

# The Dark Continent with a Bow by Jason Zins

The Giraffe appeared out of nowhere! I can't believe an animal of that size can be so quiet. He strolled right in to the water and splayed his legs to drink. His size and smell are so overwhelming- especially at 12 yards! And this was only my first day in Africa!

After an 18 hour flight from Atlanta GA, my friends and I landed in Johannesburg South Africa. Our Professional Hunters, Flippie and Willem Frost, met us at the Airport and would be our host at Matlabas Game Hunters for the week. After a 4 hour drive, we were finally in camp! After a great meal, instructions and advice for our hunt, it was off to bed. Jackals were howling as I finally fell asleep.

Up at first light the next morning, we shot our bows to make sure nothing happened during the flight. With everyone shooting well, we split up and were off to our blinds for the day. My P.H., Pieter Venter, dropped me off at a blind called Pete's Lair. I had impala, monkeys, a multitude of different bird life, waterbuck, and warthogs all come to the water. Although I never drew back my bow, it was an awesome day.

Day two started as the first day did-I was to hunt an elevated blind called Duiker Blind. This day would prove to be true Africa-almost 100 degrees. After a few hours, a huge waterbuck bull came in to drink-he just appeared out of nowhere! With waterbuck not on my list, I let him pass. Warthogs came and went all morning. They are so entertaining, they always seem to have somewhere to go, but don't ever get there! At high noon an impala ram began circling the blind. After about a half hour, he turned broadside at 14 yards and gave me a perfect shot. I released the arrow and the ram ran off. I began to shake and the adrenaline was really pumping now! I radioed for Flippie and he showed up with a tracker. We began to track the ram, and he only traveled about 50 yards before expiring. I was beside myself-my first African antelope with a bow! After a photo session, the ram was loaded on the jeep and taken back to the camp. The rest of the day passed fast-I saw monkeys, warthogs, a mongoose, waterbuck bulls, and kudu cows and calves. The sunset was absolutely stunning!

On day three we got up earlier and were in the blinds at first light. I was hunting another elevated blind today-Masoaca Blind. A huge flock of guinea fowl were the first to the waterhole this morning. After a few hours, some immature waterbuck bulls came to drink and actually bedded down right there. At high noon, two young nyala bulls came in to drink. I had a multitude of different animals again today, including more waterbuck, a bunch of warthogs and three more immature nyala bulls. Right at five pm, a nice gemsbok bull came in to the water hole. He stood facing me for what seemed like an eternity and finally turned broadside at 20 yards. I released the arrow and he ran off into the bushveldt. I felt pretty good about the shot, but was soon to be let down, after Pieter showed up, and we tracked until dark. We would have to leave him overnight. I was very sure of my hit, but you just don't go stomping through the African bush after dark when you are not sure of the shot placement.

Up the next day well before dawn, Pieter and I were on the track by first light. The gemsbok went a lot further than either one of us could figure out, as he was hit in the top of both lungs. Pieter was simply amazing to watch as he tracked this animal. The bull got in with a group of two other gemsboks, and he could differentiate the tracks of the bull I shot from the other two! We finally caught up to the gemsbok at noon. What a gorgeous animal! After some handshakes and a long picture taking session, I was off the Baboon Blind to hunt the rest of the day. I again saw a multitude of different animal and bird life, including waterbuck cows and calves, a steenbok ewe, and another gemsbok bull right at dark.

Up again well before dawn on day four; I was hunting at Pete's Lair again the next day. The sunrise was absolutely beautiful this morning! The sun is so intense here-a fire red and orange. The first animals to the water this morning are a herd of blesbok. There were 7 ewes and 1 ram, but the ram always kept himself concealed behind one of the ewes. The shot never presented itself. They milled around for an hour or so before heading off. A huge blue wildebeest bull charged right up to the water, facing me, and then turned and left right away. I thought he smelled me and had left for good. I looked out one of the side windows and saw a herd of about 50 impala and the wildebeest chasing the dominant ram around. The ram finally

came to the water with the wildebeest following. I was ready for him and drew my bow as he turned broadside at 15 yards. The shot was perfect and I heard him go down. I radioed Pieter. I had six more impala rams come to water while I was waiting. Two were huge and I was thinking of shooting, but Pieter showed up and they ran off. We tracked the wildebeest and recovered him within 100 yards. He was an enormous bull with the telltale black stripes on a blue body. They are such a symbol of wild Africa, a very majestic animal. I was elated!

On my last day in South Africa and I was in Piggy Pan Blind. A flock of guinea fowl came in right away. A pair of jackals chased them away, but never gave me a shot. A herd of kudu cows and calves were next to come in and were extremely nervous and started barking as only a kudu can. It took about a half hour before they quit barking and came to drink. A multitude of warthogs had been coming and going already. Finally at around 10:30, a HUGE warthog boar sneaked in and was kneeling on his front legs in the water six yards away. He was almost facing me and I could not get a clear shot off. I was shaking so bad. He stood up and turned a bit-I thought he was going to leave so I drew back, just in case he presented a broadside shot. He turned broadside and got back on his knees. I squeezed my release and hit him right in the lungs. The arrow completely penetrated his body and was lying on the other side of the water hole. I radioed for Pieter and impatiently waited for his arrival. After a short tracking job, we recovered the pig. He was bigger than I thought and I am so thankful for the opportunity to harvest him. They are so ugly, yet so beautiful. This warthog turned out to be a monster SCI Gold Medal pig scoring 35 5/16.

We were up early the next day and on the road well before sunrise. We arrived at the airport and flew to Windhoek Namibia. Our P.H., Tobie Englebrecht, met us at the airport. We had a six hour drive to Tobie's concession. This area of Namibia is right on the edge of the Kalahari Desert and is a lot more tropical than South Africa. Palm trees were everywhere! We were greeted at the ranch house by Tobie's wife, Liselle and a fine dinner of kudu lasagna.

The next morning we were assigned blinds for the day and I was to be in Hartebeest Blind. I had kudu cows, a duiker, a warthog and a giraffe family come in today. The giraffes gave me a multitude of different photos and they turned out to be exceptional. The next day I was in Kudu Blind well before sunup. The sunrise was spectacular and something I will never forget. I had a bunch of different animals in today and all of these at one time: four kudu bulls, eight kudu cows, four warthogs and a gemsbok cow. Nothing was trophy quality, however. It did make an interesting photo! At 4:30 a big red hartebeest came in and knelt down to drink. I drew back and released the arrow at 18 yards. The hartebeest turned right as I shot. I was worried that I had made a bad shot. While I was waiting for Tobie to come, three eland came to the water. They were quite impressive, but none were trophies. The hartebeest traveled about 400 yards before expiring. He is a beautiful trophy and we took a bunch of pictures with him. I was very relieved to recover him and very thankful to Tobie and the trackers for an excellent tracking job.

I was in Gemsbok blind early the next morning-with high expectations of another great day. I saw a beautiful kudu bull with three very large eland circling the blind, but they would not come in. I have not had a trophy kudu within range yet and am getting excited about seeing one. The day passed by fast with a duiker, a herd of blue wildebeest, and a multitude of warthogs for entertainment. At 4:45 a kudu bull came in from the opposite direction and I didn't even see him until he was drinking. I got my bow off the hook and drew back. I locked the twenty yard pin on his chest and released. The hit was true and the bull only went about twenty yards before expiring. He had six inches of ivory on each horn -a beautiful bull with a full mane. I will never forget this day-I have wanted to hunt kudu since I was young and had read Ruark's Horn of the Hunter book.

The next day was my last day on Safari in Africa and I am so thankful I got to experience this trip. It has been an overload for the senses and I can't wait to come back again. There is so much to see and experience on this continent. There was a pair of duikers in at first light. I held off on shooting the ram in hopes of zebras coming in. At 8 AM the herd of seven zebra came in and one stayed towards the back. The first six came in to drink and the other paced back and forth while I watched with my binoculars to get a positive id on it. It was a stallion! I got my bow off the hook and hooked my release on the string. As I waited he took his time coming in to drink. For a minute I didn't even think he was going to drink. He got broadside at

twenty yards and I put my sight pin right behind the shoulder. The arrow flew true and he ran a circle of about one hundred yards before expiring. I was totally overwhelmed with emotion. The zebra is the trophy I wanted the most on this trip and they are by far the most intelligent animal I have hunted in Africa. If everything isn't right, they just don't come in to the hides. I radioed Tobie and sat down to calm my nerves. A herd of 16 blesbok and four huge gemsbok bulls came in and circled downwind, but never came to the water. After Tobie arrived, we loaded the zebra up and headed back to camp. I was in utter disbelief that I finally got an opportunity at a zebra on the last day-they are such a majestic animal! This was the highlight of my trip.

Africa gets in your blood and I can't wait to get back there. My sincere thanks go to Pieter Venter, and Flippie and Willem Frost of Matlabas Game Hunters and Tobie and Liselle Engelbrecht of Engelbrecht Safaris for providing a first timer an unforgettable trip!

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Jason Zins, his wife Kerry, and their three children, make their home in Fargo, ND. Jason grew up hunting and fishing on the family farm in Western ND and has traveled the world on hunting adventures. Jason is currently working on his own hunting and fishing TV show called Wildlife Pursuit TV.

This hunt took place in August of 2004 in RSA in the Northern Province near Ellisras and in Namibia near the town of Tsumeb.

I used a 70 pound Mathews Outback Bow, Beman Arrows and Slick Trick Broadheads on this trip. This setup proved to be deadly on plains game!