

Bow-hunting

Why bow-hunting?

5978

Adrian de Villiers broaches this controversial subject and explains what happened on a rhino hunt

Game ranchers should give it some thought to allow bow-hunters on their property. It is quite easy to accommodate them because many are happy to hunt from blinds at waterholes. The advantage of this is that bow-hunters can be left in the blind for the day with a cooler-box, and a tracker can be conveniently positioned nearby so that if anything is shot, the tracker can be called to the waterhole, examine the spoor and follow the trail. Once the bow-hunter has been there, the tracker or guide can still check the waterholes for signs of animals having been shot.

There are 4 500 000 bow-hunters in America, and if we can entice a small percentage of these to regularly hunt in South Africa with bow and arrow, a vast fortune of foreign exchange would enter the country.

Regulations

In 1991 it was decided by the Department of Nature Conservation of the Transvaal to allow dangerous game bow-hunting from January 1992. I had been lobbying for years with the Department of Nature Conservation to allow me to hunt dangerous game in the Transvaal prior to 1991, but could never obtain a permit. At that time I was aware of many foreign hunters who had special permission to hunt dangerous game with a bow and arrow prior to official legalization. What used to irritate me the most was that foreigners were given preference over the local South Africans to undertake tests to establish the feasibility of killing thick-skinned game with a bow and arrow. Nevertheless, the end result was that bow-hunting dangerous game was legalized at the beginning of 1992.



Adrian de Villiers with a rhino that has been killed with a bow.

Now, however, under pressure from various groups including the Rhino and Elephant Foundation, rhino will probably be removed from the list.

We have been hunting dangerous game with a rifle for over 400 years. Thousands of elephants and other thick-skinned game animals, including hippos and rhinos, have been hunted and wounded over the years with these weapons. Nature Conservation has only allowed the hunting of rhinos for 3 years before deciding to ban it once more. I don't think the fault lies per se with the bow-hunters, but with the rules laid down by the nature conservation authorities.

It was originally suggested that a 700gr arrow and an 801b bow was adequate for rhino-hunting. I never agreed with that. It was later changed to a 901b bow and since recently, elephant, rhino and hippo can be hunted only with equipment producing 95 ft/lb kinetic energy. I believe that one requires at least 120 ft/lb of kinetic energy. Some people may argue that this is too much and many people who can afford to hunt rhinos, will not be able to generate this type of energy. The argument then is that if the hunters are not strong enough for the equipment, they must just not be allowed to hunt.

Rhino escape

I would like to comment on the controversy around my rhino hunt last year. The reason why my first arrow on the rhino was not fatal, was that I was not practicing regularly with the heavy arrows that I was shooting with at the time (1650gr). In my excitement I mis-calculated the distance of the rhino by 18yds.

With such a heavy arrow, even with a

heavy poundage bow, there was a tremendous drop in trajectory, therefore the arrow hit in the shoulder instead of high up behind the shoulder. The 1600gr arrow penetrated right through the shoulder muscles into the chest but did not penetrate the pleural cavity.

There were four rhinos in the herd and whenever they stopped, each one of them would point strategically in the opposite direction, making it very difficult for an approach. My fellow hunter, Roy Smith, and I often got to within 6yds of the wounded rhino without being able to get a clear shot at the vitals, only to have the wind change and have the whole herd thundering off into the distance once more. Once an opportunity arose for a satisfactory close shot, the arrow — which is made up of 4 separate shafts glued into one another and with a stainless steel thunderhead — penetrated completely into the animal. A 38yd broadside shot penetrated 30 inches into the chest and killed the animal within 20 seconds by cutting the thoracic aorta.

Hints

The truth about bow-hunting is that every single time you go into the bush with your bow and arrow, you learn something new. Now that

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I have shot the "Big-Six" with a bow and arrow, I would dearly like to do it all over again and correct all the mistakes I made the first time. I think the most important facts that I have learnt are the following:

- Don't be persuaded to allow 15 people to come with you on a dangerous game hunt just because many of them have not seen a dangerous game hunt with a bow and arrow, or under the guise that they need to watch the results of your hunt.
- Never fire a shot unless you are absolutely happy that all your predetermined parameters have been fulfilled, i.e. that the animal is close enough, that the animal is not moving, that you have the correct equipment to penetrate the animal adequately and that you have enough time left in the day to follow the animal if a long, protracted follow-up is necessary.
- Use the correct equipment for each animal, for example, you only need an 80lb bow and a 700gr arrow with a large 3-bladed broadhead for lion

and leopard. On the other hand, you would need an 1100 gr or 1200 gr arrow and a heavy bow for an elephant and at least a 1500 gr or 1600 gr arrow for hippo and rhino. A strong stainless steel broadhead is recommended for thick-skinned game as well. Often dangerous thick-skinned game, particularly in South Africa, which have not been previously hunted, are reasonably calm UNTIL you fire that first arrow. Therefore, if you get the opportunity to shoot your first arrow and you are not happy with the shot, don't do as I have done in the past and think that you are going to get lucky. Even though the situation is not optimal, I guarantee that when you are hunting with a bow and arrow, the smallest thing can turn a perfect opportunity into a potential disaster.

Kinetic energy

It is easy to work out the kinetic energy of one's bow if one can measure the speed of the arrow with a chronograph and weigh the mass of the arrow with a scale that measures in

grains, and using Einstein's formula of $E = MC^2$ with $C = \text{velocity}^2$ and $M = \text{mass of the arrow in grains}$. One multiplies the mass by the velocity² and divide this by 450240, and the answer will be the kinetic energy in ft/lbs. An arrow has very much less kinetic energy than even the lowly .22 rifle, but it works on a completely different principle and therefore one can kill very large animals with a low kinetic energy. The current regulation for the Transvaal states the following five categories of animals with the required kinetic energy:

- 1 - up to the size of blesbok, 50 ft/lb kinetic energy
- 2 - warthog, impala, red hartebees etc., 60 ft/lb
- 3 - eland, lion, leopard, 70 ft/lb
- 4 - giraffe and buffalo, 80 ft/lb
- 5 - elephant, rhino and hippo, 95 ft/lb.

I agree with the first three categories but would recommend that you use 100 ft/lb for the buffalo and 120 ft/lb for the elephant, rhino and hippo.

In a next issue I would like to discuss the hunting of specific species.



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