



LORD DERBY ELAND	News letter 2006
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In May of 2004, Barry Style and I traveled to Cameroon for a Lord Derby hunt. I booked the hunt with Mayo Oldiri Safaris. I met them at the SCI show in Reno the previous year, and instantly took a liking to the owner Antonio Reguera, his daughter Raquel, and the camp manager Elisa. Traveling to and through Cameroon is in it self an adventure, arriving at the Douala airport is an experience that only a hunter could endure and enjoy.

Mayo Oldiri, runs a very smooth operation, and are wonderful host. After arriving in Douala, we were met by one of Antonio's employee's who took us to and incredible dinner of Nile perch and 30 year old scotch. We then spent the night, and flew to N'Goundre the next morning. We were greeted by a cheerful and energetic Elisa, but Barry and I were tired and bogged down by jet lag, or maybe it was the bottle of scotch the evening before in Douala?

Once in camp, we met our guide Guav who coincidently was from Zimbabwe, and a good friend of Barry's. Guav's father hunted for Buffalo Range Safaris in the past. So that first night, I slept well comforted by the fact I was in good hands.

We have all read the stories of the long hot marches in search of the Majestic and elusive Lord Derby Eland. Two hours out of camp, we drove by a salt lick, and there in front of us 100 yards through the tall grass stood a heard of eland. I could have easily shot an average eland from the back of the truck, and probably on the 14th day I would have, but not on the first day. Several hours later we cut the track of another herd and packed up our gear for our first eland march. Like any other African hunt I was in awe watching Guav and his band track the eland and read the signs. It was apparent from the signs the eland were not far ahead. Barry, unlike our past safaris took up position in the back of the convoy, he was my camera man. Several years ago Barry and I discussed not only hunting together in Zimbabwe together, but hunting all the other great species and countries together, and this was our first foray outside of Zimbabwe.

Moments later the eland were spotted, and we began our sneak. This is easy I thought as we crept forward. The wind was swirling in the mid day heat, the eland spooked, but not bad, so we stayed on their trail. A few hours later in great excitement the herd cut across in front of us. Guav focused his binos as a herd of 50 eland trotted by 75 yard in front of us. I promise you one thing, every cow Lord Derby looks like a really nice eland! My adrenaline raced while waiting for Guav to say "there he is" All I could see were tan bodies with long spiraling horns trotting through the bush. I was shooting a custom built

Granite mountain Arms .416 Rigby. The rifle was built by Joe Smithson for this hunt. The command came; I steadied my rifle on the sticks and searched for the bull. He was running through the brush I followed him, and as he cleared I fired. What a beautiful animal, what a great trophy his thick horns spiraled over 49 1/2". "Guav, I thought this eland hunting was tough?" He cursed me for being so lucky...His previous hunter shot his eland on the 14th day.

Through out the week, I harvested Nigerian Bohr hor reed buck, Western duiker, Red flanked duiker, Oribi, Western Kob, Western hartebeest, warthog. A beautiful harnessed bushbuck and an incredible Western savannah buffalo that may score in the top 20. After a week I finished my entire license. Sitting in camp for tea, I asked if there was anything else I could hunt. I joked to Elisa that I felt robbed of the true eland hunting experience. Amazingly the hunter who was coming in after me had just cancelled. So Elisa allowed me to buy his hunt for Barry making him the holder of the license. I pondered for a long moment, the decision was made and we finished our tea and headed out to hunt another lord derby.

Only this time my luck was starting to change. Day after day, the true experience was unraveling. One particular hot, dusty, dry arid day. We marched all day following a herd of eland that were obviously on there way to the western shores of Africa. The next morning, still weary from the day before. I asked Guav what the plan was, and he said we were going to resume following the heard from the night before! What a horrible idea I thought as the morning sun began to melt our backs. The grass, when not burned was dusty and ten feet high, real nice morning walk. The ground in Cameroon is laden with millions of dried worm mounds giving your ankles a lot of stretching. And when the grass is not ten feet high it's burnt leaving inches of ash which hangs in the air with the slightest stir. When there is no ash the mopane fly's cloud your airspace invading your eyes, ears, nose and mouth.

As the morning turned to afternoon, the stifling heat forced us to drink most of our water. The eland showed no sign of slowing; I could see the trackers expressing doubt. I questioned Guav tactics several times, but he repeatedly insisted we continue on since he felt the eland would have stooped ahead.. An hour later, I told Guav that it was looking hopeless, and I already had a great trophy. There was no point in killing ourselves. He pleaded, "Let's just go another half hour". OK, I begrudging mumbled, but then it's back to the truck some five hours behind us.

Twenty minutes passed, and out of the thick brush was the unmistakable sound of eland. Guav with a big smirk on his face turned to me with "I told you" written across his face. I already had my middle finger up in his face as he turned to me. We all chuckled and started our stalk. Minutes later, 100 yards off quartering away was my bull. Never look at the horns, focus on the killing zone and slowly squeeze the trigger. Once again, I had a magnificent 49 1/2" trophy. The best part was now that we had the eland down the trackers had to cut a road into recover it. Which meant we got to take naps, even though we ran out of water and the mopane flies drove us crazy. When the truck arrived we celebrated with warm cokes. Throughout the second week, I harvested another buffalo, and almost all of the species I had on license.

We saw several more eland, a few of which I could have easily shot. This hunt while challenging and expensive is an absolute must for those who want to experience a

different part of Africa, and collect different species. The area that we hunted was abundant with trophy quality game. The lodging was comfortable, and the food was the best I have ever had on Safari or any other hunt. Gourmet French every night!.I hunted out of two different camps so we were able to see a lot of the area. Sadi is the other camp manager and also works as a PH. He was a great host and the stories and laughter were endless. Mayo Oldri run a great operation, Barry and I are going back for Bongo in 2005. Craig Wong purchased Mayo Oldiri's donation to our San Diego Chapter fund raiser. If we are lucky enough to get another donation it's the one of the best deals going.