



## Killer Hippo for All

By Samir Suleiman, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Last year I finally booked my dream hunt of a lifetime in Africa through Gordie White of Expedition Adventures, and this past July I headed to Mozambique to hunt with Zambeze Delta Safaris for leopard, crocodile and zebra.

After almost a 28-hour commute that entailed four flights and a truck ride, I arrived in camp where my PH, Poen Van Zyl, informed me there was a hippo in the concession that had killed a village boy the previous week. The local government had designated it a PAC (Problem Animal Control) hippo and asked the outfitters if they or one of their hunters would go hunt and kill the hippo for the villagers. I was instantly up for the task.

Our first trip to the village where the hippo attack occurred was stymied when our Toyota Land Cruiser got stuck in the mud. We tried again a couple of days later, but this time six of us went on a tractor from another camp. When we arrived, we talked to a couple of villagers about the hippo. They pointed to the reeds where it stayed during the day and the watering hole where it usually emerged just before sunset. We tried calling it out of the reeds to no avail. We then positioned ourselves behind some tall grass against the tree line on shore. I ranged the watering hole at 121 yards. We patiently waited there for the rest of the afternoon.

At 3:48 p.m., several birds that were on the water suddenly screeched and flew away, and we heard a monster-like sound. It was the hippo popping his head out of the water in the exact hole that the villagers told us he would be in. He quickly submerged into the water before I could shoot so we went back to waiting, hoping it wasn't the last we'd see of him. About a half-hour later, he popped his head out again, and Poen whispered to shoot him between the eyes. I obliged with the McMillan .300 Win. Mag. rifle that I'd borrowed from camp. I felt great

about my shot, and the hippo immediately sank into the water. We didn't see any waves in the water after I shot, which indicated that he had not swum away. We waited until sunset for the hippo to float to the top of the water, but since it can take up to three hours for enough gas to build in a hippo body to bring it to the surface, we decided to leave and return in the morning.

When we arrived the next morning we could see the hippo floating in water where I'd shot him. The entire village was already waiting for us at the edge of the water in great anticipation. Six men jumped into the neck-high water filled with razor sharp grass and snakes, and pushed the hippo as close to shore as they could. We used the tractor to drag it onto land. The villagers erupted in celebration, dancing, cheering and chanting. They were so jubilant. Not only were they now safe from the hippo, but they were going to eat like kings for a couple of weeks.

The mother of the boy who was killed was chanting and dancing more than anyone. She approached me, knelt down in front of me and spoke to me. My tracker, Gotchie, translated—she was thanking me. I fought back tears. I have never felt more proud to be a hunter than I was at that moment.

After posing for pictures with the hippo and villagers, the six men that pushed the hippo to shore immediately whipped out knives and machetes and went to work field-dressing the 2-ton beast. We lined up all of the villagers single file, and once all of the meat was butchered and set aside in piles, we distributed a huge chunk of hippo to every villager until there was none left to give. Many of them thanked me on their way home. It was the most fulfilling moment of my hunting career, if not my entire life.

I remembered what one of my hunting buddies had told me about his hunt in Africa years before, calling it "life-changing." I didn't understand what he meant at the time, but now I do. If I never do another good deed for the rest of my life, I know that I once literally fed an entire village, and that was the best feeling in the world. *ah*

**Do you have an exciting, unusual or humorous hunting experience to share?**

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