

My FIRST CAPE Buffalo

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #29 —

Your first cape buffalo will dance around in your mind for the rest of your life, not necessarily because of the size of the trophy, but rather because of the circumstances of the hunt - no matter how routine. We were driving by a large plain of tall grass; it holds a little water during the rainy season, but goes completely dry when the rains stop. Elephant and cape buffalo love these places! Several hundred yards out into the grass we saw a lone bull, through an open area, and stopped to glass; but we never got a good look before he bedded down.

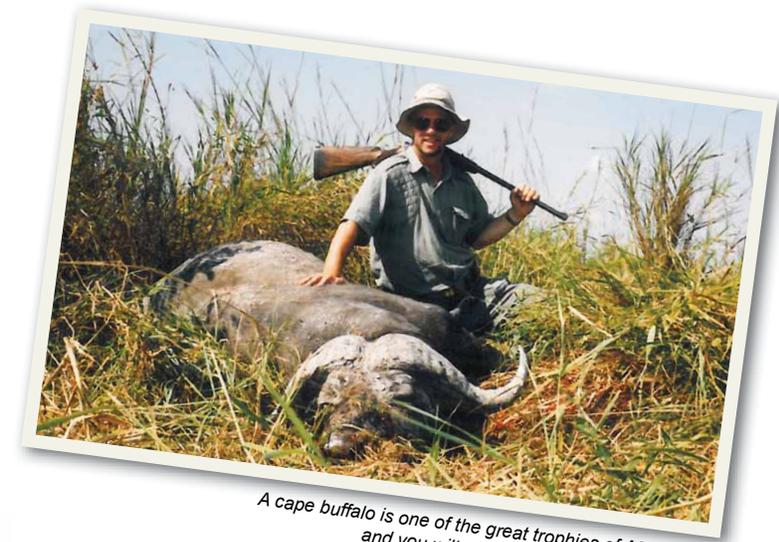
There was a small tree nearby, so one of the trackers and the PH scurried up to take a look. The PH never saw him; but the tracker, a bit higher in the tree, reported to the PH that this was a very big buffalo and that if we were to shoot him, it would be the biggest one to be shot in the camp the entire year. Well, that was

a pretty good report, so off we went - the PH, one tracker and me, while the other tracker stayed in the tree to guide us to the buffalo we couldn't see.

We knew the shooting would be close, but I was well-

armed with a double rifle in 500 Nitro Express. Son Russell says it's "a gun that's big enough to stop fights."

The ground was hard, dry and horribly rough, from the elephant and buffalo tracks; and the visibility was only a few yards. Every little bit we would look back at the tracker and



A cape buffalo is one of the great trophies of Africa and you will never forget the first one.

he would motion left, right, or straight ahead, to keep us on course. The last few yards were painfully slow, and I began to get wired!

At nine steps, the bull stood up broadside, and we saw him for the

“...this was a very big buffalo...”

first time. A buffalo, when surprised, will normally hesitate for a couple of seconds, trying to figure out what's going on, before he runs or charges; I was really wired by now and got a bullet high in his shoulder and through his spine in a few tenths of the first second.

Unfortunately, the high expectations for the trophy didn't match up with what lay on the ground, so the moral of this story is to never let a tracker judge the size of the trophy.

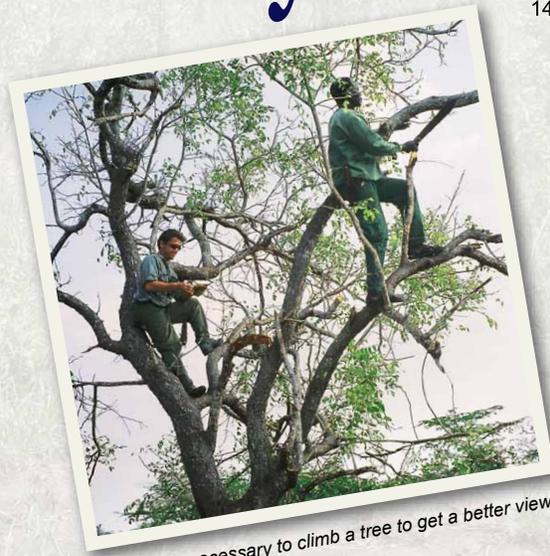
Midway USA

Larry Potterfield

Luwele Camp
Selous Game Reserve
Tanzania, Africa
14 July 1998



This is an old bull, with his horns well worn - clearly a trophy, though not in the traditional sense. Rifle is a Charles Boswell, made about 1912.



Often it is necessary to climb a tree to get a better view.