

My SCI#1 Suni

By Dian Cooper

They say hunting is all about luck. My husband, Rocky, always wants to know who 'they' are. I feel you're either in the right place at the right time or you're not. I guess you could call that 'luck.' I call it fate.

Mozambique proved to be one of the most beautiful places my husband and I have hunted. We ventured there in 2004 for a safari that included plains and dangerous game. Rocky's goal was a big buff. Mine a crocodile, lion if possible, and we both wanted to collect all the species available in that part of Africa.

It has been our experience that we enjoy hunting far more in different areas with different outfitters; it enables us to experience something new and exciting on each hunting adventure. We'd known Mark and Glen Haldane of Game & Bird Hunters Africa for many years; we'd met

them through our PH on our first safari in 1992. Kids back then, grown up now, we'd both watched each other's companies grow and prosper. It was a delight to finally hunt with them and enjoy their awesome hunting camp, Mungari, in Courada 11.

Mark was Rocky's PH and Glen was mine. All mine, for this was the first safari that I actually got to have my own PH. It was great. Prior to this, with few exceptions, we shared the same PH. This time Rocky and I would set out our different ways in the morning and meet back at camp that evening to celebrate the day's successes with a fine dinner and wine. It was so much more fun for me to know

that whatever I saw during my hunting day, it was entirely my choice whether to take it or not. I enjoyed the fact that each day was focused on the trophy I wanted to hunt, and it kept me revved up and looking forward to each morning.

Glen and I got along well. He was a perfect gentleman and very attentive to detail. He made sure we had everything we might need, ensuring I was prepared in every way for what the day may bring as far as what we were hunting, degree of danger, proper attire for the weather, bug protection, etc. I never felt unprepared – most of my questions were answered before they ever left my mouth. This was very



comforting and made for a very confident and relaxed hunt.

Glen and I hunted crocodile, lion, sable, nyala, Livingstone's eland, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, red and blue duiker, oribi, bushpig, baboon – and suni. Every day was wonderful. My crocodile hunt ruled as we floated three days down the Zambezi in a rubber duck. That was an adventure all in itself – I got a great croc on the last day of my hunt, but that's another story.

Mozambique was incredible. Vines, huge ivies, orchids, all hung from the trees. There were places that felt as though we were in a magical paradise full of tropical plants, ferns, flowers and delicious smells. It was an Africa I'd never seen – its beauty was awesome. Then suddenly I would be smacked with pain and a tsetse fly was

happily having me for dinner! Fortunately, I only got bitten a few times while Glen, on the other hand, had tsetses all over him. I couldn't see how he could stand it, but it didn't seem to bother him in the least.

One day he asked if I wanted to go to an area where we might get a shot at a blue duiker. Of course I said, yes, so I dressed in my bug suit and we headed into the forest. As we snuck in between the trees the sunlight seemed to fade. Tiny beams pieced through the thick bush here and there, but for the most part it was very shaded, giving a mystical ambience.

Glen found a place and we sat down on the thick, leafy forest floor. It was untouched by man and I felt as though we were intruding. It was so quiet you could even hear a leaf falling to the ground with

Dian and Glen drifted down the Zambezi River for three days hunting crocs.

"My crocodile hunt ruled as we floated three days down the Zambezi in a rubber duck."

Huntress Diana – Mozambique: 2004



The new SCI #1 suni, taken by Dian Cooper with PH Glen Hablene in 2004 in Cantada II, is still #1 today. This was the first safari for which Dian had her own PH instead of sharing with her husband!

a plop. Minutes passed. Then we heard rustling – the forest was coming alive with sunis all around us! They were here, then there. Some didn't see us, and some were curious as to what the two big blobs were under their trees.

I was enjoying their company when Glen's eyes got as big as saucers. I had told him at the beginning of the hunt to be very calm with me and never to start yelling, "Shoot it, Shoot it!" or whatever, and get me all flustered. So he calmly said, "See those three sunis fighting in the distance?" "Yes." "Do you see the one kicking the other two's butts?" I said "Yecsssss!" "Well, I want you to take him, pleaseeeeee." "OK."

He helped me get my shooting sticks steady. "Dian, do you see him?" Glen's voice cracked, "Uh huh," as I scoped in on him twitching about here and there like lightning, thinking that that little guy was never going to stop long enough for me to take him.

BOOM! One foot, and down he dropped. I have never seen a PH so excited in all my life! "Man, he's a monster!" Glen shouted with glee. Yeah, yeah, I've heard that a hundred

times, I thought to myself, and likely to find out that when my trophy got back to the States, my Top Ten was a #50.

We picked up my little fellow and took him to the vehicle. He was precious and so delicate – almost to the point that the woman in me was saying, “You should be ashamed, shooting that little guy.” However, the huntress in me always takes priority over any womanly weakness. Then Mark and Rocky were pulling up in their Land Cruiser. They were jumping and shouting with excitement. “Do you know what you just took, Dian?” Mark asked. Obviously, from all the hoopla this suni was special.

Come to find out, he was *very special*, winding up the new #1 suni in the SCI Trophy Record Book, and possibly the new world record, although I’ve never been able to confirm this. He was awarded #1 African trophy by SCI 2004-2005. I’m not sure where he ranks today, but whatever he ranks, he ranks #1 in my heart forever. Just love that little guy! And my husband mounted him perfectly.

Editor’s Note: Dian’s suni still ranks #1 SCI in the 2008 Edition XII, Vol. II of the Trophy Record Book.

Dian Cooper has loved hunting for over two decades. She and her husband, Rocky, own and operate the taxidermy studio Bush Country Studios located near Houston, Texas. ☺



Above: Dian and her husband Rocky set out in different directions every day, each focused on his own trophy, like Dian’s top priority crocodile.

Left: Fish drying in the sun from a local’s catch along the Zambezi River.

