And because the major holidays fall within these seasons, holiday-specific decorations and themes should also be incorporated. In our Southern Hemisphere, spring and summer decor includes not only fresh flowers, bright colours and outside settings but also Christmas and New Year. Autumn, on the other hand, is a time of earthy colours, cooler weather, the hunting season, Easter and school holidays.

My advice is to select several holidays to theme your lodge or establishment – two or three special decors during spring and summer and the same during autumn and winter.

This schedule offers an awesome opportunity for festive decor that can appeal to a wide range of travelling guests. These looks will affect your guests' personal experience and mood.

Themed decor

Where Christmas will be festive and bright, Easter will be more reverent and subtle. Easter may have a Christian vibe with lilies or a cloth draped over. Easter in America includes coloured eggs and bunnies with baskets as it is a spring holiday. In Africa, it occurs in the autumn. Adjust dining table centrepieces to match the holiday spirit. If much of your clientele is family-oriented during school vacations, by all means, cater to the children with more family-type decor such as candy in dishes, reading material and colouring books and crayons.

Also decorate outside spaces like the pool, spa and barbecue area. Twinkling lights overhead, themed drinks at the bar and holiday desserts at the table all make a difference.

Religious decor

As far as religious decorations and themes go, my first rule of thumb is to follow your experience and taste. That said, always understand that not all your clients may be religious or share your beliefs or views. Thus, consider small, themed areas of the lodge or establishment designated to specifics. "Casting a wide net" allows for a multitude of different people to still feel welcome and comfortable. At Christmas, for example, generically decorate the outside area with a festive look using lights and tinsel. Once inside, offer a table with a nicely displayed menorah for the Jewish faith and, adjacent, a nativity scene for the Christian faith. A Christmas tree with presents below can accent the lobby corner. Also consider mistletoe above the lobby counter and even a Santa Claus display with reindeer for the children. Use your imagination and cover your bases.

Don't forget the ambience

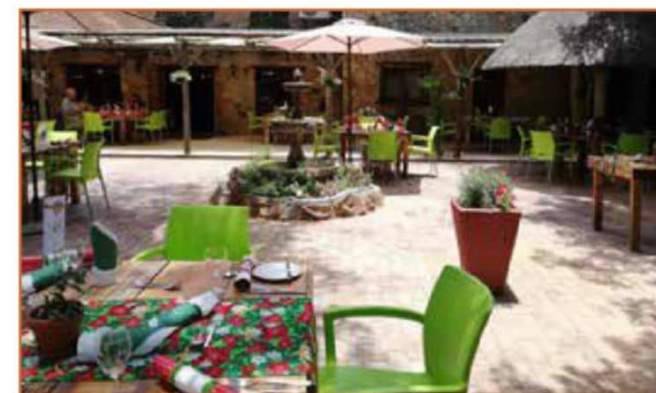
Mood lighting is an essential ambience during the holidays. Summer calls for less lighting as the days are long and hot, while winter requires more lighting for the cooler, darker days. Christmas lights over the bar add to the festive feel of the season. Another often overlooked ingredient is holiday smells. Sandalwood incense burning, pumpkin-scented candles and the evergreen scent of a live tree all add to the atmosphere. Of course, holiday music playing low in the background is a must. There are also many devotional hymns available for Easter ambience.

Another tip worth mentioning is to add special side trips or events to your holiday schedule. A wine tasting, game drive, cookie baking class, making your own oven-fired pizzas and many other holiday ideas can burn memories into clients, inspiring them to rebook to rekindle the family values and memories of holidays gone by.

You can get many more ideas from my *Lodge Owner's Handbook – Magical Safaris*, soon coming to a bookstore near you! 🦋



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A festive outside space at the Farm Inn



Family seating for Christmas at the Farm Inn, Pretoria



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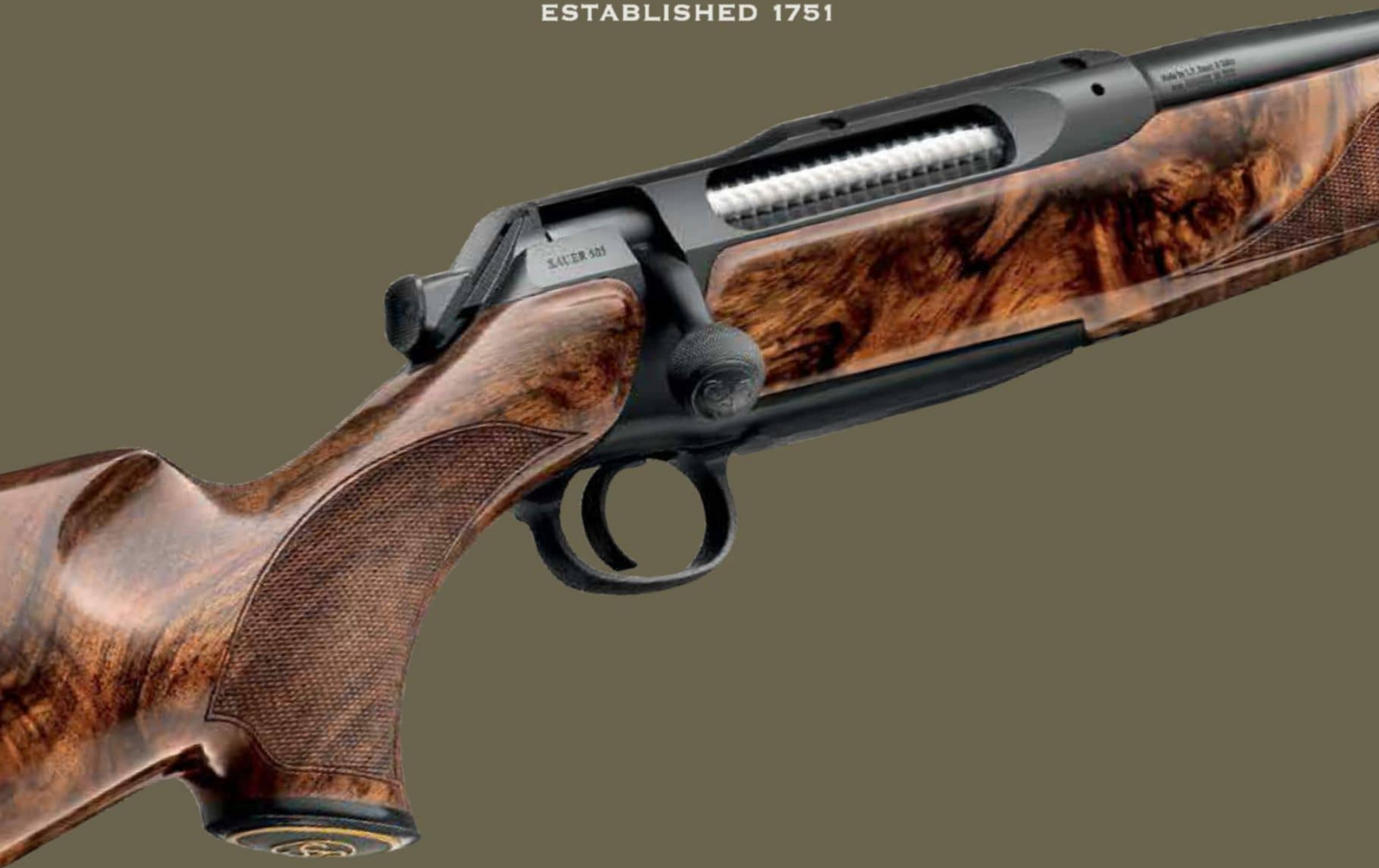


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