

# FRONT SIGHT



Mid-Michigan Chapter Safari Club International

January - March 2019, Issue 45



One of our sled dogs  
Resolute, Nunavut, Canada  
Canada North Outfitters

~ See page 16

Picture by John Sauro





# JOHAN PIETERSE SAFARIS



SOUTH AFRICA  
ZIMBABWE  
MOZAMBIQUE



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In This Issue - January - March 2019

- 2 Chapter Officers and Board Members
- 3 Editor's Message
- 3 Meeting Schedule
- 4 Book Review — *by Josh Christensen*  
The Perfect Shot - Mini Series for Africa II  
— *by Kevin Robertson*
- 5 Big Buck Night
- 6-7 40th Annual Awards & Hunters Convention
- 8 Hunting Mule Deer with Jeff Chad in Montana  
— *by Roger Froling*
- 9 Trophy Awards Program — *by Mary Browning*
- 10-11 My Dream Hunt — *by Wesley Stillion*
- 12-13 Veteran's Hunt — *by Sandra Meyer*
- 14 Youth Deer Hunt at Froling Farms  
— *by Roger Froling*
- 15 Veterans Hunt — *by Steve P. Polaski*
- 16-21 Extreme Hunting in the Arctic  
— *by Mary Harter*
- 22-23 Trip of a Lifetime — *by Sherri Froling*
- 24-28 Africa - Part 2 — *by Josh Christensen*
- 29 Looking Ahead to Next Issue
- 29-40 Advertisers



Members of Mid-Michigan SCI or Isabella County Sportsman's Club may use the shooting range located at 2872 W. Millbrook Road just east of Winn Road. The lock combination is 3220 and changes yearly on February 15th. Please carry membership identification on you when you visit the range.



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Chairmen are listed first

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The Front Sight is the official publication of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of Safari Club International, keeping club members informed about local club activities, and encouraging and defining good sportsmanship. The Front Sight Magazine is published quarterly: January, April, July and October. Distribution 400+.

Check our own [www.midmichigansci.org](http://www.midmichigansci.org) website for copies of the Front Sight, listing of events, and fundraiser auction items.

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Dr. E.H. Kowaleski	1985 - 1986	Doug Heeter	1999 - 2001	Joe Mulders	2014 - 2017
Robert Doerr	1986 - 1988	David Petrella	2001 - 2002		

## Editor's Message

What a beautiful season for our rifle hunt for whitetail deer. We have snow and it makes hunting so much more enjoyable by being able to see the deer better. We had 13 hunters with 11 successes. It was cold enough that Don let one deer hang for ten days before cutting it up. Delicious!! It was a great season.

We had check stations in our area where we took the deer heads to be tested for CWD and TB which none of our deer had. By participating you received a successful hunter patch, pictured here.

Sad news of the passing of long-time chapter member, Larry Witte, on October 2. Larry and Joanne were both board members for our chapter and very active hunters, writing numerous stories of the great times they had together. Also, on October 28, Jim Leonard passed. He was the founder of the Lansing Chapter of SCI, had been a Region Representative, and was currently a Director at Large.

Big Buck Night is scheduled for January 26 at the Comfort Inn beginning with 4:00 p.m. registration. There is also a Beal City Big Buck Contest at the Beal City Barbershop that morning at 10:00 a.m.

Our Convention is February 22 and 23 at the Soaring Eagle Casino.  
Hope to see you all there!!

Keep hunting, Keep writing,

Mary Harter  
Editor



## SCI Mid-Michigan Chapter Meeting Schedule

\* SUBJECT TO CHANGE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting Type</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Jan. 7, 2019	Board Meeting	5:00 p.m.	Cheers
Jan. 9/12, 2019	National Convention		Reno
Jan. 26, 2019	Beal City Big Buck	10:00 a.m.	Beal City Barber Shop
Jan. 26, 2019	Big Buck Night	4:00 Reg./5:00 p.m.	Comfort Inn
Feb. 4, 2019	Board Meeting	5:00 p.m.	Cheers
Feb. 22/23, 2019	Convention		Soaring Eagle
Mar. 4, 2019	Board Meeting	5:00 p.m.	Cheers
April 1, 2019	Board / Membership	4:30/6:00/6:45 p.m.	Comfort Inn
May 7, 2019	Board / Membership	4:30/6:00/6:45 p.m.	Comfort Inn

All board meetings are open to our membership. Reservations required.  
Please call and leave a message at 989-560-1061  
or email Suzette Howard at [suzettejhoward@yahoo.com](mailto:suzettejhoward@yahoo.com)





# Book Review

by Josh Christensen

Title: THE PERFECT SHOT:  
MINI EDITION FOR  
AFRICA II

Author: Kevin Robertson

Publisher: Safari Press Inc.

Copyright: 2016

List Price: \$19.95

If you are planning a trip to hunt on the African continent this book is a must have. The Perfect Shot: Mini Edition for Africa II is a compact guide to shot placement for 31 different species of big game in Africa. These animals range from elephant to grysbok and many common species in between.

I picked this book up for my son and I to look over together to help him prepare for shot placement and identification of game when we were on the Dark Continent. After receiving the book I wished I would have had it before my first trip to South Africa years ago. The Perfect Shot takes all the guess work out when determining shot placement on African animals.

This book dedicates four to six pages of information to each species, including at least two pictures. One picture with red dots to show shot placement and another with the anatomy overlaying the same picture. Also included are six shot sections to give the reader more information about each animal. These six sections are Natural History, Sex Determination, Trophy Assessment, The Hunt, Rifle, Caliber and Bullet Selection, and Shot Placement.

I also like the mini edition because it was a great size to pack into my carryon and study on the long flight over the Atlantic Ocean. Others accompanying me on the trip also appreciated the quick read. Although this book is small is size it is packed with valuable information.



This book gets 10 out of 10 bullseyes





MID-MICHIGAN SAFARI CLUB INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS...



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(9-15 YEARS OLD)  
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BEGINNING JUNE 2019

YOU COULD WIN  
A \$100 GIFT CARD  
THAT NIGHT...  
JUST BY SIGNING UP TO  
BE A MEMBER OF SCI!

# BIG BUCK NIGHT

## 2019

**OPEN TO  
THE PUBLIC**  
LIMITED SEATING  
(SEE BELOW)

**RSVP BY  
JAN 11, 2019**  
BRENDA @ 240-315-3626  
(after 5pm)

**Saturday, January 26th at the Comfort Inn  
2424 S. Mission • Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858**

Call 240-315-3626 to Reserve Seats - Adults \$25, Kids 12 and under \$20, Kids under 5 FREE  
(Call after 5pm, Please)

*Bring your bucks rack in from 2018 and get it PROFESSIONALLY SCORED!  
THEN... Get in the FREE gun drawing with that scored rack!*

### WHITETAIL AND MULE DEER

Trophies for Members & Non-Members • Two Prize Gun Drawings  
Youth Hunters Awards • Awards for Members & Non-Members  
Special Guest Speakers • Reduced Rate on Rooms • Free Membership Drawing

RESERVE YOUR SEAT  
NOW!

**REGISTRATION STARTS AT 4PM • DINNER AT 7PM**  
Dinner includes a two entree buffet, salad bar and dessert table  
Cash Bar • Free Soda For Kids

MUST HAVE A  
RESERVATION FOR THE  
EVENT!!

For Hotel Room Reservations, call the Comfort Inn at 989-772-4000  
For More Information Contact: Mike Strope @ 989-506-1113 • mstropecustombuilder@gmail.com



*Don't Miss It!*

# **40th Annual Awards & Hunter's Convention**

*Our Biggest Ever!*

**Friday & Saturday, February 22 & 23, 2019**

**Soaring Eagle Casino • 6800 Soaring Eagle Blvd.  
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan**

*Now with more room in the Entertainment Hall!*

**Outfitters from North and South America, Africa, Europe, Asia,  
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Big Game Hunts • Fishing Trips • Guns • Auctions  
Games • Exhibitors**



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**Friday, February 22, 2019****2:00 - 10:00 p.m. • \$5.00 Admission**  
**Outfitters, Exhibitors, Awards and Auction****Saturday, February 23, 2019****Outfitters, Exhibitors, Banquet and Auction****10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. • Registration****5:00 - 6:00 p.m. • Dinner**  
*(reservations required)***6:00 p.m. - Close Live Auction****For more information, contact Abbe Mulders: (989) 450-8727****Tentative list of live auction items:****Check our website at: [www.midmichigansci.org](http://www.midmichigansci.org) - for updates!**

- 7 Day Plains game (\$1500 towards Trophy Fees) Johan Pieterse
- 10 Day Plains game (\$2000 towards Trophy Fees) Johan Pieterse
- 18 Day Sheep Hunt, Scalp Creek Outfitters
- 2 Trophy Whitetail Hunts, Bell Wildlife Specialities
- Whitetail 160 - 170, Low's Trophy Whitetails
- Trophy Fee for a Tsessebe Bull, Numzaan Safaris
- \$500 per Hunter (2 Hunters) towards Trophy Fees, Numzaan Safaris
- 7 Day Safari Hunt for 1 Hunter and 1 Observer with \$1000 towards Trophy Fees, Thormahlen and Cochran Safaris (Namibian African Hunting)
- 7 Day Safari Hunt for 1 Hunter and 1 Observer with \$1000 towards Trophy Fees, Thormahlen and Cochran Safaris (South African Hunting)
- 5 Day Red Stag Hunt, MG Hunting, Barrio Santo
- 1 Day Dove and Pigeon Hunt, MG Hunting, Barrio Santo (Buenos Aires)
- 5 Day Whitetail Hunt - Kansas, 180 Outdoors, LLC, Matt Wonsler
- 6 Day Bow or 5 Day Gun - Whitetail Hunt, Tails of the Hunt, LLC, Aaron Volkmar
- Custom Engraved Wildlife Photo Scene, Rover Valley Laser Engraving, Jennifer Hickerson
- 10 Day Black Bear Hunt and Fishing Combo, Hepburn Lake Lodge, Arlee Thideman
- 6 Day Black Bear Hunt, Hepburn Lake Lodge, Arlee Thideman
- Black Bear Hunt, WFO Bear hunt, Garth Matyasovszky
- Moose Hunt, Cosco's Yukon Outfitting
- Red Stag Hunt, Spain, Great Spanish Hunts
- Pheasant Hunt, Crooked Foot Upland Bird and Game Hunting, Michigan
- Elk Hunt, Hell's Half Acre Outfitters, Ronnie Davis
- Rustic Furniture, Dan, Dan the Mattress Man, Midland, MI
- 5 Day Whitetail Hunt in Iowa, Windy Ridge, Nick Boley
- 3 Day Turkey Hunt in Iowa, Windy Ridge, Nick Boley
- 3 Day Turkey Hunt in Iowa, Windy Ridge, Nick Boley
- Wildlife Trophy Art Figure, Sam Soet Art
- Fishing Charters, Reel Rumor Sports Fishing Charters, Jim Lanfrankie
- Plains Game, Safaris Unlimited, LLC
- Pheasant Hunting, Tails A Waggin' Acres, Chuck Connell
- Central Michigan Goose Hunt, Tom Deharde
- Salmon Fishing on Lake Michigan, Fish Hunt Charters, Davis James
- Mountain Hunting, Majestic Mountain Outfitters, Jeff Chadd
- Exotics Ranch Hunting, Morani River Ranch, John Frederickson
- Plains Game, Jan Oelofse Hunting Safaris, Namibia
- 7 Day, 2 Hunter 3 species Bird Hunting Expedition - Mexico,
- Balam Outfitters, Alfred Lamadrid
- Sport Fishing Expedition, Crocodile Bay Sport Fishing and Expeditions
- Mountain Goat, Leuenberger's Baldy Mountain Outfitters, B.C.
- Youth Deer, Buffalo and Spring Turkey Hunts, Roger and Sherry Froling
- Mountain Goat and Wolf Hunt, Iskut River Outfitters, B.C.
- Antelope and Archery Elk in Wyoming, Wycon Safari, Inc., Wynn Conduct
- Whitetail Hunt, Marvels Whitetail Hunts, Jeff Thiesen
- Bear Hunts in Powers, Michigan, Wild Spirit Guide Service, Dan Kirschner
- Whitetail Deer and Elk, L-4 Ranch, Chris Ortwein
- Fur Coats and Vests, Cascade Furs, John Hayes
- Custom Rifle or Muzzleloader, Ultimate Firearms, Ken Johnston
- Mountain Goat, Tsiu River Lodge, Sam Fejes, Cordova, Alaska
- Red Stag, Water Buffalo, Sheep, Caza Pampa, Luis Mangararo, Argentina
- Sika Deer and Fishing, Mike Carlson, Larsen Bay/Kodiak Island, Alaska
- Elk Hunting, RB Outfitters, New Mexico
- Photo Safaris, Zula Nyla, South Africa



# Hunting Mule Deer with Jeff Chad in Montana

My friend, Jeff Harrison and myself, Roger Froling drew tags for Mule Deer in Montana for 2018 and had booked a hunt with Jeff Chad of Majestic Mountain Outfitters. We flew to Montana and met Jeff at the bridge in Forsyth, Montana. We arrived and Jeff took us to camp about an hour through the mountains and range land to a nice campsite sitting in the pines. They have a very nice cabin with a full kitchen and shower, along with onsite cabins for the hunters, which sleep two people in comfortable beds.

The next morning Jeff took us out hunting a day before we were scheduled and we spotted several nice bucks, we even saw two whitetail bucks. We made a stalk on the Muleys and got to where we thought they would be 100 yards or so only to find that when Jeff ranged them they were at 550 yards. The guys said Roger can you get him? I replied, let's see. I put the Sheppard scope on the 550 mark and knocked the big Muley down, breaking his back. He then got on his feet but couldn't run so I took a second shot and he went down for good. It took a while to get to the buck and when Jeff Chad arrived he started to clean the buck, he pulled the heart out and there was a bullet hole right through the heart.



What a great thrill this was! We took the buck back to camp and finished skinning and taking care of the meat. We had a great meal, a good night's sleep, up early and off we went to get a buck for Jeff Harrison.

It wasn't too long and we spotted a nice big buck who disappeared into a draw, then we stalked the hills looking for him. As Jeff Chad came up to a deep ravine suddenly 4 bucks jumped out. The biggest one on the left of all of them is the one Jeff decided on, so he took his shot at 200 yards on the dead run and put him down. What a great shot! We really enjoyed our hunt and left with two nice bucks.

*Roger Froling*



# TROPHY AWARDS PROGRAM

*By Mary Browning, Chair*

To refresh your memory, trophy awards for our Mid-Michigan Chapter of SCI are decided as follows:

Score sheets are collected for a two year period. Before our Hunter's Convention in February, the sheets are categorized by country and species. The top entry for each species receives a gold award, the number two animal receives a silver award and the number three animal receives a bronze award. Animals are also separated by method of take so there could be two gold awards in one category if one animal is taken by rifle and one by bow.

The continents of North America and Africa receive numbers one, two, and three awards each; the other continents receive one award. The winners are decided by which animal scores closest, numerically, to the top in the International Record Book. To find this score the rank of the entered animal is divided by the total number of ranks in the International Record Book. Estate deer and turkeys are in categories of their own and are not eligible for the top awards in North America. Exceptional Estate deer, Estate Elk and all species of turkeys will receive their own awards only if they score in the top 10% according to the International Record Book.

Other Major Awards are for the Crossbow Hunter of the Year, Muzzleloader Hunter of the Year, Handgun Hunter of the Year, Bow Hunter of the Year, Men's Hunter of the Year, and Women's Hunter of the Year. These awards are voted upon by the Awards committee. This decision is made on the basis of which hunter had the greatest achievements during the past two years. We do not consider more than the past two years of activity. For the Women's Hunter of the Year, she must have taken at least three animals. Because we have so few women submitting score sheets often we do not have a winner in this category. We have not had a Handgun Hunter of the Year for many years either.

The Men's and Women's Hunter of the Year can only be won once in a lifetime.

This allows more hunters to get a chance to win this award.

The period for score sheets this year is:

**DECEMBER 1, 2017 TO NOVEMBER 30, 2019**

**Send your score sheets to me, Mary Browning, 6030 Madeira Drive, Lansing, MI 48917**

**You may contact me at 517-886-3639, or email at [lrc05@att.net](mailto:lrc05@att.net).**

All entries must be postmarked no later than December 1, 2019

Please remember to send pictures and to notify me if some score sheets are youth entries.  
Children and grandchildren of members under age 17 are eligible for youth awards.



# My Dream Hunt

by Wesley Stillion



My name is Wesley Stillion and I'm 12 years old. I love hunting, football, basketball, and baseball. My favorite color is Camo. My room is in Camo and most of my clothes are, also. I took my Hunter's Safety at Jays and Randy, who took me hunting, was my teacher. When I got my hunter's safety card I was so happy. I learned a lot of stuff in his class. I was so surprised when my mom told me that Randy was going to take me hunting for a buck. I couldn't wait and had so many ants in my pants. I told my football coach I couldn't be at my game on Saturday because I was going hunting and my whole team was so excited for me. My mom drove me and when we got there I was so super excited I couldn't wait to get out of the car.

When we arrived, there was Randy. I met Leon who owned the hunting area and was really nice and let me use his .245 so that I would have a gun to shoot my deer with. He even sighted it in so that I would be "dead on", as he said. A nice lady gave me and my mom a hat and I thanked her.

We left to go hunting and I was super excited to be going. My mom, Randy, and Leon went out to this nice area with a shanty and we got our seats in and Leon went and put corn down. We watched him from the shanty. After Leon finished, he went and

parked the truck. When he was walking back, we had the shanty door open and we saw a buck already coming in. I was so excited, and Randy told Leon to hurry up so we could shoot but it walked off. That was OK as I wasn't really ready, yet.

Once Leon got in the shanty and we got all seated, Randy started to talk to me about what to do and how to shoot. I practiced opening and closing the window a lot and then he talked to me about shooting the gun. I listened because he is a very smart man. While we were talking, I said, "Hey, there is a deer coming in" and we looked and there was a big buck. Randy had me open the window and I waited because Leon said to let him come in and settle down.

The buck finally turned, and it was time. I was so nervous. I looked through the scope and I was hoping I wouldn't



miss. Randy said it was OK, anytime, go ahead, so I slowly took a breath and shot. He went down right in the weeds right in front of me. I was super, super excited that I got him. I didn't yell though because I didn't want to spook him.

Leon said to wait 15 minutes, so we did. We talked and laughed. It was fun. We even saw more does coming in. It was cool. After 15 minutes, Leon went first to make sure he was dead, and he was, so we all walked up to him and we didn't even have to track him. It was awesome. My mom and I dragged him out a little bit and I had shot him right in the heart. It was a good shot. We took lots of pictures and had so much fun. Then a man came with a dog. I loved the dog.



She was so cute and loved my deer. We loaded my deer up and took him back where they cleaned him, and I cleaned the back of the van, so we wouldn't forget him. I didn't want to leave my deer behind.

Everyone was so very nice, and I had so much fun. I am so glad and grateful that I was able to go and on such a good day. **THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO MADE MY HUNT POSSIBLE. IT WAS ONE OF MY DREAMS!** And I still wear my hat!





# Veteran's Hunt

## at Crooked Foot Ranch

by Sandra Meyer

As avid hunters and outdoorsmen, we know the comforting feeling of peace and serenity while being in nature. We also know the comradery that comes with talking about our past hunts (and follies) with our fellow hunters. For us, the nature is a form of therapy unlike any other. And Tony Mizzoilli, owner of Crooked Foot Hunt Club, in Owosso, Michigan provides this type of therapy for our nation's veterans on 300 acres of pristine ground.

With the staggering number of PTSD and mental health related diagnosis for veterans, the common form of therapy comes in the form of talking and/or medications. But there is something to be said for being outdoors and with a group of people that has shared a similar experience. My husband and I are both Air Force veterans serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom were fortunate to attend this year's hunt.

The annual Veteran's Pheasant Hunt at the Crooked Foot Hunt club showcases beautiful facilities and a warm and welcoming staff. Upon arrival, we registered for the hunt and received a hat, provided by SCI, shells for our shotguns, and hearing and eye protection. We proceeded to the meeting room which had a bounty of fresh donuts and hot coffee. This is a great time to sit and talk with other veterans, discussing where we were stationed at, deployments that we had been on and things we missed about the military. Before the hunt, we honored the flag by standing for the National Anthem and a safety briefing from Lynn Coleman, the Director of the Discovering Recreation & Exploring Wildlife (DREW) Foundation. The Mid-



*Sandra and Tom Meyer*







Michigan SCI Chapter was represented by Vice President, Jon Zieman and Board Director, Randy Raymond. Both members thanked those veterans present for their service. Names were chosen by random to participate in a shooting competition of clay targets which I'm proud to say that the Air Force won.

Then comes the moment filled with anticipation, we are transported out for the tower hunt where hundreds of pheasants were released and top-notch guides with their dogs from around the state retrieved the game. As we stood in our blind, feeling the cold wind in our face, and watching the excellent dog work, it brought a sense of thrill and joy. There was also a bit of a friendly jabbing and joking about missed shots. Every so often a volunteer drove around to check if we needed anything such as more shells. We truly appreciated the feeling of being catered to.

During lunch that was generously provided by the sponsors and prepared by Jimmy Reynolds consisted of pheasant poppers as an appetizer followed by smoked pork loin, mashed potatoes with gravy and corn. Following lunch, two guns were raffled off for the veterans that were generously donated by the Grand River Chapter of the Michigan Duck Hunters Association. The joy of the winner's faces as they held their prizes was accompanied by more jabbing us veterans have grown so accustomed to. A special thank you and mention to the sponsors of this event was mentioned. These organizations included the Mid-Michigan, Lansing, and Detroit SCI clubs, Michigan Operation Freedom Outdoors (MOFO), Lansing Area Veterans Coalition, Michigan Duck Hunters Association, The Mannik & Smith Group, Dean Transportation, and Towne Mortgage Company.

After the dishes were cleared and a few more donuts were enjoyed it was time for the walk up hunt. Bringing our own

bird dogs was an option, we choose to walk behind some of the best bird dogs in the state. 18 guides brought their best dogs out to display their impressive bird searching skills. Watching these four-legged companions point, flush, and retrieve was a joy.

When the hunts ended, Crooked Foot Hunt Club had a person that cleaned all the game, bagged it and prepared it for the trip home. Not enough credit is given to the experience that Tony Mizzoilli, sponsors, and volunteers that this hunt provided to the 62 veterans in attendance. Despite coming from different branches of services, participating in different conflicts, the age gaps - we shared, for a moment, the brotherhood we so greatly longed for.





# Youth Deer Hunt at Froling Farms in Ionia 2018

Early Youth Deer Hunt is where the kids get the start to a long and enjoyable Sport Hunting experience. The season is only two days and 9 year old Logan Frisbie was lucky that his Grandfather purchased the hunt for him at the SCI Auction. Grandfather, Bryan Sergent brought his Grandson, Logan to Ionia and got set up in a Deer Blind on Saturday to try for a White tail Buck. Roger had taken them to the blind the day before so they knew where to go and see the area.

The blind overlooks a big alfalfa field with a big corn field next to it and a large woods with a creek flowing through. This is a great place for the deer to feed and drink and stay safe through the year. Several doe came into view and a nice buck but was too far to shoot, then a smaller buck came through into sight and Logan decided he could make the shot and a great shot it was with his Grandfather's 450.

The two of them could not stop smiling what a thrill for Logan and Bryan was very Happy to have his grandson get his nice Buck. You've Never seen a happier Grandfather!

*Roger Froling*





# Veteran's Hunt

I would like to take a moment to thank Mr. Randy Raymond of the SCI Mid-Michigan Chapter for selecting me for this Veterans hunt and Mr. Leon Low of Low's Trophy Whitetails for this incredible adventure.

I am a 32 year Veteran of the Michigan Army National Guard with 2 tours in the Iraq War, (Jan 2003-May 2004 and May 2006-July 2007). I was fortunate to have participated in this hunt on Nov 7th, 2018. It was a windy day and Mr. Low decided on a stand deep in the woods to hunt. We encountered 3 bucks as we drove to the blind. After they left the area we quickly got into the blind and set up, what happened shortly after was truly amazing.

A mature doe walked onto the trail and urinated in a couple of areas. Shortly after we started to see bucks. Within 2 hours I saw 8 very large bucks who wouldn't present a shot as they were running the does.

Through our conversations, I had explained to Mr. Low that I was more interested in a non-typical with character than a very large typical.

There was a very large double drop tine buck that had walked out but he was only a 3 year old and he got a pass. Suddenly a large 10 and 12 point emerged from the brush. As we were discussing shooting one of them an extremely large 12 point emerged and a battle ensued between the two 12 points. The fight went on for only a couple of

minutes but it seemed like forever as I was watching it.

After the fight ended, they both ran off, and we were discussing the battle when another doe went running through down the lane and a large non-typical was chasing her. Mr. Low was watching that one and let me know it was a shooter buck. It had double split brow tines with thick mass. I was able to see the rack through the brush, and we decided that I would try to take him if he provided a good shot. After a little while the doe ran back across the lane heading our way with him right behind. As he cleared the brush I grunted to stop him and made a quick shot.



When we made our way to the downed buck, I was very excited to see the mass and the double brow tines of this 14 point non-typical. I am so looking forward to seeing my buck mounted thanks to Mr. Nick Giuliani of NAC Taxidermy, who was gracious enough to donate a shoulder mount. I know I will retell my story of this incredible hunt for years and years to whoever will listen.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to everyone involved for an experience of a lifetime that I will never forget.

*Steven P. Polaski*  
Command Sergeant Major, Ret





# EXTREME HUNTING IN THE ARCTIC



By Mary Harter

I had never even considered this type of a hunt but at the 2017 SCI Convention in Las Vegas, it was on the Saturday night auction and the outfitter, Shane Black, was honored as the Outfitter of the Year, so it seemed like a good hunt. Don began bidding on it for me and we got it. Oh, my!!!!

We talked to Shane and made plans for April 2018 because in April, it would be warmer, a high of 0 and a low of -13 F. Don could go along as an observer, for a price, clothing and sleeping bags would be provided, and they would make all the flight and lodging arrangements.

The 2018 SCI Convention came around and when we visited Shane again, he said he had a tag available if Don wanted it. We both nodded "yes" at the same time and we were both going to have the opportunity to hunt a polar bear in the high Arctic. When telling people what we were going to be hunting, we met with a lot of questions. So, before we go further, we were going to be hunting in Resolute, which is an Inuit



***Don, David, Jamie and Mary***

village high in the Arctic parallel to about 2/3 up on Greenland. It is on the Northwest Passage on Cornwallis Island, in Barrow Strait, Nunavut, Canada. We had to purchase a license and if we were not successful, we had to turn the license back in. 35 polar bears were to be harvested in this area and Shane with Canada North Outfitting, exclusive in this area, had 10 of the licenses, but if any of his clients were not successful, someone else (a native) would fill the tags. It had been decided by the Innuits that 35 bears would be harvested whether we helped or not. The U.S. Government will not let us bring back any part of the bears because of apocalyptic predictions about climate change made





***Our 7'x10' living quarters for the hunt complete with kerosene heater.***

years ago that did not happen. We are hoping for a change soon in these inconvenient restrictions, so we can bring our legally hunted bears home.

We drove to Ottawa with an overnight on the way leaving Michigan on April 14 during a rain storm that turned to sleet. We stopped to spend the night earlier than we had planned because with the defrosters on high we still could not keep our windshield clean to be able to see out of it. Finally, we arrived at the historic Fairmont Chateau Laurier Hotel built in 1906 and met up with our guide, John Sauro, from Montreal. He showed us our Arctic clothing and sleeping bags and gave us a bag of goodies for the trip. We transferred what we needed to the new bag and left the remainder in our car at the airport.

We flew to Resolute with three stops on the way. The first was at Iqaluit, then Pond Inlet, and then Arctic Bay. Only four of us were left to continue to Resolute. We stayed at the South Camp Inn where lots of military and government employees were also staying. We met a girl who flew in repair parts for Hercules, a huge military transport. Three planes were at the airport in need of repairs.

The next day we met David, our Inuit guide, and Oz, the owner of our hotel plus much of the town. We were to go out hunting around noon tomorrow. We bought our licenses from Tabatha and went for a walk around town, in which lived about 250 people, and consisted of a school, church, hockey arena, post office, and several government buildings. We visited Tabatha's office and saw the many maps on her walls and saw the predictions for polar bear which they expect to increase rapidly and consistently projected to 2052. Right now, there are between 26,000 and 27,000 in the Canadian Arctic. She said the meat from the polar bears is used by the local people and what they don't eat is fed to the dogs. Seals are also harvested for dog food.

That evening in one of the lounge areas at our hotel, we talked to Marty from New Jersey, who with his friend, were trying to fly to the north pole. Marty had flown all over in a very small plane, even a unique flight to Australia. They were staying in Resolute to repair the hydraulic breaks on

their plane. John gave them two Canada North hats to wear and have pictures taken with at the North Pole.

The next morning, we had bad weather and the airport was closed. We learned later from Oz, who comes in to the hotel to eat daily, that Marty and his friend took off early and went back to New Jersey, never venturing further. The weather was too bad for us to go out hunting.

After breakfast we walked to the Co-op to look around. It was a very neat grocery store with lots of extras like material and sewing supplies, boots and shoes, some dishes, hardware, and we met Tabatha again who was buying rope. We met Nancy carrying a couple of maps of the Arctic and Antarctic that we had been admiring on the wall where we are staying, so John asked her about them and we went to her office to get us a couple. Everyone is very friendly around town and at the hotel and people are happy to strike up a conversation with strangers. The wind was picking up, so we returned to the hotel. This is a dry town so there is no alcohol served anywhere but the hotel serves three meals a day cafeteria style, one price. You help yourself to what is out and what is in the refrigerator. There is a cold bar for salads. Usually they have a soup choice. Lots of beverage choices and there are cookies, cake, bars, and fruit bread. Eggs are cooked how you like them at breakfast time. Dinner entrees varied from prime rib, stews, shrimp, barbecued chicken, etc.

In the hotel we met an Inuit woman who worked for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada. She had 12





**READY**



**AIM**



dogs for her dog sled and hunted but had never gotten a polar bear. She said this area had the most polar bears and that they were delicious, and we were fortunate to be able to hunt them. She said polar bears semi hibernate.

The next day we woke to much drifted snow from high winds and poor visibility. It was good that we were stranded in a hotel instead of a crowded in a small tent. The huge front loaders and plows were digging out the town. Drifts were to the roofs of many homes and the windows were mostly covered in our hotel.

On Friday, plans were made to go out hunting the next day at 9 a.m. Word had come back that two of the dogs were injured during the last hunt, so the owner brought them back to town. We will be using only seven dogs to pull the dog sled. A legally hunted polar bear must be pursued by dog sled and they are pulled by 6 to 12 dogs. Snow machines will pull sleds with tents on them with a bench on each side with pads on them to be our beds. These are large enough to stand in. At night they heat them with a kerosene heater, but it will never get above freezing. We will go out on the frozen bays to hunt.

Saturday came, and we went out on the ice with two snowmobiles pulling two tents, one for John, Don and me, and one for David and Jamie, the other guide. Jamie and David drove the snow machines and David drove the dog sled which we picked up on the ice out about 30 kilometers. The dogs were all very excited to see us and to be going hunting. We stopped several times to glass and cut polar bear tracks several times. We were traveling on the north side of Bathurst Island driving towards the magnetic North Pole. We stopped for the night about 6:30 pm after traveling more than 65 kilometers. They must

drive the snow machines in low gear because of the weight they are hauling. David and Jamie cooked us dinner of beef steak, mashed potatoes, and peas.

Sunday, we got up at 9 am. It is daylight all the time, so it is hard to tell time. I woke at 7 am and looked at my watch but as there is hardly room to stand in our tent, I stayed in bed until everyone was awake. After a hot breakfast

of eggs, bacon, and toast, we rode, stopped to glass, and repeated all day. We cut wolf tracks. Jamie said they usually don't live here but have been far as Victoria Island recently. Nunavut is untamed, unspoiled, and undiscovered! We stopped at 4:15 pm by Baker Island after traveling about 30 kilometers. We could see many seals on the island and bears eat seals. We are in the Northwest Passage which goes through the Parry Channel, south in the McClintock Channel, Queen Maud Gulf, west in Coronation Gulf, Amundsen Gulf, and out to the Pacific Ocean.



***Don with his polar bear***

The snow is only a few inches deep except where it is drifted. It is hard snow and easy to walk on. This is the type of snow that is cut to make igloos.

At 4 am we were awakened by the dogs barking as a small bear was out about 50 yards from camp. We all jumped up and tried to rapidly get into our warm clothes. John, Don, and I have the same kind of clothing but in different sizes. This was good practice because the next night we all knew just where our clothing was hanging. The bear was less than eight feet and gave us a bit of excitement.

We traveled about 30 kilometers again stopping to glass often.

We saw bearded seals and muskox. We saw old polar bear tracks. When we stopped for the night it was near fresh polar bear tracks of a sow and cub.

When we stop, David chops into the ice and makes a





**HIT**

**SUCCESS!**

place to tie the dog's chain on either end and then ties the dogs along the chain for the night. They just curl up to sleep as they are happy but tired. David feeds them frozen meat cut off a hunk with an ax. The lead dog is dark and quite old, and his teeth are worn down from eating the frozen meat. They are very friendly and wait patiently to be fed. The dogs each are on a separate leash and David holds them all together as they pull the dog sled. They are of different lengths, so the dogs run in a curve in front of the sled. The sled is just flat with a box on the back to hold the leashes and other dog equipment. It is very basic and not like an Iditarod sled with sides.

We sleep and read in our tent as we go to bed early and get up late. David and Jamie are out a lot glassing and if they saw something huntable, they would tell us. Finally, off we went stopping to glass often. After about six stops Jamie saw a sow with two cubs. We had been following the shore line of Bathurst Island out beyond the rough ice. When they spotted the bears, we went further out on the ice. A couple more stops, and Jamie saw a lone bear. We got closer and it was a very small bear. He was hunting at a seal hole. Jamie went closer and stepped a foot in a seal hole under the snow. We saw a seal hole with blood around it. A bear had gotten lucky and had a meal. John took lots of pictures.

We stopped for the night and as I brushed my teeth, the mug I found with liquid ended up being coffee with ice crystals,

but I used it any way and then cleaned off my braces with snow. No one said this trip would be easy.

The tents are about 7'x10' with benches on either side and a 6" foam piece across the front which Don and I sleep on. John sleeps on one side on another piece of foam. There is a kerosene heater on the bench across from John and it heats us up quite well, but we still have snow and icicles inside. We take off our outer clothing - "Canada Goose", and boots - "Baffin", and sleep in our double layers of -33 wool underwear.

We just get our outer layers of clothing removed for the night and Jamie knocks on our door. They have spotted three bears out on the ice. One they think is the small one spotted earlier, still hunting a seal dinner. David goes off to check out the size of the other bears. Soon he is back and I'm ready, back in my heavy clothes. The dogs are ready and we are off!

Now just riding in a dog sled is an adventure in itself. I'm sitting on a sled about seven inches off the ice and snow with seven dogs pulling me. I'm sitting on a black pad lashed to the sled. A wooden box which holds the dog supplies is behind me. David sometimes sits on his knees in front of me, stands behind me, or runs beside me. I never know where he will be or sometimes if he is even still with me. Sometimes the dogs tangle and he untangles them or they hook up on chunks of ice. Me, I'm just holding on for dear



**Huge head.**



**Huge Teeth.**



**Huge Paws.**



life! I have my rifle in my lap. I try holding on to my pad, then the sides of the sled but ice chunks hit my hands. Bumps shift me forward and I keep trying to stay back on my seat to make room for David when he sits in front of me. He sticks out a leg sometimes to help steer the sled over the very rough ice. Sometimes ice is piled up 20 to 30 feet. It is very rough but a beautiful blue ice.

I only fell off twice and into soft snow. It is hard to get up but soon I'm back on and ready to go. After my second fall, David put my gun under straps on the sled. We traveled forever but on a dog sled seemingly fast but not as fast as the bear was traveling. It really doesn't matter how long it will take as today it will never get dark. Were we ever going to catch up? Finally, we were. After about three hours we neared the bear and David let the dogs go to bay him up. Each dog had his own tether and it just trailed behind them as they ran to bay up the bear.

What a beauty? The bear looked almost yellow in the sunlight. I had shooting sticks, took off my right glove, racked in a shell into my .375, looked at David and he shook his head, "yes". I shot! The bear reared up and took a couple of steps back and fell backwards. I looked at David and he shook his head, "yes", again. The bear was dead. The dogs were going nuts, barking and licking at the blood from the bear. I had him through both lungs.

After pictures and celebrating, we rolled him on the dog sled which took awhile and set out back to camp over the rough ice field. Jamie had met us with a snowmobile which we rode on with him. The dog sled hit a sharp piece of ice and one rail of the sled broke. We had to use the snowmobile to finish hauling out the bear and us. We tied a rope around the bear's head and all three of us rode the machine hauling the bear back to camp. Don and John were anxiously waiting for us and whooped and hollered when they saw the bear. He was over nine feet and just beautiful.

After more pictures, the skinning began. I got out my license and paperwork. They send in a tooth, a

sample of liver, lung, meat, fat, and baculum bone for testing. Pieces were cut for the dogs to eat and they loved the fresh, warm meat.

We went to bed after midnight just after taking pictures of the setting of the midnight sun, or really setting at 11:27 pm. Today, April 24, we had 20 hours and 17 minutes of sun and then twilight. On April 30, the sun will never set.

### ***Evidence of a seal lunch.***

The next morning the dogs are sleeping spread out, not curled in tight little balls. Their stomachs are full. David went back with the snow machine to repair and bring back the dog sled. He used a piece from one side of their Coleman stove on one side and a piece of plywood on the other. Jamie saw a bear sleeping on the ice and went to check on him. After glassing the "sleeping bear" he decided he was just sitting very still hunting over a seal hole. Glassing also produced a sow with two cubs. Cubs are usually with the sows for three years. Bears mature to breed at six to seven years. Finally, we are in a very good hunting spot where the bears are!

The "sleeping bear" hunted all day. When we went to bed he was still hunting. We also saw a herd of muskox and many seals.

At 1:30 am the dogs started barking. A small bear was about 40 yards away. David chased it away. Don could have shot it from our tent.

It was snowing the next morning and not much visibility, so we had to just wait it out. When it cleared we set out again traveling over 30 kilometers. Again at 5:30 it started to snow and cloud up, so we stopped for the night. David and Jamie glassed and glassed but no bears. We texted our daughter and son on the satellite phone.



***The lead sled dog had worn down his teeth from eating frozen meat.***





***A warm dinner.***



***Packing up the polar bear on the sled to head out.***



***Airport Inuit Art***

The next day, Friday, April 27, was overcast so we waited for it to lift which it did. We spotted a sow with two cubs. They are so cute. It is nice to see a good number of bears with young. At about 4:30 we spot three more in this same area, but they are a sow and two boars. David checks them out and one boar is a shooter. Jamie gets the dog sled ready and Don gets his gun and off he and David go. The bear is on pretty much smooth ice. John and I follow way behind as does Jamie. Soon David lets the dogs go and they bay up the bear. Don shoots. The bear sits with blood pouring out like from a garden hose. He is dead but hasn't fallen yet. A second shot isn't needed. He falls. The dogs are on him lapping the warm blood. Don's bear didn't go as far as mine did. I think the bear was already tired from following the sow.

Since it isn't far from where our tents are, David and Jamie go get them and after picture taking, they skin the bear where he fell. The dogs are tied and rewarded with a hunk of bear meat each. They patiently wait their turns as they know no one will be left out. These dogs are very well behaved.

At about 6 pm it was decided to return directly to Resolute which was over 80 miles away. They loaded the dogs in a box on a sled and put the dog sled on top. Off we went arriving at Resolute at 6 am. What a rough ride! When we got out to walk, I felt like I had just gotten off a rocking ship and I felt like that for several hours. David tied the dogs on the ice and gave each another piece of bear meat. His dogs are fed daily and very well cared for.

We checked into our hotel, cleaned up, ate a hot breakfast, and took a nap. Our flight home was scheduled for the next morning, so we kept the reservation and flew home.

What a great experience! This trip was extreme to say the least but definitely one to remember for a lifetime. We saw a total of 21 bears. Canada North Outfitting does an excellent job!



***Snow covered the hotel windows.***







# A Trip of a Lifetime

Sitka Alaska with Baranof Expeditions,  
Bert and Julie Stromquist

By Sherri Froling

My friend, Bruce Rasch and I decided we would like to do a trip to Alaska with Bert and Julie and stay on their 72 foot yacht, The Alaska- Outlier. The boat has two large state rooms, two smaller cabins and private captain quarters each with their own private baths. Absolutely beautiful and comfortable accommodations with everything one would need.

We had six in our group, myself Roger Froling with my wife Sherri, Bruce Rasch and Peggy, along with Joe and Jean Pennington. We started our trip of a lifetime on July 23 when we flew into Sitka, Alaska and stayed at the Sitka Hotel which was very nice and right in the heart of downtown near everything one would want to shop for.

On the morning we were to embark on the boat. Bert and Julie drove us to a few local destinations to get last minute gear and our fishing licenses. Once we were finished with that they drove us to the nearby docks where we boarded one of the most beautiful boats I've had the pleasure to stay on. Once we were unpacked and settled in. Bert and Julie gave us a tour of the majestic boat we would spend the next 7 nights on in total luxury. Shortly thereafter we set out for our cruise. We were accompanied by a 36 foot Aluminum fishing boat rigged up for all kinds of fishing: halibut, salmon, yellow eye rock and many others. Also, Bert pulled a 20 foot skiff along which would taxi us to different bays to sight see, crab and shrimp.

We all settled in for the cruise across the Alaskan waters and took in all the beautiful scenery. There were views from every spot on the boat as you were surrounded by windows and seating for everyone. We were seeing sights that one can only see in pictures, movies and dreams, unless you were fortunate enough to take this trip.

Once we arrived to where we'd anchor for a few days in the most beautiful tranquil bay Bert could have chosen, he and Julie jumped into action to start one of the many gourmet dinners we would be served during our stay.

We went out the next morning to start some of the most exciting fishing one could



ever ask for. Sherri pulled in the first salmon which she is still talking about. Then a few minutes later Joe started fighting one, Peggy took the next one and then Bruce and I had our turns at fighting these huge fish. We ended the day limited out.

The next day Bert took the ladies out in the skiff sight seeing and touring around mountains that were so high some had snow on them. They decided to set some shrimp traps that afternoon that they would come back and check the next day. While the ladies were enjoying a day on the water the three of us with Captain Mitch were pulling in fish as fast as we could, again going back to the Alaska Outlier limited out.

Needless to say we had another spectacular gourmet dinner that evening with halibut, salmon and steaks. The meals never ended, we had a full breakfast before we went fishing every day, packed lunches that we couldn't finish and every night a fresh catch. One of the evenings we even had the opportunity to enjoy some fresh crab that the ladies had dropped traps for.

The wildlife was everywhere you looked. We saw eagles, brown bear, mountain goats, whales, sea otters, sea lions and lots of seals. We took hundreds of pictures capturing every moment we could. We were also blessed with some of the greatest weather one could ask for. Every day was in the 70's with calm waters and plenty of sunshine.

Captain Mitch was an excellent fisherman and knew where to take us every day to limit out. He handled everything from baiting our hooks to netting the fish. Every night when we arrived back Mitch would clean and filet all of the fish preparing them to be vacuum sealed. Once the fish were vacuum, sealed he and Bert would place them in the deep freezer.

We all had a wonderful trip that we will never forget and we will always be thankful to Bert and Julie for the fine hospitality and making sure this was truly a trip of a lifetime. Oh yes and we brought home almost 400 pounds of fish.....we just might have to do this again.





# South Africa *Part Two*

By Josh Christensen

The next day, June 17th, was Father's day. John, Lance and Lon headed to a different property, one of Tom's properties (Tom is another PH for Marupa), to hunt gemsbok, whereas Elijah and I would stay on the 20,000 acre property looking for wildebeest for Elijah. It didn't take long for us to find a herd. It was the same herd from the day before, the one I shot my wildebeest from and they were standing in the same place as they were the morning before. However the conditions weren't as good as they were for my stalk. We still had the sun at our backs, but the wind was also at our backs. As we were still over 800 yards away our scent must not have made it to them. Pieter decided to drive a very large loop around the wildebeest and hoped they would still be in the same spot when we would emerge with the wind in our favor.

After our quick five minute drive, Pieter stopped the vehicle out of view of the wildebeest and walked to where he could see if the herd was still there. They were, and the stalk began. We used the same strategy as we had the day before; parallel the road and pop out from time to time to see if we were close enough for a shot.

This strategy worked and we were able to set up the shooting sticks twice on the herd, but the animals never offered a shot for Elijah. After setting up the second time, the wildebeest had enough of our shenanigans and bolted into the thick bush. We gave up our stalk and returned to the truck. Our new plan was to try to relocate the herd and proceed from there.

About five minutes into our drive the herd was relocated in an area with a few large openings. Pieter stopped the truck and looked over the animals. I had Elijah get a solid rest on the padded shooting bars on top of Pieter's safari truck. Pieter told Elijah to take the last one in the herd if he could get a shot. This wildebeest was clear of all the others and was perfectly broadside. As Elijah settled in for the shot I pulled up my binoculars to better observe the shot.

At the report of the rifle the wildebeest jumped and ran off out of my sight. It looked like a good hit, but I had been wrong already on this trip. Then our tracker, Jack, looked to Elijah with his infectious grin and said, "Nice shot, he is down." Jack and I both shook Elijah's hand and I slapped him on the back a few times. His shot had been from about 180 yards! Pieter asked Jack about what he saw, because he was the only one to see him go down.

We drove to the area the wildebeest was standing and began to look for blood, which we did not find and we weren't able to see the wildebeest from where we stood. I'll admit I was getting a little worried, especially after the long tracking job we had to do on my wildebeest the day before. Pieter and Jack began to follow the tracks of the herd as Elijah and I followed. Not long into the tracking Pieter turned around and shook Elijah's hand telling him he had a nice shot. The wildebeest bull had run about 100 yards before taking his last breath. This would be the furthest any animal would travel after being in Elijah's crosshairs. Elijah was by far the best shot in camp for this hunting safari!

As we set up for pictures, I told Elijah I couldn't think of a better way to spend my Father's day. Once pictures were over, the wildebeest was loaded into the back of the truck using the winch again. By the time we dropped the bull at the skinner's building it was only around nine, so Pieter thought we could head over to Tom's property to help with the gemsbok hunt.

On the way to this property, about a 45 minute drive away, Pieter informed me Tom's place had some species of animals I thought were only a part of Marupa's Northern Cape properties. Two that really caught my attention were red hartebeest and blesbok. Before leaving for this trip I was quite interested in hunting a hartebeest, but after inquiring with friends who hunted with Marupa a few years before, I learned I wouldn't find them in Limpopo. So to hear a hartebeest was a possibility excited me. And I thought Elijah had been shooting so well if the opportunity presented itself he might get to bring a blesbok home. As we got closer to Tom's property Pieter pointed to the horizon and told us that was the country of Botswana. Even though we weren't able to visit Botswana it was cool to be able to see it.

The rest of the morning we only located one small group of blesbok, but none of them were "exceptional" according to Pieter, so we passed on them. At lunch we decided to combine our efforts and we would ride along with John. So it was Pieter and Tom in the front of the truck, with Elijah,

Baobab Tree



John, Reinardt (John's PH) and myself in the back. John was looking for wildebeest and gemsbok, while Elijah was looking for blesbok and I was hoping to find a red hartebeest. We figured we should see something one of us would want to hunt.

That afternoon we came across a herd of wildebeest and we were lucky enough to watch John and his PH make a stalk on the herd. He was able to get within 190 yards and get a shot off at a nice bull. Upon impact the bull looked like it was a great shot, but John had a similar shot to the one I had on my wildebeest and took some tracking to locate. But none the less he had his wildebeest down.

After taking the wildebeest to the skinning area on this new property, Tom, Pieter, Elijah and I drove to a cattle ranch about a half hour drive away in search of a steenbok. This property had many wide open fields and our plan was to drive the fence rows in between the fields looking for steenbok. Before dark we were able to locate two decent males, but were unable to get a shot opportunity at either. As the light was fading we decided to wait until total darkness before proceeding.

Once it was dark we drove the fields in search of the elusive little antelope. We encountered several herds of impala before coming across a steenbok, but it was a female and we couldn't locate a male. Usually when there is a female a male won't be too far away. Ten minutes later and in another area we spotted a nice bush duiker, but I decided not to pursue him because on my last trip to South Africa I collected a very nice one. Shortly after spotting this duiker at a close proximity to our right we located a steenbok across the field to our left. He was about 80 yards away and I couldn't decipher if he had horns or not. Not only are steenbok small in size they also have very small horns.

Pieter and Tom were able to determine it was a decent male and I should take a shot. When I found the little antelope in the scope I placed the crosshairs on his front shoulder and squeezed off a round. Pieter said I missed and to get ready for another shot. As I looked for the steenbok in the scope I found him and saw he was moving with a limp. I lined up the shot again and shot. The steenbok vanished. When we drove to his last location we found the steenbok with a broken leg from my first shot and a hole in his neck from my second.

Then next morning we headed back to Tom's place in search of hartebeest and blesbok. Tom would be Elijah and my PH on this day, and for the rest of the trip. The morning was fairly uneventful with only one group of blesbok being spotted, but they were gone before Elijah could get an opportunity to line them up in the scope.

Before lunch on this day we all traveled to a local school to present them with gifts. As a teacher, and a parent taking my young son on this trip I wanted to visit a local school and bring them materials. Elijah contributed to the effort by taking money from his savings to buy some soccer balls and basketballs for the kids. In all we took tooth brushes, tooth paste, school supplies including rulers, paper and pencils, and toys such as basketballs, soccer balls and toy airplanes.

When we arrived at the school there was excitement in the air as the kids knew something fun was going to happen. The headmaster of the school sent word to all the classrooms we were there to give the school goods, and the kids starting funneling out of the classrooms into the courtyard. This school educated kids from kindergarten through high school and had a total of about 120 students. As the kids started to gather they began to sing a song for us. I'm not sure what they were saying, but we could tell it was in honor of us bring them goods and put a little lump in my throat.

I was asked to say a few words, and I explained where we were from, I was a school teacher and we had brought some gifts for them to share. As per the request of the headmaster, I also let them know we would leave the goods with their teachers and they would distribute them to the students. It was a humbling experience and one I was glad to have my son be a part of. Sometimes in our country we take things for granted and don't realize how blessed we truly are.

After visiting the school we returned to Tom's for lunch and the afternoon hunt. After fixing up my plate for lunch I took a seat at the large dining room table, when Tom appeared with a slight grin on his face. He asked me if I still wanted to shoot a hartebeest and I replied with a "Well, yeah!" He told me there was a small group at a waterhole visible from the lodge.



Josh with his Wildebeest



Josh with his Impala



Josh with his Warthog







Elijah  
and Elephant in Kruger

I quickly got up, went outside, grabbed the 6.5 and followed Tom as we started our stalk. We were able to sneak within 80 yards of the waterhole undetected. I set up the rifle and followed the animals in my scope finding what appeared to be a very large bull. Tom told me to wait as he looked it over. I had the crosshairs on the hartebeest's shoulder and waited to hear the go ahead, but it never came. Tom told me, "Don't shoot, we can do better." I immediately asked if he was sure, because the bull looked very good to me. He once again said, "We can do better." And we retreated back to the lodge for lunch.

I told everyone in the lodge of our stalk and Elijah asked, if I thought it was a good one why I didn't shoot. I let him know that's why we have PH's and they know the animals here better than we do. For the next five hours I would replay that stalk in my head over and over, wishing I would have been a little more assertive in my request to shoot that bull. We did come across a large herd of hartebeest shortly after leaving the lodge in search of our quarry. We had a failed stalk, which really made me second guess our lunch time encounter.

During our search we came across a herd of blesbok and Tom did an excellent job of getting us close, but unfortunately the vegetation was so thick Elijah wasn't able to get a clear shot. Close to sun down Tom spotted something in the bush and had me quickly follow him. As we walked into the bush I was looking for hartebeest when I spotted a blesbok. I reminded Tom, Elijah was the one going after blesbok, when he said, "Not blesbok, hartebeest" and we proceed forward. We soon found the herd of hartebeest was traveling with a herd of blesbok.

Tom got us to within 40 yards of this large group two times, but once again the vegetation was too thick to see the animals clearly, little own take a shot. After getting that close the second time the animals knew something was up and began to funnel away from our right to left. As they made their slow cautious escape they passed through an opening about 60 yards from us. The shooting sticks were set up and in the opening stood a large hartebeest. Tom quickly assessed him through his binos and told me that was the one.

I placed the rifle on the shooting sticks and found the large animal in my crosshairs. I found his shoulder and squeezed the trigger. I could tell the bull was hit, but it didn't appear to be a hard hit as he, and the rest of the animals scattered. Tom asked where I shot and I told him in the shoulder. He said he was a little worried, because the hartebeest took a step as I shot. This made me think of the wounded impala and got me second guessing everything about the shot.

We walked up to where the animals were standing and where I shot the hartebeest. We didn't notice blood right off and Tom pulled his binos up to look in the direction the bull ran. He turned around and looked at me with a huge grin on his face and said, "Nice shot!" Then he gave me a hearty handshake before we walked over to my huge hartebeest. While looking at that giant of an animal, Tom mentioned this was the reason he didn't want me to shoot the one earlier in the day. This was truly a stalk and an animal I won't soon forget.

Tom went back to get the truck to try to find a way into the animal through the thick bush, and asked if I would be alright by myself in the bush. I smiled and said I would be. As he walked away this entire experience started to play back through my mind. My ears were filled with the sounds of Africa, as I heard the birds signaled goodnight to the sun. My eyes were mesmerized by one of the most beautiful sunsets I have ever experienced. With shades of orange and shadows dancing as the light began to fade. All the while breathing in the sweet air and dust of the African bush. At that moment, as I stood over my hartebeest, it all began to sink in. I was in Africa, hunting some of God's most intriguing animals and sharing this experience with my son. What an awesome ending to this day.

That day also turned out to be a great one for John as he finished his hunting for the trip by connecting with a blesbok and a gemsbok.

The next morning the plan was to head back to Tom's place and continue to try our luck at blesbok. Lon would do the same for gemsbok and this time he would have not only his PH, Dolf, he would also have Reinardt who was John's PH. As we drove onto the property a whopper of a warthog ran out in front of our truck. Tom stopped to look at the



pig as he trotted off. I mentioned to Tom I'd shoot that pig. He had me get in the back of the truck for the rest of the ride to the lodge, but we didn't see that warthog the remainder of our hunt. Even though warthogs are plentiful in this part of South Africa they are very elusive, rarely offering a shot opportunity over a few seconds.

We proceeded to look for blesbok and about a half hour later we drove around a corner to see a herd of gemsbok. I was watching the large long horned animals when Tom motioned out of the driver side window to our left. When I looked I saw the front half of a large tusked warthog standing about 60 yards away. I quickly grabbed the shooting bag and set up for a shot from the roof of the truck. This was the first and last time on this trip I had difficulty finding the animal in the scope. As I was trying to find him in the scope Tom opened his door and stood looking over the roof of his truck with his binoculars. He encouraged me to quickly find the pig in my scope as he was a good one and would run off soon.

Lucky for me the warthog was fixated on something out in front of him, maybe the gemsbok, and stood like a statue. I found him in the scope and placed the crosshairs on his shoulder before squeezing the trigger. "Click" was all I heard. I quickly worked the bolt and out came the undischarged round. The firing pin struck the primer, but the bullet did not fire. This was very surprising, because it was the 19th round out of twenty we used and the only one that didn't fire. I tried to find the pig again in the scope and once again had difficulty, but was able to see him still statue like in the scope.

For the second time I found his front shoulder in the crosshairs and squeezed the trigger. This time the rifle fired and the pig did a quick 180 and ran off. He looked like he was hit, but when we went to where he stood we only found a few drops of blood. We followed the few drops of blood and his spoor, which was easy for the tracker to follow because it appear the pig had a broken leg, for about 150 yards before finding the old boar. We only found a few drops of blood along the way and when we found the warthog we saw the bullet hit him in the shoulder and passed through. I was very surprised we didn't find more blood.

When telling the story of this hunt to everyone later, they were all surprised the pig stood there for so long. To be honest I was too. I just told them he was a very old boar and was deaf in one ear and couldn't hear out of the other as well as blind in one eye and couldn't see out of the other.

It was still very early in the day so we dropped the warthog off at the skinner's area and headed back out in search of blesbok for Elijah. We drove for about an hour before I spotted a small herd of blesbok laying under a tree in the bush about 70 yards away. Later Elijah mentioned he couldn't believe I spotted them in the thick bush. We stopped the truck, but Elijah wasn't able to get a shot through the bush. Tom had us get down to try to put a stalk on the herd. We started off on the two-track paralleling the herd. We only went 40 yards before Tom found a shooting lane back to the herd, and standing in the shooting lane was a mature ram.

Tom stopped and set up the shooting sticks as he glassed the ram. As Tom did this Elijah placed the rifle on the sticks and found the blesbok in his scope. After a few seconds of looking at the ram Tom told Elijah to take him. The blesbok was quartering away when Elijah let the bullet fly. Instantly we could see the bullet hit its' target as the ram dropped in his tracks. Tom was so excited he gave Elijah a huge before shaking his hand. Elijah was excited for his trophy and for the fact he shot four times and had four animals down.

When we returned to the lodge and skinning shed Tom asked Elijah if he would be willing to shoot a warthog for meat. He told us he needed meat for the workers on his property. Elijah agreed to help out and then we were told he would be using a .22 long rifle. I questioned how that was going to work on a warthog when Tom explained we would be sitting at a waterhole and Elijah was to make a head shot. He used the warthog I shot earlier in the day to show shot placement, after which we drove to a hide at a waterhole.

About twenty minutes into the sit we spotted a kudu cow and bull, but they didn't come into the water. Shortly after the kudu walked off a sow came into the water. Elijah got set up and placed the crosshairs right on



**Hartebeest**



**Our visit to the school**

the pigs' ear. At the crack of the .22 the warthog dropped and Tom's employees had some addition meat.

This was our last day in this area. The next morning, June 21st (the first day of winter in the southern hemisphere and my youngest son, Ivan's, birthday) we awoke and took a four hour drive to a concession closer to Kruger National Park. That evening we drove around the concession and saw many impala as well as a giant baobab tree. The lodge we were staying at had one of the most beautiful backdrops with a large mountain range lingering over property.

The following morning we began our two day one night trip into Kruger National Park. Marupa offers several different photo safari packages to take before, during or after the hunt. Our group opted for a tour through Kruger, where we were able to stay in chalets in the park. While in the park we were able to see four of the big five including cape buffalo,



elephants, a black rhino, and lions. We also saw many herds of blue wildebeest and zebra along with hippo, crocodiles and some huge kudu bulls. I found it interesting when we arrived at different ranger stations they had maps of Kruger with markers to place on the map for sightings of each of the big five. However they didn't allow people to mark where the rhinos were sighted due to the possibility of poachers. We learned later that even in this National Park poaching is a problem and during our trip through Kruger witnessed anti-poaching planes flying overhead.

After our two day trip to Kruger we were down to two more days of hunting. Lon decided if the opportunity presented itself he wanted to shoot a kudu bull, and Lance still wanted to get his warthog. The morning of the second to last hunting day we departed the lodge to head to a property known to hold warthog for Lance. Once we arrived, Dolf decided to take Lon to a different property known for its' kudu. John accompanied Lance on his hunt, while Elijah and I road along with Lon.

After going our separate ways, we drove about thirty minutes to a new hunting location and were met by Nichols, a tracker on this property. This new property had several waterholes and a few mountains on it. Our plan was to drive around the property checking these waterholes in hopes of spotting a nice kudu bull. If one was spotted and Lon could get a shot from the truck so be it, if after being spotted Dolf needed to take Lon on a stalk that worked too.

We saw many animals as we drove around the property including impala, duiker, zebra, giraffe, waterbuck and a side-striped jackal. Lon and Dolf also got a quick glimpse at a kudu bull as we drove up the side of the small mountain on the property. This trail going up the mountain was a bit scary for someone sitting on the back of the truck and the turnaround at the top was even worse! We had to make a seven point turn where the front of the truck was over the edge of the steep rock face several times.

On our drive around I lost my hat twice to the thorny trees on the property. Every piece of vegetation seemed to have thorns on them and several times someone in the group through the course of a hunting day would either get caught up in a bush, get something like a hat or glove taken off by a bush or get a nice scratch along some surface of their body. All an extra added bonus which added to the experience of hunting in the South African bush veld.

After making several loops around the property looking over the waterholes, Nicholas pointed out a kudu bull on the ridge line of that mountain we drove up earlier. Up the side of the mountain we drove again. This time when we reached the top Dolf, Lon and Nicholas went for a walk along the mountain to see if they could locate the kudu bull. Elijah and I stayed back with the truck and enjoyed the view from the top and sounds of the South African bush.

Forty-five minutes to an hour later the three of them returned. The temperatures were rising and they all needed some water before continuing our search. Along their path they came across four kudu bulls, and even though Lon wouldn't have been able to get a clear shot at any of them Dolf was

able to see them all clearly enough to know there wasn't any shooters in the group.

As we made our way back down the mountain we passed a group of kudu with two bulls in it. One was very young, but the other was a very nice mature bull with deep curls. Dolf instructed Lon to shoot the big bull if he could get a shot. There was a small opening in the bush and the bull just walked into it. As Lon pulled up his rifle to make the shot a kudu cow stepped right in front of the bull obstructing the shot. We waited what seemed like minutes, but were in fact seconds for something to happen. And it did, all the kudu walked off into the bush.

Dolf and Lon left the vehicle with the shooting sticks to try to catch up with the kudu as the wind was still in their favor. However after about ten minutes they returned because the wind shifted and the kudu caught their scent and left the area quickly. Although they were a little dejected by this failed attempt, we had seen our first really nice shooter bull and it was still early.

We continued our pattern of driving, until we came around a corner and lo and behold a kudu cow and kudu bull were standing in the open in front of us. A nice kudu bull. When they saw us they ran into some thick bush, but it was open on two sides of it and we soon realized they would come out of this smaller thicket to reach one of the bigger ones. The kudu cow was in the lead and we could see her frozen on the left hand side of the thicket. I used my binoculars and located a horn of the bull standing behind her.

Dolf instructed Lon to watch the kudu cow and be ready because the bull would followed her out. We waited patiently until the cow made her escape. She walked through the opening and was followed by the kudu bull. As soon as the bull was completely in the opening the rifle roared and the kudu dropped. I was so excited that I was slapping/hitting Lon in the shoulder repeatedly while continually saying "Nice shot!"

During the day Lance was able to help out the property owner of the place he was hunting by collecting two impala for meat as well as taking a very nice warthog sow.

The next day was our last full day. Lance and Lon were able to golf a round of nine holes with Dolf and Reinardt while John, Elijah and I went in search of curios for our families. It was a very warm and sunny day and we all got a little sunburned. It is amazing how hot it could get in the beginning/middle of the winter in this part of South Africa. Day time highs often exceeded 75 degrees with one or two days peaking about 80. We were told summer time highs could be in excess of 120 degrees.

This hunting experience was truly one of the best I've even had. To be able to bring my oldest son and three other first timers to South Africa and witness their joy and amazement on their first African safari is something I will always relish. Marupa was able to make this hunting and touring adventure enjoyable and memorable. I am sincerely grateful for all they did to make our experience a great one that we will cherish the rest of our days.



# Looking Ahead

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