

# My First LEOPARD HUNT

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #198 —

One of Africa's grandest trophies is the leopard – as magnificent in death as he is in life. Leopard aren't rare or endangered in the safari countries of Africa; however, daytime sightings are unusual, as leopard are principally active at night. It's understandable that some "rush-to-judgement, anti-hunting experts" once thought they were endangered; but it simply isn't true. Trophy hunters have no impact on the leopard population, as they shoot so very few leopard each year, and usually only mature males are legal to shoot.

There are many, many stories of hunters who have sat in blinds night after night, all night long, waiting for a big leopard to come to the bait. These are true stories, but

there are also many stories, like mine, which were simply one-night stands. The amount of time a hunter spends in a blind is dependent on the population of leopard in the area, the hunting pressure – and the time of the year.

Leopard hunting is an art or a science, depending on which Professional Hunter you're talking with. In my opinion it's a little of both. During times of plenty, when the baby antelope are born, it's more difficult to get a leopard on bait, as there's plenty to eat. Also, every PH has his preferences for bait trees, location of the bait in the tree and the positioning and construction of the blind.

When it came my turn to shoot a leopard, on our Family safaris, everything was routine. We found the track of a



*The classic pose of a hunter and leopard; the trackers place the leopard around your neck, the pictures are taken, and they remove him. Yes, there's always blood on your shirt!*

large male leopard, on the dirt road, and hung four impala legs for baits in the immediate area. Next morning we had a hit on one of the baits, took the rest down and built a blind near the bait that was hit. About 4:00 that afternoon we got in the blind and waited. He came in just before last light. I could see cross hairs extend out the front and rear and above and below his heart; but it was too dark to see spots. The PH looked him over with binoculars and gave me the green light.

**"...this was a classic leopard hunt..."**

The boom and flash from the 375 H&H disrupted everything for a moment, but I clearly remember seeing the leopard come off the limb and turn end for end while falling. He never moved again – this was a classic leopard hunt, and I was only in the blind for a few hours.

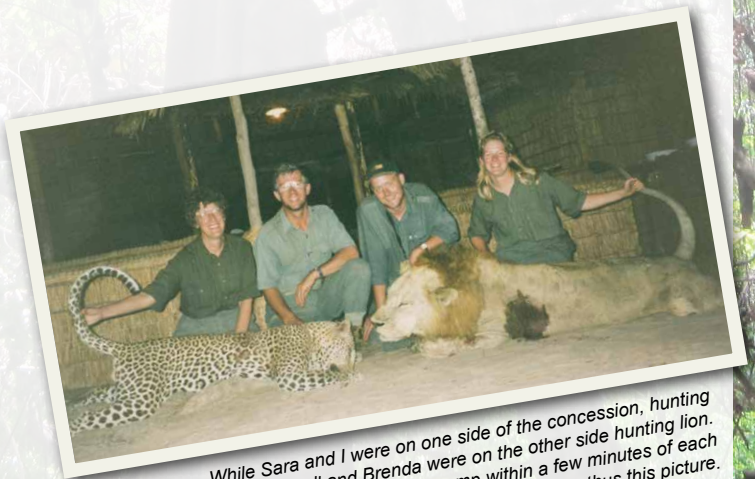


Larry Potterfield

Nakilala Camp  
The Selous Game Reserve  
Tanzania, Africa  
7 July 1997



*Leopard pictures are almost always taken after dark, as leopard usually come to the bait just at dusk. Daughter Sara came with me on this hunt.*



*While Sara and I were on one side of the concession, hunting leopard, Russell and Brenda were on the other side hunting lion. Our safari cars arrived back at camp within a few minutes of each other, thus this picture.*