

Zimbabwe Safari

I was warned by Louis Foght that I was going at “just the wrong time”, but the plan was made and Jim Bean, Gerald Miller and I would be traveling to Africa to hunt Cape buffalo. Gerald and I told SCI-PDN donor Johan Botes that we definitely wanted a wild hunt for buffalo. We got that and more with our hunt to northwest Zimbabwe the first week of April. We hunted with Johan and another company from Zimbabwe, Lalapansi Safaris of Bulawayo. The Sengwa Conservancy is a 400 square mile “little enclosure” that had no hard boundaries as far as the game was concerned. To say that this hunt was “western” is analogous to referring to the Grand Canyon as a ravine. This was a game rich environment that took 7 hours of driving time, of which 5 was on a dirt road, to reach. The camp was located scenically above The Sengwa river which ran really wide when the rains came. Upon arrival, we all went to the range to check our rifles and all were okay.

We went out to check out the countryside and saw quite a few animals. Back in camp we were treated to a great dinner at the lodge. The next day consisted of driving in the Land-Cruisers spotting game. Since Gerald's guns were lost in Atlanta, I loaned him one of mine for the first 3 days and I had only my .416 Rem Mag. We spotted a nice waterbuck which I took (after a couple of misplaced shots) and was pleased with the horn length at about 29 inches. That same day provided an exciting opportunity for Gerald to harvest a superb buffalo. The next day I harvested a fine old bull buff with exceptional bosses but narrower horns than Gerald's (ask him.....the exact measurements are memorized) bull but it was a great stalk and kill. I was able to shoot him from a termite mound offhand and with open sights. I shot him a bit high and as we went into the 5-6 foot high grass to gather some photos, he tried to stand just as we got to within 10 feet of him. Joe took leave and Johan put 2 shots into him followed by one from me. To say that I was puckered is analogous to referring to the Atlantic as a pond. After a brief, albeit interminable, length of time we were able to approach the buff and take some pics. I was pleased with him and with my hunt but was also pleased and thankful that Johan was in the lead and was quick with his .375 H&H. We then went on a short (about 5 miles with 2 river crossings.....always take a bottle of water) hike to try to catch up to the rest of the herd so that Jim could try to get on his buffalo. We were unable to catch up with them and they went way up river. We then gathered up my buff (it took all of us to put him in the truck in 2 pieces) and went on back to the skinning shed.

The following days provided much hunting opportunity for the three of us, with Gerald and me collecting 2 fine zebras and a couple of exceptional presidential baboons, and Jim taking a really good trophy quality reedbuck. That was truly an exciting hunt for Jim as well. The rains pretty much scattered the game and made for a tough hunt for Jim's buffalo. He passed on one old dagga boy that was ultimately harvested by Todd Ellis (another hunter from Sacramento) and he had horns about like mine....or rather like my buff's. Gerald shot a fine waterbuck also and in the last days, the hunting got really tough. We didn't get a chance to hunt bushbuck or kudu or eland that Gerald and I

wanted but the hunting was fantastic. Jim came very close while stalking a buffalo to stepping on a green mamba, Gerald (on hands and knees stalking a buffalo) came very close to a Cape cobra, and we all saw a 9-10 foot African python in the road going back to camp one evening.

We all took Malarone as a malaria prophylaxis and suffered no side affects. We slept under mosquito netting each night and all used bug spray with Deet, but didn't even see a mosquito. In that regard, we were very fortunate. There were scant few bugs of any sort except the ever present ticks on the animals and the occasional pepper ticks in the grass. Gerald and Jim hunted mostly in shorts and I hunted in long pants every day. I hunted in long sleeve shirts after I burned myself silly for a couple of days. Take sunscreen whenever you go anywhere, it doesn't weigh much or take up much room. The hunt was a screaming success and I would recommend Ubathi Hunts to anybody. You can pay more and get far more luxury, but for an all around good hunt, you can trust Johan Botes to provide all you need. The all inclusive cost of the Cape buffalo hunt was \$8500.00 USD and all of the other trophy fees of other animals were added to that. Gratuities were not included. Oh by the way, Louis was only half right. It rained but it didn't dampen our spirits, it just scattered the animals a bit and it did provide a little relief from the afternoon heat.

Bubba Brown