

RUSSELL'S Giant HIPPO

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #50 —

One of the trophies on Russell's wish list was Lion, so we were always looking for lion tracks in the dirt roads as we drove around. On occasion a lion will be spotted from the safari car, but normally you find the tracks where they have crossed or walked on the dirt road – and late one morning we did just that. The tracks were large, so we knew they were made by a male, and they were fresh so there was a good chance the lion was nearby. Now we needed some bait to hang in a tree, hoping the lion would find it. Impala is fine for leopard bait, but for lion, we needed something bigger. Buffalo



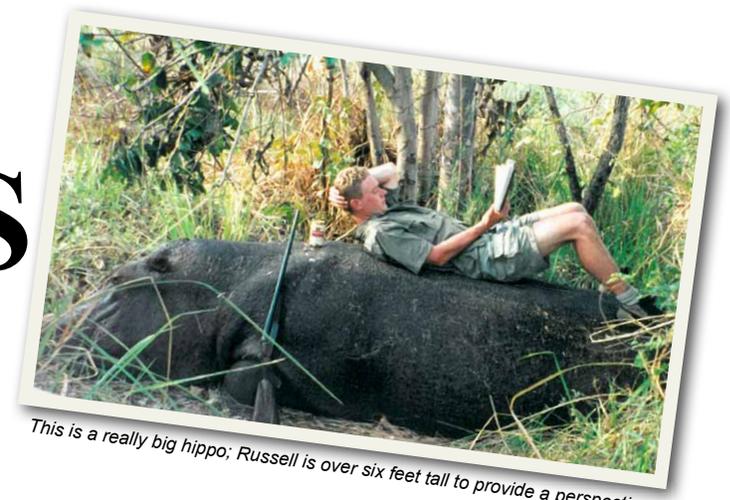
Russell donned a red beret to strike this 'French professional hunter pose'.

is always a good choice, as are any of the larger antelope; and of course, lions eat hippo. Since we were near a riverbed, the PH asked Russell if he wanted to walk the edge and possibly shoot a hippo for bait. Russell said sure!

Now, let me tell you a couple of things about hippos; first, they get very big – up to 6,000 pounds; second, it is said that

they kill more people in Africa than lion, leopard, buffalo or elephants – so they aren't to be taken for granted. It requires a cool head and 'enough gun', if you want to hunt hippo out of the water.

The river was mostly dry, but there were still a few small pools of water that the hippos used. The PH thought we might find one laying up out of the water in the tall grass, so we began walking the hippo trails through grass way over our heads. The going was slow and quiet. Hippos



This is a really big hippo; Russell is over six feet tall to provide a perspective.

make very little noise when they're resting, so on this hunt our eyes were more important than our ears.

The line was composed of two trackers up front, the PH then Russell and myself. We followed one track, then another, then another – over the ridges and through the grass; then we heard movement in the grass on the next ridge over. Slowly

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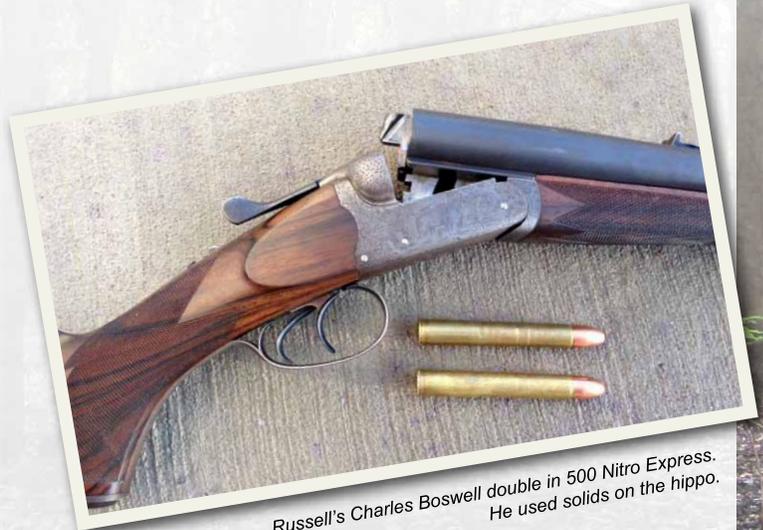
a huge hippo lumbered into sight – perfectly broadside and just 12 steps away. Russell raised his rifle and fired one shot to the brain.

We had no way to weigh this hippo, but the trackers and PH agreed that they had never seen one bigger; and now, we had lion bait.

Midway USA

Larry Potterfield

Mkuku Camp
Selous Game Reserve
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Russell's Charles Boswell double in 500 Nitro Express. He used solids on the hippo.