

## The Mountain Dew Kudu

In the summer of 2004 my good friend, Dayna Masters and our families embarked on a safari in Africa. Dayna has never been to Africa and will agree it's an experience everyone should have. We flew into Cape town, South Africa and traveled North to Port Elizabeth where we were met by the fine folks at Bethhaven Safaris. A couple of hours north and we were in a true hunter's paradise. While riding in the truck on the ranch you'd better pay attention in every direction or you'll miss something. There was game everywhere. After settling in and doing some warthog hunting, where we were all successful, the manager, Owen Smith, told us of a really good Kudu that had been spotted and suggested we go after it.

This particular hunt was about an hour and a half from the main lodge in an area where there were citrus trees. We set up our double bull blind on a big pile of discarded oranges. The blind was set up in the middle of a tree/ bush that was hidden so well you would never in a million years know that it was there. Dayna and I entered the blind shortly after lunch with great anticipation since the big Kudu Bull had been spotted there the day before. After setting up in the blind, we found that only one of us could have a clear view of the feeding area at a time. This was a problem since I was filming and needed an unobstructed view of Dayna's hopeful bow shot. We made a plan that I would watch the opening in the blind so as to get the maximum amount of video footage and would lean over as far as possible after Dayna drew his bow so he could shoot through the same opening.

Not long after we got in the blind, Vervett Monkeys began coming and eating the oranges. I've never seen so many monkeys. They kept us entertained for most of the afternoon. Then at about 45 minutes before dark, 2 Kudu cows came in. The guide told us the Kudu had very keen senses as we would soon find out. I was filming the cows when we heard another kudu coming. As soon as he was in the camera view and within bow range, he barked, similar to a dog, and they were all gone in an instant. We had made no noise, no movement, the wind was in our favor, but we still got busted. We were puzzled.

Day 2, we were in the blind before day light, out at lunch, lots of monkeys, no Kudu. That evening found us at the same spot with a totally different wind direction, so we had to move our blind. Once everything was set up on the opposite side, 10 yards farther from the oranges, we were ready for the afternoon hunt. Just like clockwork, the monkeys came back and just before dark so did the Kudu, 3 small bulls and 9 cows. Unlike the evening before Dayna actually got to see these kudu, not just the footage back at the lodge, but the actual live animals. But no big bull. With light fading fast, the bull finally showed up. Unfortunately for us, just as the day before, one of the Kudu barked and they were all gone. After scratching our heads for most of the next day, we figured out the Kudu had seen the reflection of our camera lens.

After getting busted twice in 2 days, we were ready to go elsewhere for a few days and come back when things had settled down. Our guide, Owen, and the landowner, Bakie, both said that we should stay and keep after him, as they are creatures of habit and they had not actually seen us. So against our better judgment we stayed another day.

Day 3, We hadn't seen any kudu on either of the two previous morning hunts, so we decided to hunt bles buck in the morning and back on the orange pile for kudu in the afternoon. After a successful morning bles buck hunt, we were back in our double bull

blind. The wind picked up and a light rain set it. Gusts of 25 mph made us think our blind would fly away at any minute. About an hour after we got in the blind, 2 cow Kudu came in. Since it was early, Dayna whispered to me that we should experiment with them and see how keen their senses really were. So I sat in the far, far rear of the blind and was able to film with no reflecting lens. I had been sitting closer to the front, when I got light reflection on the lens. I was in front of the opening. Dayna had to lean over in order to see out. He practiced drawing on his knees and leaning over to the opening and was able to successfully do it with the cows at 30 yards thanks to the sound of the strong wind.

Dayna was drinking a mountain dew in a 20oz bottle. It was still early. Dayna whispered to me to watch the Kudu cows to see if they heard the bottle do its fizz as he slowly opened the cap. Dayna ever so slowly opened it and I motioned that the kudu had heard it. Now the sound was very quiet even in the blind. Dayna whispered “I don’t believe they heard it”, so he did it again and I motioned that they heard it again. Dayna shook his head “no way” and waited for them to settle back down and begin feeding again. Dayna then eased up to the edge of the opening to see for himself and sure enough; muffled fizz-ears was on full alert. After the cows left, we discussed how to beat these Kudu bionic ears. We came to the conclusion to draw only when there was a strong wind blowing.

Never doubt your guide, just like clockwork, 45 minutes before dark, they came in and this time we were ready. 9 cows, 3 small bulls, but no big bull. As these kudu fed, light was fading fast but finally we heard steps to our right. It was him. Camera on and in the very back, everything quiet; waiting for a big strong wind gust. Finally a gust and Dayna started to draw, ever so slowly. I didn’t think his Matthews Black Max 2 would ever break over, but it did. He looked over at me as I had one eye on the camera and one eye on Dayna. When I saw Dayna finally at full draw, I mouthed, “You got him now!” Dayna still wasn’t as sure as I was as he eased over toward me to the shooting window, on his knees. When he finally had his 30 yard pin on the Kudu vitals, he said he couldn’t even remember squeezing the release, but he did. I can vividly remember the Easton arrow disappearing behind the shoulder. After many high fives and thank you Lords, we went to where the bull had been standing. The arrow had gone right through the Kudu and stuck ½ in and ½ out of an orange, sort of like William Tell only with an orange instead of an apple. Anyway, good blood trail and 40 yards into the brush the cape Kudu was actually ours. I don’t know who was more excited, Dayna, me, or our guide, Owen. Owen was sure it would make the SCI book and after checking the record book, before drying, it was the #2 all time Cape Kudu Bull with a bow. We owed it all to a mountain dew!