

# A Red Duiker Bowhunt

*By Frank Berbuir*



*Red Duiker.*

After our successful bowhunting adventure on a blue duiker, by the way the smallest duiker and the smallest antelope in South Africa, my challenges and endeavors on the pygmy antelopes continued. On this safari the second most sought after species of the tiny ten was a red duiker.

While the red duiker is very similar to the common duiker but it is smaller in size and has a distinguishing reddish coloring. My quest on it, together with my PH and friend Izak Vos from Vos Safaris, started on an early morning mid of August. We are in

the North West Province on a farm where some red duikers roam that had not been hunted for a couple of years according to the farmer. As usual in August during South African wintertime it was a bit chilly early in the morning when we started our stalk.

Slowly but surely we walked always looking for tracks or scat and glassing the area with our binoculars to check the bushes. The countryside had some rocks respectively little hills but was mainly quite flat bushveld with open plains, savannah or grasslands peppered with thorny bushes and some acacias. For stalking with bow

and arrow really challenging especially if you try to get close to that small game. After a couple of hours without a lot of activity we arrived at a large grassy field where we spotted within the range of vision at approximately 120 meters or 130 yards from us a male red duiker.

It was an impressive specimen of this small mammal. He was facing us for quite a while before he jumped off and was on his zigzag escape route before he finally disappeared behind some bushes. "He will stay in the area, they are territorial animals and there is a fair chance to stalk him and

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get close”, Izak said. We made a plan how we can approach him by moving around the grassy field behind some covering bushes and trees with the wind in our favor. It took us an hour to walk quietly and in disguise before Izak raised his hand to signalize me to stop moving.

With his eagle eyes he spotted the red duiker standing behind a bush. We knelt down slowly and observed him with the binoculars and ranged him at 34 meters. So far the pygmy antelope had not realized us. The shooting window was not good due to many twigs and branches and I did not want to repeat the same situation like with the first shot on the blue duiker. “Let’s sit down and monitor him”, Izak whispered. Like a pillar of salt we both sit and looked through our binoculars to see what our quarry will do next.

The little fellow was standing as well dead still and facing to a bush opposite to him as if he is worried about something, but he did not realize us up to now. When we saw some small blades of grass moving all of a sudden also we figured out what bothered him. A small African carnivore – a mongoose – raised his head out of the grass. Funny picture, they both looked at each other before the little critter decided to walk back the way he came. “Get up slowly and ready, probably the red duiker will move forward once the mongoose is

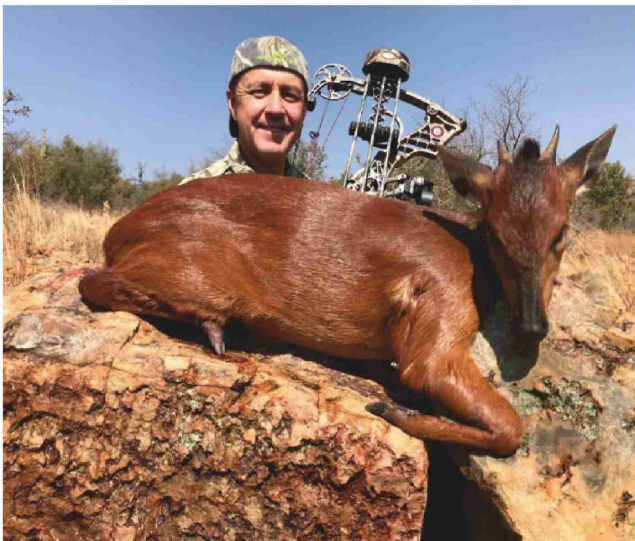


*Typical rough bushveld.*

gone”, Izak mumbled. At a snail’s pace I straightened up on my knees and pulled gently an arrow out of my quiver. Without making any noise and very slow movement I placed it on the arrow rest. The tension was rising like my blood pressure as well when I could see that the duiker took a step forward once the mongoose was gone.

I pulled my bow to full draw and settled the pin of my sight on the vital area of this small antelope. He was still covered by some twigs but with its next step the shooting window would be clear. “Wait.... wait....wait”, Izak whispered with his hand covering his mouth. It felt like eternity until the red duiker took a step forward and there were no twigs or branches in the way anymore. “Now”, he mumbled and at the same time I released the arrow on its mission. The carbon arrow equipped with the two-bladed broadhead flew through the small antelope like a hot knife through butter. The red duiker jumped forward and started running. After about ten meters he stopped, felt on his knees and expired. Izak stood up, shook my hand firm and said: “Congrats, well done. Your red duiker is in the salt!” When we got to the place where he expired I knelt down, looked and examined this specific gorgeous specimen of the tiny ten antelopes. Again it was an awesome and challenging hunt and experience with bow and arrow and finally I could harvest this awesome red duiker.

After some nice pictures we radioed the farmer to pick us up and we all enjoyed the success with a cold beer. One more time a tremendous hunt with unforgettable impressions and memories together with my friend and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris in South Africa. Shoot straight, take care, always good hunting, “Waidmannsheil” and “Alles van die beste”.



*Magnificent red duiker and a happy hunter.*

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*Accept the dare to stalk.*

**Equipment:**

**Bow:** Mathews Z7x @ 70 lbs  
**Arrow:** Carbon Express Maxima Hunter 350  
**Broadhead:** German Kinetics Silverflame 125 grain  
**Optics:** Zeiss Victory Binocular & Nikon Rangefinder  
**Release:** Scott  
**Camo:** Sniper Africa

**Description:**

The red forest duiker, Natal duiker, or Natal red duiker (*Cephalophus natalensis*) is a small antelope found in central to southern Africa. The red duiker is a bit smaller than the common or grey duiker, but somewhat larger than the blue duiker. The most distinguishing feature is his chestnut-red coloring. Additionally, the red forest duiker favors a denser bush habitat than the common duiker. The Natal red duiker is more diurnal and less secretive than most forest duikers, so therefore it is easier for them to be observed. Red forest duikers have a body length of up to 1 meter, a typical shoulder height of 43 cm, and an average mass of 12 kg. This mini-antelope is characterized by the crest of red and black hair on the top of the head, sometimes almost appearing to be a third horn. Both males and females carry a pair of short, straight, horns. The ewe's horns tend to be a bit shorter. Towards the base, the horns have coarse rings and longitudinal striations, but they are smooth towards the tips. The hairs on the chin, throat, and insides of the ears are commonly a shade of white. A tuft of reddish-brown and black hairs grow between the horns, and the tail has a white tip. A notable characteristic of the Natal red duiker's appearance is its hunched back, with front legs shorter than the hind legs. These longer hind legs are in a crouched position, which serves as an advantage when the duiker senses danger and needs to flee by allowing the individual to leap quickly into nearby brush. These little guys are territorial, tend to be solitary, but may on occasion form loose associations. The only times they form groups larger than three are at water sources, salt licks, or fruit falls that occur at territorial boundaries. Males are particularly territorial, and are combative with one another if they come into contact. Home range size is usually between 2 and 15 hectares. On numerous occasions, red duikers have been observed associating with vervet monkeys, not just foraging on food dropped by the monkeys, but also allowing the primates to groom them. 🐵

*German hunter Frank Berbuir is passionate about the outdoors and hunting – especially bowhunting, which he has practised for more than 20 years. Although he's bowhunted in several countries, he's become addicted to hunting in Africa since his first safari in 2004. Frank is a mechanical engineer and risk manager in the automotive industry.*

Though often overshadowed by the Big Five, with much attention focused on hunting the large and glamorous African species like kudu, gemsbok or wildebeest, hunting the tiny 10 species of pygmy antelope in Africa can be an extremely challenging and fulfilling experience. Tiny Ten Species are Damara Dik-Dik, Blue Duiker, Common Duiker (also called Grey Duiker or Bush Duiker), Red Forest Duiker (also called Red Duiker, Natal Duiker or Natal Red Duiker), Cape Grysbok (also called Southern Grysbok), Sharp's Grysbok (also called Northern Grysbok), Klipspringer, Oribi, Steenbok (also known as Steinbuck or Steinbok), Suni. All of these antelope are extremely small, the largest specimen, a common duiker weighs less than 50 pounds and therefore it is very demanding to get close for a shot on such a small target. Luckily I had bagged successfully a common duiker and a steenbok a couple of years ago on bowhunts in Namibia and South Africa as well as a blue duiker on the current trip.

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