



November 2024 Newsletter

My Recent African Safari

With the encouragement of the other officers of RLAT, I was asked to write a few words about our recent trip to Zambia, Africa in the Lunga-Luswishi GMA next to the Kafue National Park. We first went to South Africa on a Safari in 2010, once you have the experience you can't wait to get back its 10 times better than you think. Needless to say, it has been on our radar for a long time. I have long wanted to hunt the dangerous 5, so our plan was to hunt in an area that had Leopard, Cape Buffalo, Lion, Elephant, and plains game (specifically Sable). After talking to many Outfitters, references and cost we decided to hunt with Back Country Africa.

The process started 2 years before our hunt, after many conversations with Russ our PH (professional hunter), I determined to specifically hunt Leopard and Cape Buffalo! My wife Nancy wanted to hunt a big Bull Sable antelope and other plains game. It was going to be quite an adventure because we were going to have to hunt for 24 days, the longest hunt or vacation we had ever taken. We landed in Lusaka, Zambia and then took another plane to a runway close to our hunting area. There we met up with Russ and our team of trackers and government scouts. When we got to our camp got unpacked, had lunch, and started hunting immediately.

Our main focus in this camp was Cape Buffalo and plains game. On the second day Nancy got a beautiful Lichtenstein Hartebeest, so the next day Russ's plan was going close to the Kafue National Park boundary and hunt this big flood plain for Cape Buffalo. It was probably the coldest morning we were there, about 40 degrees seemed colder traveling on the top of Land Rover safari truck. We got to the plain area and started driving trying to find a Buffalo to hunt, when we saw huge dust cloud coming towards us. Russ said it was big herd of Cape Buffalo, so we needed to get a vantage point in hopes of seeing a big ole bull to shoot. We ended up next to a drainage area that pinched the herd down to just a few at a time crossing about 150 yards in front of us. There were close to 1,000, it was unbelievable, we waited at least 30 minutes as they walked past until we saw the right one. I had my .375 H&H on a rest and was prepared to shoot when he came through, Russ told me which one and when he went in the low spot in the drainage I fired. The bull spun around and piled up in some brush close by. We waited and took our time approaching because they are so dangerous. Once Russ was confident it was dead everyone celebrated. See all the meat and internals of most animals taken are given to the community, they love huntersin most cases it's the only protein they get. After pictures, processing and loading we were off to the next animal to hunt.

Leopard was high on my list and was going to be the hardest to hunt. In Zambia you can only hunt them during daylight hours and they are mainly nocturnal apex predators. To hunt leopard, you must

use some of the meat from the other animals you shoot to be used as bait. Usually hung in tree where the leopard can get to it, but the lions can't. We moved to leopard camp the day after I shot my Buffalo, the trackers and apprentice PH had already started pre baiting. Immediately we had 2 big leopards eating on 3 of the 10 baits in the hunting area. Every day was a new adventure we would go check the bait that had game cameras on them and then hunt the baits that the leopard was coming to in manmade ground blind with the hope they would show up during daylight. In between sits for leopard we would spend the day hunting different game animals, always stalking sometimes for hours trying to get close enough for a shot. It was the hardest hunting we had ever done in our life.

Through the process of 24 days, we had many close calls with lion, elephant, hippo, crocodile its was just unreal how wild everything was and how undisturbed in the GMA (Game Management Area) Wild Africa. Like I said it was a new adventure every single day, I Left Zambia with no leopard and hunted every day and spent one night in a blind hoping to shoot one the next morning. But Nancy and I have a lot of memories and stories. We are already planning to go back in 2026 for leopard and lion. Here are some of the trophies that we got Cape Buffalo, Sable, Kudu, Lichtenstein Hartebeest, Puku, Bush Pig, Reed Buck, Bush Buck, Warthog, Orbi, Common Duiker and Defassa Waterbuck.

I hope you enjoy reading this article and if any member has anything they would like to contribute to the newsletter please let us know. God Bless and have a Happy Thanksgiving,

Jeff Bearden / Treasurer



