



# Contents

## COVER STORIES

- 8 The twisted 12 bores
- 14 The cowboy's kudu
- 22 Wingshooting – the good, the bad and the ugly
- 28 Bowhunting the Damara dik-dik – Namibia's tiniest antelope
- 58 **Hunting in the Zambezi Valley, Zimbabwe, 1970s**
- 62 Hunting the trophy steenbok
- 74 The 2018 Mathews TRIAX

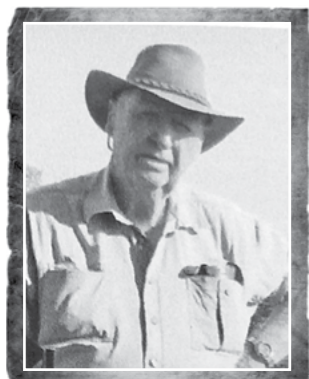
## OTHER FEATURES

- 42 Hunting with an old bull
- 46 "Perceptions" of hunting and sustainability of your enterprise
- 54 Hunting hard for a dagga boy in Namibia
- 70 Promotional article: Garmin Xero™ A1 and Xero™ A1i bow sights
- 78 How important is the BC of a bullet to a hunter?

## REGULAR

- 6 From the editor
- 18 Custodians of Professional Hunting & Conservation – SA
- 32 Just another day in Africa – The Mockford legend
- 34 Tomorrow's wingshooters – Hunting or harvesting?
- 49 True Green Alliance
- 50 Big-game hunters of yesteryear: Alfred Pease – Lions in Africa
- 82 Hunting in Africa? What you need to know
- 84 Campfire Chronicles – The crocodile in the window
- 86 The hunter and society's "conservation ethos" – CITES: A time for change
- 92 Mahohboh on the hunt ... Heart of the hunter, Part 3
- 98 Our advertisers
- 98 Subscription

## 72 HUNTING IMAGES



Owen Connor

# Hunting in the Zambezi Valley

## Zimbabwe, 1970s

*In the 1970s, I decided to organise a two-week hunting expedition in the Zambezi Valley of Zimbabwe. My hunting companions on this trip were Mike Hodgson, Ian Ross and John Rowell. We were all members of Lawleys Concession hunting syndicate and were looking forward to spend some time in the bush and doing some serious hunting.*

The Sapi hunting area was situated at G Camp and was organised by the Rhodesian Hunter's Association. We drew a camp for the month of May – not the best time of year, as the grass was shoulder-high and the reed beds so thick that you could only walk the hippo paths. There was also water in all the pans.

My rifles of choice for this excursion were a .600 Westley Richards and .30-06 Remington self-loading rifle. Ian Ross brought his .416 Rigby and a .240 Holland & Holland, while Mike Hodgson carried a .375 Cogswell & Harrison. John Rowell used a .475 that was on loan from Johannes Meintjies, a neighbouring farmer in Darwendale.

We left Salisbury/Harare in a convoy of pickups – Peugeots, Land Rovers (both short and long wheelbase) and my Bedford 1½ ton truck. These vehicles all came from our farms. Mike, whom we called Big Hoddy, had a Land Rover that he borrowed from his farming enterprise. Ian used his Land Rover Series II LWB and a pickup, while John drove his Land Rover Series I SWB. We were heading for Marangora National Parks, where we would get our licences. We had spent the previous evening at Clouds End Hotel in Makuti and picked up two Israeli hitchhikers.

Our game bag (allocated per hunter) consisted of the following: 4 buffalo females, 16 impala females, 2 warthog, 1 elephant cow, 2 kudu cows, 1 sable cow. If multiplied by 4 (4 hunters), this quota came to a tremendous amount of meat! We regarded it more of a "culling exercise" to reduce the numbers of game in the Sapi area, which also coped with the "prestige" hunts at the end of the season in September. This quota left a lot of room for animals of the wrong sex to be mistakenly hunted!



The convoy on its way to G Camp in Zimbabwe's Sapi hunting area, 1970s

The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) had a camp just south of where an overhead water tower can still be seen to this day. As we were hard pressed to turn all this meat into farm rations, the South African Police (SAP) gladly accepted any fresh meat and were extremely generous in offering us many items of tinned food that we had been unable to acquire. All of us were members of our various military/police reserve units. We were amused at their "care-free" patrols, particularly with regard to the water detail: They would all get onto a Land Rover, "armed" with a guitar and singing folk songs while driving to the Zambezi River. There they all stripped off their uniforms, stacked their rifles in the Land Rover, and started the pump to fill the water bowser. Thereafter they dived into the river to cool off. Miraculously, no one was attacked by crocodiles or "infiltrators" from Zambia. Two years later, this camp was attacked and landmines were laid on the South African camp road, which led to the withdrawal of the SAP. The hunting was also moved up to the Zambezi, 30 km away, but we still sneaked down to the Zambezi to shoot birds at Chikwenya and fish for bream.



Left: The hunters relaxing in front of G Camp. Needless to say, the entire front portion was washed away when the floodgates were opened at Kariba. Middle: Three of the hunters with National Parks ranger Kevin Thomas and his wife. Left to right: Ian Ross (wearing shorts), Kevin's wife, Owen Connor, Mike Hodgson (partly cut off), and Kevin (with camo jacket). Right: The dining room at G Camp. There were also four chalets, a kitchen and even a flush toilet and shower.



"Wood and steel, combined with passion and the highest craftsmanship. Not more, not less."

Thomas Wolkmann, Owner of Heym

Kevin Thomas was the National Parks game ranger in charge of this area and lived there with his wife and child. At the time, National Parks seemed to be more concerned with prosecuting hunters for shooting male instead of female animals than with protecting the hunters!

## Elephant hunt

John Rowell and I went to hunt elephant in the Chewore River area. We parked near Phumbi Hill and walked downstream, as the wind was blowing upstream. In the process we disturbed a rhino that had been sleeping under an albida tree. The irate animal made us run quite far, John carrying the .475, which was very heavy to run with.

We located the elephant herd and followed them through the heavy riverine combretum bush. Suddenly we found ourselves on the opposite side of the herd, with the wind blowing towards them. They immediately charged and we made a beeline for the other side of the clearing. The elephant cows did not present a target for us to shoot at. The animals then headed into the Chewore River area, where no shooting was allowed. We then commenced downstream and picked up yet another elephant herd within just a kilometre. One cow did present a shot, but John hesitated too long. The same elephant then stopped and moved sideways. John fired at it, but it proceeded to run towards the river. I knew that I had to put it down before it crossed the boundary!

I took two steps to the right of John, firing both barrels of my .600 into its chest. This felled the beast, as well as John – because of the muzzle blast, he couldn't hear for a few hours! We headed back to our vehicle and camp, shooting a kudu cow and a warthog on the way.

Mike and Ian had had a lazy day, shooting birds. The next morning all of us, including the two Israelis, headed to the Chewore River with our helpers and the necessary butchering equipment to cut up the elephant cow. After dropping off the helpers and Israelis, we drove downstream to look at the river and see whether we should plan a fishing day. Within half a kilometre of the shot elephant, we came across another herd of elephant, all standing quite relaxed. The game scout persuaded me to shoot another cow. The wind and visibility were good, so I walked up to within 30 m of the herd, along with the scout, who then chose an animal I should shoot. The bullet hit the cow in the heart,



The author is standing with his back to the camera, looking at the trackers skinning John Rowell's elephant. On the left (in shorts) is one of the two Israelis who badly damaged Ian Ross's Land Rover when racing each other in the Zambezi Valley.

causing her to collapse within five paces. Ian then put another shot into her brain as extra insurance.

Having left the foreign hitchhikers with two vehicles to do the butchering, we started to worry when they failed to return to camp. Ian and I went to look for them and found that they had tried to race each other with the vehicles, overturning and badly damaging Ian's Land Rover in the process. We were really annoyed and promptly loaded the two Israelis on another vehicle and sent them back to where we had picked them up at Makuti!

## Mike Hodgson's buffalo and warthog hunts

Originally, Mike and I were on buffalo tracks. Being mid-afternoon, it was very hot and Mike was lagging behind, so we silently discussed the best plan to return to the road. The next moment, we spotted a warthog carrying good-sized tusks. I indicated to Mike to shoot it. He was carrying his .375 rifle and dropped the pig on the spot. We promptly gutted it and tied it to a pole so that two people could carry it back to the vehicle. I was in front, followed by the warthog carriers, and then Mike. We were on the edge of the mopane grove, where the grassy marsh started. I went to rest against a tree until Mike caught up to us when I suddenly saw the carriers drop the warthog and running away. Next a rhino emerged from the mopane grove. By this time, Mike had also seen it and broke into a run, heading for the marsh. "Not that way!" I shouted to him. He did a 90-degree turn, as though he was on the rugby field with the ball in his hand. I shouted at him again and kept him running till he was out of sight.

The warthog carriers returned, but were not all that happy, as the rhino had left his dung fairly close to where they had dropped the pig – they knew the animal would return to scuffle it! But they condescended and picked up the warthog. Then, amid great laughter, we caught up with Mike and returned to the vehicle. "I will get you back, Connor!" Mike said.

The next day, John Rowell accompanied Mike to the H Camp floodplain to look for buffalo. They spotted a herd in the reeds, upon which John took Mike to a suitable spot where they waited for the herd to head towards them. A big cow was bringing up the rear, and Mike put her down with a single shot – excellent shooting! Mike's helper, Austin, was left to guard the buffalo, while he and John returned to camp to fetch a bigger vehicle for loading the downed animal. All the hunters went back to look at Mike's buffalo cow, but Austin was nowhere in sight ... John and Mike took a ride around the area to search for him and eventually found him high up in a mopane tree. He refused to come down until the vehicle was parked directly underneath him. When questioned, he couldn't actually describe what type of animal had chased him. There was much laughter in the workers' quarters that night when he was asked to recount his experiences of that day!

## John Rowell's two buffalo

John was of slight build, probably 70 kg (154 lb). Carrying a .475 rifle with a tremendous kick, he was out hunting in the Chewore area. Although he was without a back-up hunter, he was accompanied by the National Parks scout by the name of Sign, who was a very capable hunter/tracker.

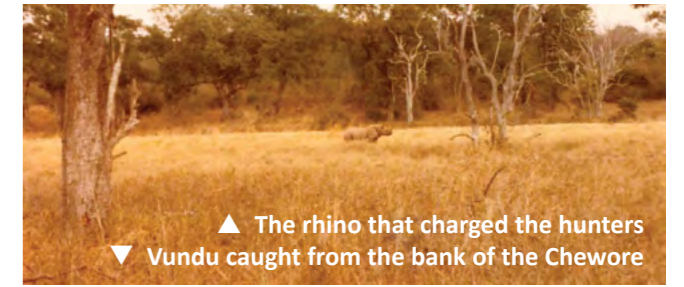
Sign brought John to within 30 m of a buffalo herd that was walking and grazing. He indicated to John which cow to shoot, which he promptly did with a single shot. Upon reloading, Sign told him to take another buffalo female, as the herd had not moved off. He stood behind John with his hand on his shoulder to absorb the recoil from this powerful rifle. John had to use both barrels to down the second cow.

Due to the number of animals shot, quite a few bones were deposited at the bone yard, which was about half a kilometre away from G Camp. Kevin Thomas gave us permission to go there at night to check for hyenas and other predators. John and Big Hoddy drove there in the SWB Land Rover and parked under a mopane tree in which several vultures were resting. After an hour of waiting and no predators, they returned to camp for a Whiskey. Big Hoddy was asked to comment on his hour at the bone yard. He replied that the only noise he had heard was the vultures depositing their "load" from above. Luckily they were both wearing caps, which were on display for the rest of us to look at!

Ian and I left very early one morning, heading towards Mana Pools, where we could see dust rising from the floodplain. This was obviously caused by animals heading towards the Zambezi River. Having parked our vehicle in a fire-safe area, we walked towards the dust. Upon getting closer, we could see some buffalo. We managed to get within 50 m of the herd. Ian shot at a cow with his .416. The herd immediately took off and crossed onto a reed island in the Zambezi River. We followed them and I took an animal, which the game scout had assured me was a buffalo female. She ran also ran off into the reeds with the rest of the herd. We followed and found one cow lying down, which we had both shot at, thinking it was the wounded one. However, on examining it, we found it was not the wounded cow. There was still a blood spoor showing up with the herd, which necessitated a follow-up.

We found some buffalo standing at the edge of the reed island and spotted our wounded quarry after glassing them. Meanwhile, the hunters from H Camp, who were on the mainland, fired a fusillade of shots at the buffalo on the island, which were only 100 m away! The next moment, the herd stampeded towards Ian and me! We stood together, shouting and waving our hands as they ran past us. After we had recovered from the fright, Ian went across to the mainland along with his tracker, Makosa, to accost the other hunters about reckless shooting at the buffalo herd we were hunting! There could have been a very nasty accident between the hunters that day.

In the meantime I continued to search for the wounded animal and finished it off, only to find it was a young bull. Ian returned to join me, explaining that he had asked the other hunters whether they had known we were there. He also found out that they had shot two buffalo without even crossing to the island to make sure they were dead! We returned to camp and collected the two buffalo cows and the young bull. I then went on to the rangers at old G Camp to report the mistaken shooting of the buffalo bull. As a result, Kevin confined us to camp the next day, where the senior ranger and a policeman from Chirundu arrived to investigate the events of the previous day. The actual head of the bull had been carried away by hyenas during the night, so proof of size was no longer there. It was suggested that



▲ The rhino that charged the hunters  
▼ Vundu caught from the bank of the Chewore

Ian and I had purposely left the bull there in the hope that this would happen! Because of this incident, I had to pay a fine of 100 dollar and was suspended from hunting in a National Parks area for a year. All the meat was processed, except for the young bull, which was taken for National Parks staff rations!



The H Camp hunting group also paid a fine and were disciplined by the Rhodesian Hunter's Association, who reprimanded them for their highly unprofessional conduct.

## Rhino and fire don't mix

One evening, a rhino visited G Camp and stamped out the cooling fires in our staff section. We all leapt up into the albida trees, except for Sixpence, my deaf driver, who was oblivious to the drama unfolding in camp. The game scout came down from one of the trees to wake Sixpence, and despite him being elderly, he proved that he could still scale a tree if he needed to! The rhino remained at the fire it had extinguished.

On one of the days following this event, John and Ian, both of whom had attended Gwebi Agricultural College together, went for a drive towards Mana Pools. On arriving at the Sapi crossing, they found a rhino standing there. With them in the Land Rover were National Parks scout, Sign, Ian's tracker, Makosa, and a water carrier, who was wearing a long-sleeved red jersey that he had taken off and tied around his waist. Upon seeing this proverbial red flag, the rhino promptly charged the Land Rover. John, who was driving, tried to reverse, looking back as he did so. However, when he looked forward and saw the rhino was close, he switched off the engine and jumped out. Ian in the meanwhile had put his hand on the bonnet and vaulted over the front, as the irate rhino was charging from the side. Sign and Makosa stayed put in the back of the vehicle, but the water carrier took flight, with the rhino in hot pursuit of "the red thing" dashing for the trees. Both Sign and Makosa were incapable of running anywhere, splitting their sides with laughter at the antics of the water carrier, who then turned and escaped the rhino.

After these rhino episodes not much hunting was done for the rest of the trip. However, there was a lot of merriment! Every so often laughter would break out on the back of the vehicle as we recalled the rhino chase and Mike's athletic demonstration of how to outrun the beast, as well as the water carrier episode. The poor water carrier was so embarrassed that he mostly sat with his head between his knees.