

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.



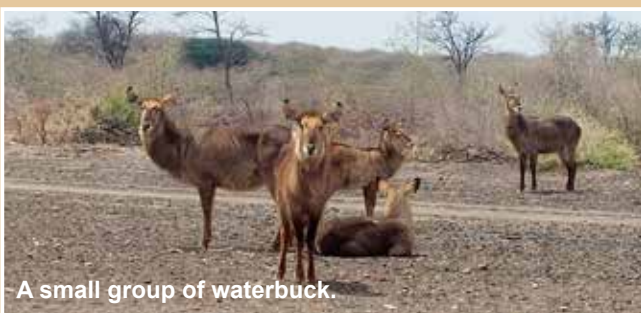


Rueben, Chris, Alisha and Brad

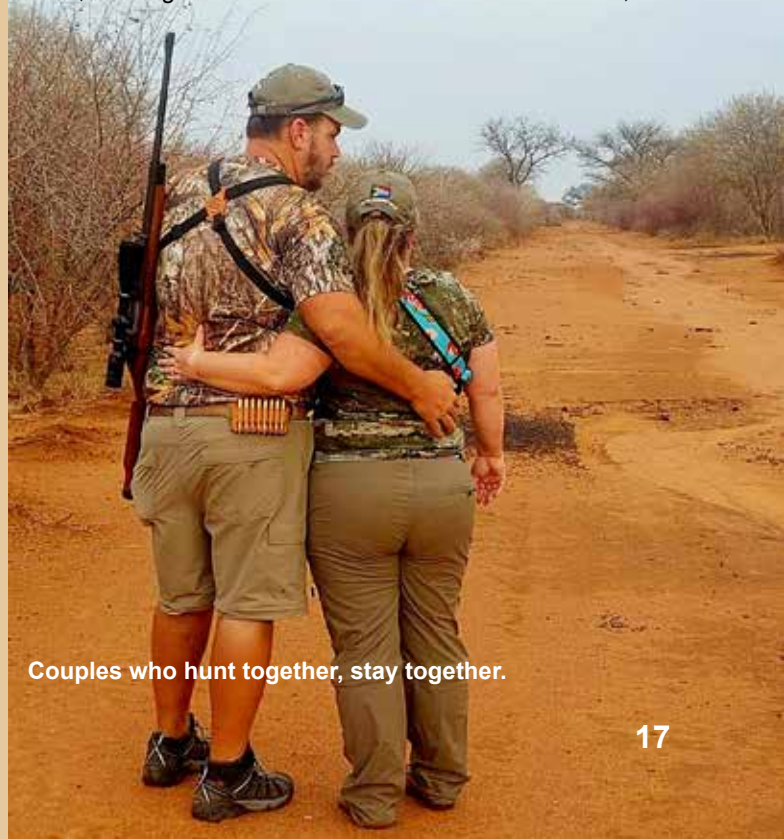
On Tuesday morning, the sun rose majestically over the horizon, illuminating the clear blue skies. We spent the morning attempting to stalk four impalas, but unfortunately, we could not find a clear shot. We also encountered large herds of buffalo. As we made our way back to camp for lunch, we heard 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

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



A small group of waterbuck.



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



Buffaloes watching us

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-

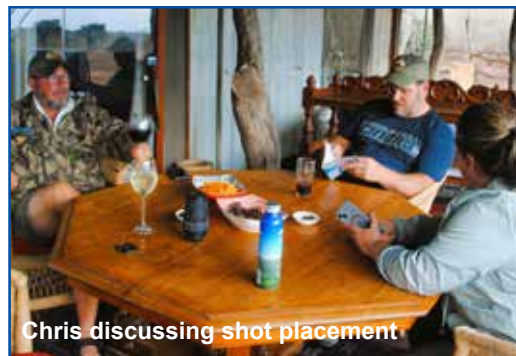
cessfully taken her gemsbuck! She was absolutely delighted.

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.

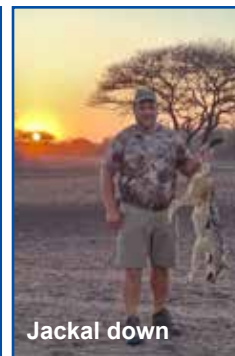
That evening, we enjoyed a delicious feast of gemsbuck fillet and impala backstraps, harvested by our hunters and expertly prepared by our chef. The following morning, after breakfast and completing the necessary paperwork, it was time to pack up and leave. On the way out, we stopped for some shopping 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



"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



spektrum
gehoor • hearing