

'Experience the Thrill of Big Game Hunting'

SPORTING NEWS



Official Newsletter for Zambezi Hunters

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October, 2009

- Larry Shores gets an excellent lion as well as having a great buffalo hunt.
- Mahenye continues to produce some fine trophies despite the challenges of hunting there.
- We will be attending the Dallas SC and SCI convention shows in January 2010.
- Our new filming company, Zambezi Hunters Productions is established and operating.
- Professional Hunter Profile—Collen van der Linden.

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Outsmarting The Professor

Dusty Joubert has spent the last two years studying the leopards on Save Conservancy. By baiting and using trailcams, a large proportion of the leopard have been photographed and, using their spot patterns, identified.

The good news for future leopard hunters is that there are still some very big leopard out there.

One such individual was **'The Professor'**. So called because he was a master at avoiding hunters and in his one close brush, managed to escape with a minor bullet wound.

Every one of our professional hunters knew of the Professor and he was the target of much baiting. The **challenge was 'who, if anyone, could outsmart the Professor'**.

The following is the **story of Will Parks'** hunt on Sango, told in his own words:

As with most leopard hunts, baiting was the first priority. My PH, Thierry Labat, wanted to shoot a zebra which would give us four baits to add to the four he had already pre baited with.



The Professor caught on Trail Cam

After a quick bite of brunch, we set out and within twenty minutes, a herd of zebra was spotted. The stallion presented himself, the shot was true and we delivered him to the skinning facilities for quartering.

We now had eight baits out and checking them every day takes time. On day three I was basically asleep on the back of the truck by the time we arrived at the final bait – one

of the baits hung the day of our arrival. I woke up pretty quick when I heard the excitement in the **trackers' voices**.

I dismounted the truck to see a decimated zebra quarter and plenty of large tom leopard tracks in the sand.

On the way back for lunch, Thierry told me that a client wounded a leopard last year in the same tree where we had the big cat feeding. The cat was well known as

'The Professor' because he was said to be well educated.

After lunch, we went into hunting mode. We built the blind and by 4:00 p.m. we settled in for the **evening's hunt**. By 10:00 p.m., I was struggling. I



Will and Betsy Parks with one of the zebra shot for bait

Another great Lion Hunt

Larry Shores was a veteran of at least 15 African safaris before he touched down in the Save Conservancy in October.

He had come to our Hammond / Arda concession to hunt lion as well as buffalo, leopard and elephant.

PH Collen van der Linden met Larry at the air strip and after checking the rifles at the range, it was straight down to business.

Two leopard baits had been put up before Larry arrived. One had been hit by a female leopard and the other by two lions. A good start!

More baits were needed and so some imapala and a couple of giraffe were shot and set up in likely places.

While still waiting for a male lion and leopard to take the bait, Larry and Collen were hunting buffalo and other plainsgame.

On day seven, whilst following a herd of buffalo, Collen spotted three bulls on their own. After over an hour and a half of crawling, the hunt-

ers got to within 60 yards.

The bull is old with big bosses. Larry shoots from a sitting position and with his second shot it goes down.

It is not the biggest buffalo trophy Larry has taken but it was a very memorable hunt and one of his most enjoyable stalks on buffalo.

The next day, one of the baits is hit by a male lion. Larry and Collen are in the blind by 4pm and settle down for the long wait.

After 20 minutes Collen spots the lion coming in. Larry cannot believe it. It is still an hour and a half before dark.

The lion is cautious as he moves to the bait. Larry shoots as he walks past the bait. It is a good shot and the lion flips in the air, spins and then disappears over a ridge.

Larry manages to get

one more bullet into the lion as it is running off.

They leave the blind and walk towards where the lion had disappeared. There is



Larry with his excellent lion and PH Collen van der Linden

“Larry shoots as he walks past the bait. It is a good shot and the lion flips in the air, spins and then disappears over a ridge.”



The weary trudge back to the vehicle after a good days hunting

plenty of blood. Just over the ridge they find the lion, stone dead.

It is a beautiful trophy. Interestingly, it has a bald patch in its mane above its ears on both sides. There is no obvious explanation for this but the hunt gives Larry a unique trophy and many



Collen and Larry with a magnificent 59” kudu bull

The Challenges of Mahenye

Mahenye has again produced some outstanding elephant trophies. We have just heard that Rich Papapietros has shot an elephant that should go 80lb!

This will be the biggest elephant taken there this year and maintains the quality set last year with Anton Dahlgrens magnificent 78lb bull.

Mahenye is a challenging hunt

but incredibly rewarding when you get the trophies you are looking for.

While there are not large populations of the plains game species, it still produces some phenomenal trophies.

The best this year is undoubtedly a 63” kudu taken by Pete Waller.



Joe Waroquier with his well earned 58lb elephant bull from Mahenye

Zambezi Hunters Productions

At the start of this year Zambezi Hunters established a new filming company; Zambezi Hunters Productions is a partnership with Ryan Torrie whom some of you will remember from Sango.



Ryan Torrie with his Canon AHI HD video camera

At the moment it is a one man band and Ryan does the filming and editing himself.

If another camera is needed then he has some excellent freelance cameramen he can call upon.

It has been a busy first year for Ryan and he has done over 100 days of filming for us. Most of his time between

hunts has been spent at home, catching up on the edits.

The work that Ryan has produced has been excellent and very professional. He will be putting together a Dvd of the seasons highlights that will be screened at the shows for everyone to see..

Not only is Ryan a pleasure to have in camp but he will provide you with a long lasting memory of your hunt on Dvd.

See you at the Shows

Zambezi Hunters will be at the Dallas Safari Club show from January 7—10 and in Reno at the Safari Club International (SCI) show from January 20—23.

You will be pleased to hear that we will have a double booth at both shows next year. We really appreciate all the hunters who have been on safari with us stopping by

and spending some time catching up. The problem at the shows earlier this year **was that there just wasn't** enough space for everyone.

Our booth numbers are:

Dallas - 2250 & 2251

SCI - 2752 & 2754

We are very pleased to say that Thierry Labat will be

joining Jonathan and Alis-tair at the shows next year.

Thierry has had a great season for us and it will be a good opportunity for him to reacquaint with the many hunters who shared the campfire with him these past few years.

We sincerely hope to see you at some stage of the trip.

IMAGES FROM THE BUSH



1. Time out..... 2. Drinks at the river in the evening 3. A hearty packed lunch

wondered if the leopard would ever show up. By 11:00 p.m., I was falling asleep.

Only a series of regular elbow jabs from my PH kept me awake and not snoring.

At 12:15 a.m., it happened. With a snarl and a growl, the leopard charged up to the base of the bait tree to run off a civet. The civet almost ran through the blind and I almost **jumped into Thierry's lap.**

He whispered, "It's the leopard." As the sounds of tearing flesh and breaking bones began, we moved into our shooting positions.

By moonlight, I could just barely see the leopard moving on the bait branch. Thierry tapped me on the shoulder indicating that he was about to turn on the light. I gave him a thumbs up that I was ready.

After the light came on, another tap would indicate that the cat was a male and that I could shoot. I can remember the light hitting the cat just long enough that I could see his yellow color.

Then, instantly, the cat leapt from the branch, grunted, and ran off. I could not believe it. What happened? I sighed and laid flat on my back as the excitement of the situation began dissipating through heavy breathing and my shaking legs. Thierry said, "He will be back."

Not twenty minutes later, we again heard the sounds of the leopard feeding. This time, however, he would go up the tree, get a bite or two, and retreat to the ground.

For several minutes, we watched bits and pieces of this activity by moonlight before the leopard stopped, walked into the open, sat down in the bright moonlight, and looked up at the bait.



Will with the buffalo bull that he shot at 15 paces as it charged them.

I could see the cat well and, in hindsight, probably should have shot him. Instead, I whispered, "I can see him. I can kill him right there." Before Thierry could respond, the leopard looked right in my direction and ran away.

I cannot believe that he heard me whispering, but I know that he did. To put it into context, I could have gotten away with whispering if there had been a tom turkey at 30 yards rather than a tom leopard at 50 yards.

Three hours later, there were no other encounters with the leopard, so we called for the truck at 4:00 a.m. Of course,

after we left, the leopard returned and ate the remainder of the bait.

The next day, we debriefed and went back over the previous night's hunt. **Thierry** agreed that the leopard heard my whispers, and he emphasized the importance of our using hand signals.

We also talked about the leopard, that he was big, and that **he was smart. The leopard's** experience with being hunted and shot the previous year would make him a difficult cat to hunt. It would also be difficult to get the cat back to bait since he had eaten most of a zebra quarter in two days.

Finally, our botched hunt from the previous night just served to further his formal education. Thierry figured that we would have to shoot the leopard, if at all, by moonlight.

The next few days focused on hunting some other leopards that were visiting our baits.

Day four had us spending the night in a machan. While we heard the sounds of a breeding pair of leopards for several hours that night, we only saw the female and she never committed to the bait.



A great Waterbuck Trophy

Day five we were back for The Professor, but he did not return.

Day six put us in another machan where we had spotted a male and female feeding in the daylight earlier that day while we were hunting buffalo. As darkness fell, we could hear the sounds of the leopards. The female walked right under the machan and approached the bait. The male could be heard purring not more than thirty yards to the left of the blind.



Will and Betsy with a very good eland bull

The female went half way up the bait tree before going back down and disappearing into the night. The purring male followed, but we never saw him. I really thought we would kill that leopard and make it home in time for our first hot supper in several nights, but it was not to be.

Day seven began with a buffalo hunt during which we saw a tom leopard lying on an ant hill taking a sun bath. After watching the cat from 150 yards for more than 15 minutes, he eventually rose and walked away.

By this time, I was developing

a funny feeling about this leopard hunting business. Most of my knowledge of leopards told me that I would see one leopard and that I would have a matter of seconds to shoot him.

To the contrary, we were seeing and hearing leopards everywhere. Seeing that tom on the ant hill was my fourth leopard sighting in seven **days! Additionally, I'd heard** two males that I had not seen.

Before the hunt was over, our hunting party would account for nine leopard sightings. I think anyone who has hunted leopard will tell you that is a lifetime of leopard encounters.

Our baits were starting to rot or had been completely devoured, and Thierry was starting to think about focusing our efforts on different cats in different parts of the concession. But before moving on, he wanted to try for The Professor one last time.

Since The Professor had so much experience with the existing bait tree and blind site, we moved deeper into the bush and created a new set up between three rocky hills. We hung the bait where the leopard could eat from the ground.

Thierry was so confident in this set up that he went ahead and built the blind without any cat having found the bait or fed on it. He felt so confi-

dent in the set up that we almost sat there that night.

Day eight dawned with us on the tracks of buffalo. We enlisted Nevin Lees May, PH and Sango camp manager, to shoot a zebra bait for us, and we sent one of the trackers to see if The Professor had found the bait.

The buffalo were uncooperative, but Nevin got our zebra and The Professor had fed during the night.

Spirits were high as we ate lunch and planned for the evening's hunt. Since the new blind was deeper in the bush, we planned to arrive at 3:00 p.m. in case the cat arrived early.

The plan was to shoot the cat by moonlight so, with the gun in the rest, I memorized the sight picture thinking anything that was not a rock or the bait tree would have to be the leopard.

Again, hours passed and I drifted in and out of sleep until 10:15 p.m. Just at that time,



Will with his excellent Klipspringer

Thierry nudged me and gave me the hand signal indicating where the cat was in relation to the tree.

I sat up and looked through the scope and could not see anything. Clouds had moved in, and the bright moonlight that benefitted us on the previous nights was no longer there.

After a few tense moments, the clouds parted just enough that I could make out the leopard. He was sitting like a dog and eating the bait. Of course, he was on the shady side of the tree!

I turned to Thierry and gave him a thumbs up, a head nod, and a trigger pull gesture all at the same time. He nodded back and I returned to the sight picture, **made out the leopard's moving head**, slid the crosshair down into his body, and squeeEEEEEEEEZZED.

Boom!

Growl!

You got him!

Did I get him?

You got him!

Thierry turned on the light, but there was no dead leopard at the base of the tree. I saw nothing but fire when I pulled the trigger, but Thierry said that the shot definitely knocked the leopard down.

Unfortunately, he lost sight of the leopard when he put down his binoculars and turned on

the light.

After fifteen minutes, we decided to slowly approach the bait tree. With rifles and flashlights at the ready, we began the long walk to the bait.



Betsy arrives in her finery to congratulate Will on getting the Professor

About fifteen yards away, Thierry took the lead and asked me to stay behind. After finally getting to the bait tree, he began unloading his gun and called to me, "Mr. Parks, come see your leopard."

Incredibly, the leopard was perfectly shot and had died just eight feet from the tree. I put down my rifle and grabbed the leopard in the obligatory "bear hug" pose. It was completely dark and there was no camera anywhere, but I had been waiting a long time to hoist up a big tom leopard.

The truck arrived and all the trackers joined the celebration.

After a power struggle as to which of them would get to carry the leopard to the truck, we made the short walk to the vehicle

and took some pictures before heading back to the skinning room. On the way, the radio calls starting going out that The Professor had given his last lecture.

In response to the radio calls, just about everyone in the compound came to see The Professor. We arrived to a large crowd sometime before midnight and the party was well underway.

Betsy was so excited about my getting the leopard that she made the trip in her robe and pyjamas. After taking more pictures, reliving the story a dozen

times, toasting The Professor, and toasting the hunters, we made the 20-minute trip back to the camp. It was, without a doubt, the highpoint of my hunting career so far and will be very hard to top.



Will holds the educated leopard that had eluded so many hunters before him

And the Buffalo Keep getting Better...!





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***'Experience the Thrill of Big
Game Hunting'***

Zambezi Hunters prides itself on a reputation for providing high quality, big game hunting safaris. We only hunt in areas that provide a superior standard of hunting and will employ only well reputed professional hunters. Our emphasis is on sport hunting that embraces the spirit and ethics of the traditional African Safari.

We strive to ensure that the areas we operate, and the wildlife populations within them, are better off and improve under our custodianship. All this goes a long way to ensuring that when you book a hunt with Zambezi Hunters, you can rest assured that you will have an unforgettable safari experience.

For more information on Zambezi Hunters or to book a safari, please contact us with the information given opposite.

Profile—Collen van der Linden

Collen van der Linden has been a Professional Hunter for nearly twenty years.

As with so many other Zimbabwean Professional Hunters, Collen grew up on a farm. He was able to spend much of his early life exploring the outdoors and hunting birds, rodents and whatever else he and his friends could find.

After finishing school, Collen went to do his apprenticeship with Roger Whittall.

While with Roger he worked on Humani in the Save Conservancy, Chewore South and in Matetsi, north of Hwange National Park.



Collen got his full license in 1995. He continued to work for Roger for a number of years, gaining valuable experience in

the Zambezi Valley as well as on the Save Conservancy.

Collen has a very easy going manner and is great company in camp. He is a passionate hunter and it is very apparent to anyone who spends time with him in the bush that there is nothing else he would ever want to do.

He started hunting for Zambezi hunters in 2008 and has become an invaluable member of the team.

Collen lives with his girlfriend Justine and together they have a little boy called Oscar who is now 2 years old.