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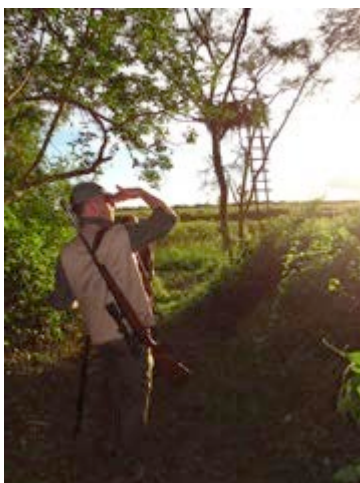
# UGANDA

## Pearl of Africa and kingdom of big trophies

**5:00 AM**, my reading lamp comes on, I was already sleeping last night when the generator went off. We've been in this new superb hunting camp for 3 days now, bordering the Kafue River Bassin.



**We are in Uganda**, the « Pearl of Africa » as Winston Churchill liked to call it while hunting rhinos in this magnificent part of Africa. A country with lots of color contrasts and some huge sitatunga, lots of them...

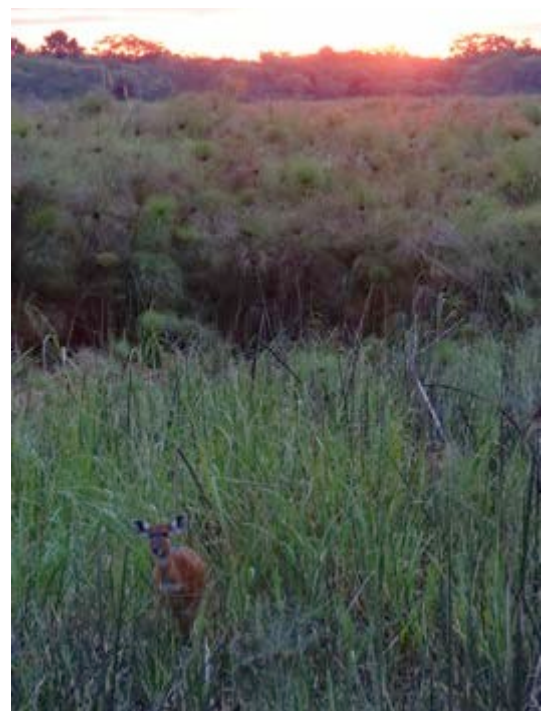


**I find Xavier**, French hunter, and my long time friend **Peter** that has been operating in Tanzania for 20 years, around a cup of coffee in the mess. Uganda has just opened up sports hunting after a 30 year break, and GRAND SAFARI has just secured some marketing rights for some of the best Sitatunga areas that the country has to offer. The population seems very large, and we are here to find out. We have a lot to learn from this area where we have about 150km of prime sitatunga habitat on concession, mainly on the Kafue River basin. We've erected a dozen Machane (blind or platform on stilts, preferred way to hunt Sitatunga) and

our furthest spot so far is only 4,9km from camp ... can you say need to explore?!



*Signs of sitatunga* are everywhere, some tracks on the edge of the papyrus swamp but also missing papyrus freshly grown shoots that they love to feed on. We cut some papyrus in strategic places and it seems to act like a magnet for them. So far, we went out 7 times (mornings and evenings) and have seen sitatunga each and everytime. We've seen females with



young, and lots of bulls at different stages of their life, including 4 shooters. We've set up our standard to 25" or bigger, one of them was for sure at least 25", but the shot was a bit far in

those papyrus, and having so many of them around, it looks like one can become a bit picky even on the shot!

***For those of you that have been hunting East African Sitatunga***, you would know what I mean by a 2 shift bug in Tanzanian Moyowosi (Tsetsee flies during day time and Mosquitos night time), wet feet 12 hours a day, and lots of hard work to put a nice bull in your sights...

***This is different here*** in Uganda, with no Tsee Tsee flies and hardly no mosquitos. Some machane are in the middle of the river where we reach them by boat, others are just on main land bordering the swamp, a 10 to 30mn walk from camp, or 5 mn drive. I think the main difference is really the density of those animals around here, allowing us to work with them in a very unique and different way. We are just scratching the surface right now, pulling world class trophy quality around camp!



**This area has HUGE potential!!**

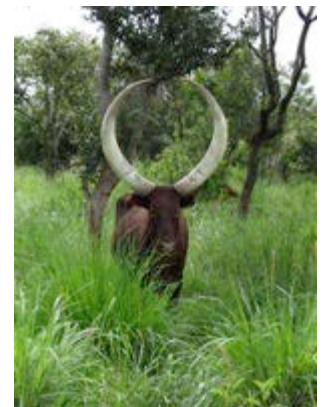
***We've decided to try up river*** when we leave camp in a heavy mist. Tracker Abu wants to check a salt lick on the way and we find a nice sitatunga bull track, amongst bushbuck, a young leopard and the local cattle (Ankole Watusi).



**Douille de 500 NE**



The big horned watusi cattle are everyway here. Local farmers make use of the exceptional grazing for their live stock, it actually does very good to the game as they will dip their cattle once a week for ticks. Hardly any parasites have been found on any of the game we shot during this safari.



Farmers will also cut wood to make charcoal

, opening up the bush and creating new habitat for oribi and kob. An old belief does not allow them to eat game meat and we often found oribi, duiker, kob and bushbuck within 30 yards of grassing cattle, with people walking



pass close by, a **perfect harmony** like it is still today in some areas of Tanzanian Masailand.

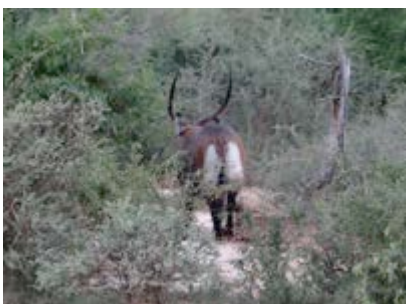
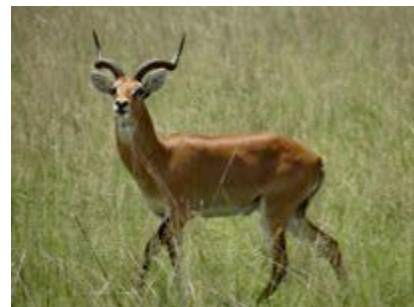
**Hope it will stay like this...**

*The sun starts to raise* when we leave the mokoro (boat) to reach our furthest machane on the opposite bank of the river. We are about 2km away from camp that we can see in a distance. Mist is very thick and we cannot see much yet...

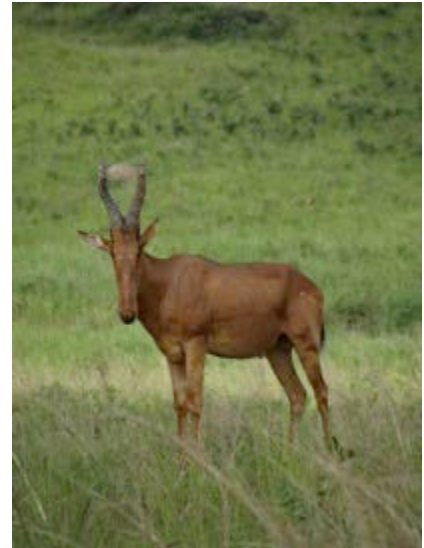


*...soon we spot 3 and then 5 sitatunga females in the papyrus* below us, beautiful contrast of colors between their orange coat and the green vegetation in the morning light. Right below on blind is an hippo swimming in his channel, I took his white ears for the ivory tip of a big bull for a second, and obviously Peter will not let me forget about this ...

*Xavier spot a big sitatunga bull* at about 170 meters, he appeared in the middle of a big patch of papyrus that we have been checking for at least an hour, that bull was always there and we never saw it. This is a shooter with about 25" horns, but Peter know of a bigger bull seen a few weeks ago. Hard to pass on a big bull when you come from so far away to realize a dream, but Xavier is happy to play the game and wait as suggested, a few years back he took his Bongo on day 13 of a 14 day safari, the man has patience... A second bull is now walking right to left towards a female, and when reaching her, she will actually swim away without a splash, what a show mother nature is giving us this morning ...



**We get back to camp** for a solid breakfast before going bushbuck hunting. We've passed the best time for them while looking for our Sitatunga, but this is a good opportunity to explore a big further this new hunting area. It is getting hot already and we are all surprised to see over 15 Nile Bushbuck in one hour (not to mention loads of



oribi that can be seen every way). Tracker Abu is now calling the car to go back to camp, and apologise for not seeing "anything" this morning. We should come back at 05/00 PM where there is lots he says (!?) If I did not know Abu from hunting with him in Tanzania about 6 or 7 years ago (it was a big surprise for both of us to meet again in Uganda), I would have thought he was talking nonsense, but it was not the case and the man knew his story after tracking for 4 years now in this area...

**Lunch in camp** – the chef does a very good job, he was trained in a very good restaurant in Kampala before joining the team – traditional siesta, and we are now heading up river. It is 04:00 PM of our 4<sup>th</sup> day of hunting, and we've already seen oribi, duiker, defassa waterbuck, Bohor Reedbuck, Uganda Kob, Nile Bushbuck and of course East African Sitatunga.

Our first machane is a kilometer away from camp, this is a new one and papyrus have just been cut in front of it. It will take a few weeks before it will get attracted by the new shoots.

**No movement here, let's go to the next one, it is only 800m away.**



***Lots of signs of sitatunga feeding here***, we decide to spend the rest of the day here, hopping to see a big bull. Tracker Gilbert and “bwana game” (game scout) will climb in the next one, some 500m further up river, so we can cover both prime sitatunga territory that afternoon.

While climbing the step ladder, I notice the presence of a **young bull** feeding only 80 m below, papyrus were cut about 2 month ago and are now attracting lots of sitatunga each day. We are somehow surprised not to see any females here, as we always do. We’ve been so spoiled those last 4 days that we almost forget how elusive those antelopes are.



***This new concession in Uganda is home to so many sitatunga*** that we tend to forget how elusive this mystique specie is. We’ve been on this platform for about 20mn when we hear someone running towards us. It can only be one of our tracker, we better get ready to move. It is Gilbert that left his gumboots behind and is now quietly running barefoot to us. It is when they climbed their ladder getting to the next machane that they saw a big bull lying in the long grass just below them. **“Kubwa sana bwana, kubwa sana ...”** (very big sir, very big...).

Gilbert will now stay in our blind while we will check his to see if we cannot connect with that big bull. A quick walk later, we are in position again, ready for action. The big bull has long disappear in the thick papyrus, but some females are happily feeding some 90 m away from us.

***They have not been disturbed at all and chances to get more action are rather good.*** Our



binoculars are going from left to right, and right to left trying to detect the slightly suspicious reed movement. Everytime a bird land on a papyrus, it catches our eyes and we doubler check if it’s not our big bull sneaking in. Our big bull or an other, they seems to be so many of them around.

***We feel very privileged*** to witness those females with their young feeding, it is indeed captivating.

Prior to this trip, I’ve tried to see what was available on internet about Sitatunga, hardly any videos and very few photos, we will try to fix that if any of the footage taken here is any good ...

***“Here” said the game scout pointing his finger*** directly below the machine. It is impossible that none of us did not see that bull, only 30m away in the papyrus... We can clearly see the 2 white tips of its horns, a bull for sure, but even that close, not the easiest to judge their lengths!



We made a few unwanted movement in the process of getting ready, and that made the bull go forward a bit where we now have a clear view of his neck, head and horns. He is a magnificent bull, over 25” for sure and we decide to take him. He is now 60 m away, totally still in this green ocean “can’t see the shoulder” said Xavier, “3/4 back, head on the right, improvise!” was my answer. Look, it is very seldom that you will have a clear shoulder shot in such thick vegetation, heavy calibers have not problem going through papyrus!! The elusive antelope is now looking straight at us and it is now or never ... Il am recording the whole thing from a branch above Xavier, seconds are going way too slow and I can’t hold my breath any longer when ...



**Bang !!** Our beast dropped in its tracks, the Barnes TSX of Xavier’s .375 H&H Mag did an excellent job, as always...

***A dream become reality***, Xavier is one of the first hunter harvesting one of those great Sitatunga from Uganda. We have both East African and Island Sitatunga here in Uganda, and from the field measurement of Xavier's trophies, it looks like he is the proud owner of the new East African Sitatunga SCI # 13!!

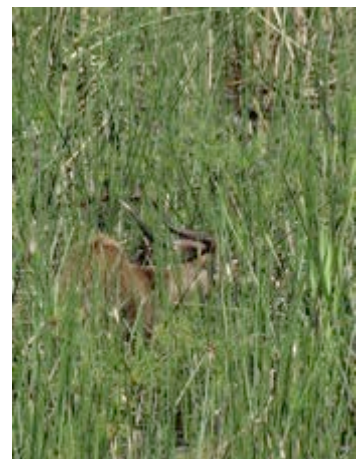


***Two days later***, Xavier will harvest one of the numerous Nile Bushbuck that we have in this area, we've seen bigger ones a few days earlier when looking for his Sitatunga, but this one should still make SCI #14!!

**This is unreal, we are indeed re-writing the record book in UGANDA...**

This afternoon, we decided to spend some time getting more footage of Sitatunga from the same machane where Xavier got his. Hard to believe, but we have just bumped into an other 3 bull including 2 huge ones on the 30" mark... Where on earth can one video 2 animals at the same time that will respectively make SCI #3 and #4 !? Can you say Uganda? ...I can't get over the fact that I have just recorded this unreal sight...

**An Oribi** will later complete the collection, before heading to our next concession further North.



***Day 9, departure early morning*** towards Murchison Falls National Park. Crossing the Nile river is somehow mystical, Ernest Hemingway crashed his plane here in 1954... it's like being part of an old exploration book...





*Xavier will take a beautiful Uganda Kob possibly the new SCI #8, everything seems to be a record in this trip...*



*Then we will hire a boat and cruise up river to the Murchison Falls, named after Sir Roderick Murchison, president of the Royal Geography Society by Samuel Baker.*

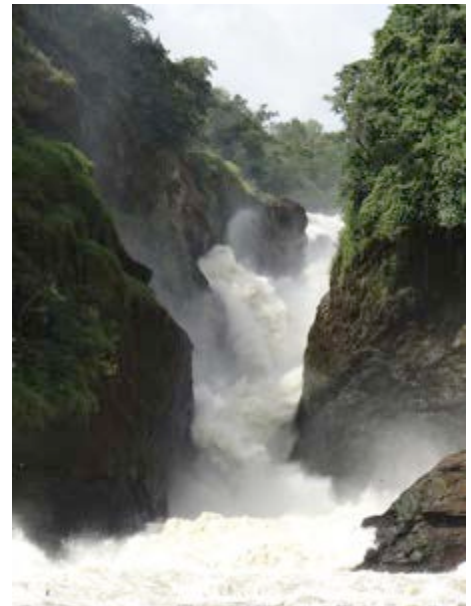


It is known to be one of the **best fishing spot for Nile Perch**, with yearly International fishing competition right here.

***Got to try...***

I'll catch one of **23kg** while my friend Peter caught...nothing...

"Polé Sana Bwana..." (sorry my friend...). Lots of hippos and crocs around here too.



**Uganda is a magical destination, to discover absolutely !**



**I am planning an other trip there to get more video footage of Sitatunga, it will possibly be around September time frame and I can take a group of 4 hunters with me at a discounted rate.**

**Anyone interested to join me?**

**Christophe BEAU**

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