

MATWETWE SAFARIS

2023 NEWSLETTER

It is with a humble thankfulness that I look back at the 2023 hunting season. A record year in many ways. The highest number of hunters in a single season. The biggest buffalo, biggest sable, biggest steenbuck, biggest fallow deer, and biggest vahl rhebuck ever taken on a Matwetwe Safari hunt. As many as 12 people won the Harold King Award this year. Although it was also the longest season ever, it never felt long because of the great people we've met and seeing old friends again.

We kicked off in March with Chuck Hoeft, John Winkler and Jamie Majewski. They had a great time and like first timers took way more animals than they were planning on.



Chuck



John



Jamie

Dustin Alexander and Montana Oberwegner booked a hunt for 12 people for 2024. They decided to come on a "reconnaissance hunt" first and visited in early April. They brought Dave Wolf and Morgan Seymore with them. What a blast it was!!! They took some outstanding animals. A 56" Kudu for Morgan, two huge blue Eland bulls for Dustin and Montana as well as very good steenbuck and Blue wildebeest for Dave were some of the outstanding critters they collected. Neither of us can wait for the 2024 hunt!!!



Montana



Morgan



Dave Montana's Eland



Dustin's Nyala



Steve & Bill with both 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ "



Steve Matthes was back in mid-April, 14 years after his first trip. This time he wanted a Cape Buffalo. Steve brought Bill Avent and his son Cody as well as his friend Chris Smelser along. They hired our professional photographer Brandon to capture it all o camera. Great decision!!! Brandon did a fine job and had a lot of footage to work with because these guys were busy. Bill & Steve both took 47 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch sables as well as 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch buffalos. Bill's sable was the biggest ever taken on a Matwetwe hunt.



Bill & Steve with both 47 $\frac{1}{2}$ "



Chris



Cody

When Mike Behunin left Matwetwe Safaris after his first hunt two years ago, he started planning his dream Cape Buffalo hunt. Mike has the finest taste in rifles and came with a Blaser R8 in .375H&H as well as a very pretty Cooper in .300H&H. Only one well-placed shot in the heart out of the Blaser did the trick on the buffalo. Mike brought some more luck and took a 30" Nyala and beautiful Bushbuck, 15 minutes apart one early morning. The Nyala made the 6th position on the Matwetwe Top Ten. Kathy was there to share in the delight.



Mike & Kathy



My friend, Dave Wilkins and his daughter Morgan needs no introduction. This year they made it a 3-week trip. Dave was after his Cape Buffalo and Morgan wanted her second Harold King Award. She took some magnificent trophies on the journey, and it was most likely the 45" Sable, beautiful Fallow Deere and 54" Kudu that stood out. She did become the first girl to win the HKA a second time. Dave took an old 43 ½ inch Buffalo with the best character I have ever seen on a buffalo. He ended up bagging a beautiful Red Lechwe and 14" Common Reedbuck as well. We made sure he earned his food and made him dig some post holes in between. LOL.



Happy Dave





Morgan's HKA



Danny



Her 1st ever



Danny DeFauw and his wonderful wife Denise came on safari for their honeymoon. Danny took sable, kudu, eland, and a few smaller ones. Denise went through all the preparations and took her first animal ever with a clean one shot kill. A beautiful trophy impala. Harm, Hennie and Bianca took them out pub crawling one night, which sounded like it was another huge success... Just an altogether great time we've had with them in camp.



Eric



Steve



Both got HKA's



Steve the "danger man" Soya was back for trip no. 5. Again, with his .416 Rigby. His son Eric joined him again this year and they both won the HKA. Steve became only the second guy ever to win it twice, but nobody has done it twice with a true Big Bore before. Congratulations to a true marksman! Steve took a nice croc with a brain shot after quite a colorful stalk. Eric had a definite place for that Giraffe hide and was rewarded with this beauty. To end everything on a high note Steve took a 45" Sable on the last day. A great time like always.

Bill MacDermaid and Brad Endres met each other on a Matwetwe Safari hunt, and since then has been back here together, 3 more times. This was after they have hunted here separately a few times before that. Two years ago on their previous hunt, Brad said: "I think I have one more in me". Meaning that after his first 5 buffalo with us, he would like to hunt another one. So, we did. Brad also wanted some of the small cats for years and this time lucked out when using the hounds. He bagged both Serval and Caracal cats. Bill didn't bring a backup rifle this time and stuck with his .500 S&W and Blaser handgun in 9.3x62. With these two handguns he took Roan, Fallow Deere, Buffalo cow and a Red Lechwe. Bill also took an outstanding 46" Sable and 46" Buffalo with his handguns. This buffalo is the biggest buffalo Matwetwe Safaris has ever hunted. What a brute! He made no. 4 on the MTT. Congratulations again my friend!!!



Both at 46"



Brad's cats

Another seasoned hunter from west Michigan, Dan Jordan hunted South Africa several times in the past. This time he was after his first Buffalo but kept his eyes open for anything out of the ordinary as well. Good thing he did because after a perfect frontal shot out of his .416 Weatherby the beautiful 40" buffalo was down on day one. Then the "out of the ordinary" started. We hunted a very nice Vahl Rhebuck of over 8" that made no. 10 on the MTT. Driving around at dusk on the last day my eyes caught something white sticking up above the grass. We read the wind and started the stalk on a real monster warthog. The boar was after a sow in heat and came walking straight at us. At 40 yards he gave us a brought side shot. Perfectly symmetrical and very heavy, he measured 14 ½ inches outside the gum, which would put him well over 16". Being so hard to find a big hog like that, he made no. 2 on the Matwetwe Top Ten.



Some of Dan's dandy's



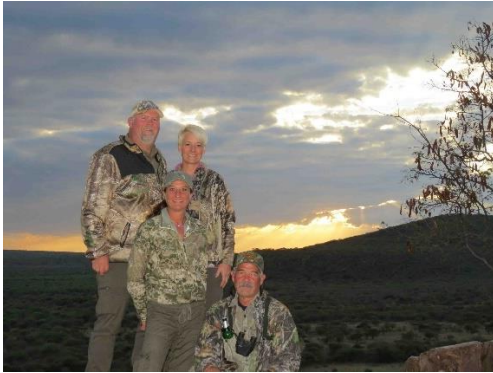
Luke Fraudenburg from Kalamazoo, MI gathered up a bunch of friends and family members and made up a group of 7 guys. They all hunted a wide variety of species and had a great time doing it. At night around the fire everyone had a chance to sit in the "story chair" and tell his story of the day. There were only 1 rule: "you were not allowed to screw up a good story with the truth". This idea might happen again with the right group around the Matwetwe campfire. A fun time is an understatement. New lifelong members of the Matwetwe family.



Anders Garner decided to bring his whole family along on his second trip to Matwetwe. Grandma Elizabeth joined them but decided not to hunt. Anders only had sable on his wish list but also took a very big common duiker. Then it was Melinda and the boys that were turned loose. She was rewarded with a very good Nyala and Black Impala. Drake had zebra on his mind and took one down with a perfect heart shot. Devin was focused to get himself a Giraffe and made a very precise neck shot to bring the bull down in spectacular way. They also did our Kruger Park and Cape Town tours and filled their hearts with spectacular views and precious family time together.



By the end of June, it was time for Wayne Courier and his family. Wayne brought his daughter Jenniffer as well as his son Chris with his wife Melissa. Harm and Herman guided them and everyone in the group took a few nice animals. Wayne was a real good shot and bagged his six and received the HKA. They did the elephant interaction, visited the baboon cliffs for sundowners and just filled up their trip with great memories. If there was a gentleman's award for the year it would have gone to Wayne. What a great guy!



We were so blessed this year with good-hearted people visiting us. Mike & Mary Veele were that kind of people. Because of the variation on their wish list, we had to travel to a few different areas of the country. The hounds treed a big tom caracal cat for Mike while we were down in the Free State area for Mary's springbuck. Mary wanted to finish her springbuck slam with a white and black. She did so with distinction and went on to take a roan amongst several others. She was a superb marksman and became one of only a handful ladies that ever won the HKA. Mike had his sights on a big croc and was rewarded with this nice 12-footer.



Ed Fuller and his friend Dave Grindly came on a bow hunt, but Delta airlines didn't play along so well. They left the bow case back in the US, so for the first 3 days Ed was sightseeing. Luckily, they had booked a 10-day hunt and there was enough time. Dave couldn't stand to only watch, so he took Harm's rifle and started to put some animals on the ground. Eventually he did turn to the bow and took a few with it as well. Ed was a fine marksman with his crossbow and took all his animals with it. He loved hunting gemsbuck and took two of them, but when this brute of a blue wildebeest walked in, he couldn't resist. The bull measured 30" and the carcass was the second largest we have ever taken at 352lbs. The wildebeest got Ed the no. 7 spot on the MTT.



While Ed & Dave were in our main camp, Herman took the Whitefords to another luxurious camp in the area. Pat Whiteford made his son Logan and dad John's dream come true to hunt together in Africa. They took advantage of the huge Warthog in the area and bagged two magnificent hogs. Logan was well prepared and was shooting like a sniper. He became one of the youngest guys to win the HKA.



By the end of July Greg Armock brought his wife Kristi and 3 daughters, Kensey, Delaney and Bailey over for a great adventure. They had lots of energy and were very fun people to be around. Delaney took a 29" Golden wildebeest but it was Kensey that was the big huntress. She took a 17" Blesbuck, 34" Livingston Eland, nice Impala and sable as well. Greg is one of those thoroughbred hunters. For every professional hunter, the ideal client. Physically capable, great shot and always there, ready to act when you need him to. Greg took a nice black Impala and bushbuck, but his main goal was the buffalo. He took a brute of a bull that measured 45 ½ inches with 16" bosses. He made no.8 on the MTT. Halfway through their trip they went to Kruger Park and came back to hunt some more afterwards. While me and Greg smoked some monkeys with his .300 Norma Mag, the girls went to the spa, had sundowners at the Baboon cliffs, visited the croc farm and just had an all-round ball of a time.



While me and the Armocks were at it, Harm and Herman were busy with Dough Cook and his friends. Doug Cook, Josh Rice and Frank Jenkins. They had a great hunt with Josh taking a monster warthog and giraffe, but it was Doug's buffalo cow hunt that made them work. After several stalks she finally stood up at 30 yards and Doug kept it together and put her down with the first shot. They couldn't stop talking about it. Frank took a very good blue wildebeest, springbuck and worked very hard to see the Gemsbuck. He finally was rewarded for an old bull that was way past his prime but a fine representative of his specie.



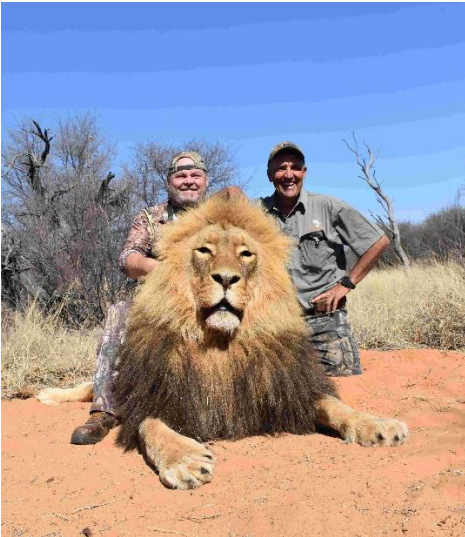
Dirk Blunck from Rheinfelden, Germany needs no introduction to any frequent Matwetwe newsletter reader. He's been here almost every year since 1999, except for Covid. Dirk's son Ciril definitely inherited his dad's "sniper like" shooting skills. He is starting with the .22 and took 12 different species while me and dad were tagging along. Again, we've had a great time with them in camp, discussing ballistics and relived some of our great hunting adventures of yesteryear. I think soon Dirk will be ready to pick up the .416 again and go on the tracks of a jumbo with me. You just can't get that out of your blood.



Dave & Beth Read were back in August. This time without Bob & Becky. Their daughter Erica and her husband Mike Wellman joined them. Most importantly, it was grand daughter Lilly's trip. At 16 years old she was a well-prepared hunter and took some very nice trophies with clean shots, especially the springbuck at over 200yards. Dave had a score to settle with another buffalo. 2 Years ago, he hunted buffalo and we took 3 days to put that one down. This time, a perfect shot through the heart and a magnificent 44-inch bull was down. Beth took a very good Red Lechwe while we were down in the high country after caracal. Dave got a very pretty tom Caracal that he wanted for years. Erica, Lilly & Mike did their photo safari in Kruger Park and came back to hunt some more. Erica shot a very good sable while Mike took his 6 animals all with one shot and received the HKA.



And then Joebear Miles showed up after only 12 months... This man is a true hunter and a great shot. A big black maned Lion was his top animal. We took the 8 ½ hour drive to the Kalahari bushveld and enjoyed the change of scenery and different habitat. On day 2 after quite a lot of tracking in the Kalahari sand the big boy gave us a shot. Joe seized the opportunity and made a perfect shot; we followed up and there he was. Africa's most majestic animal. What a privilege that there are enough people that takes care of these creatures and their habitat so we can still hunt the non-productive ones. Joe went on to take several more animals including a 12-foot croc. He became only the third guy ever to win the HKA a second time. Maybe on his third trip in 2024 he "could" be the first guy to win it 3 times.



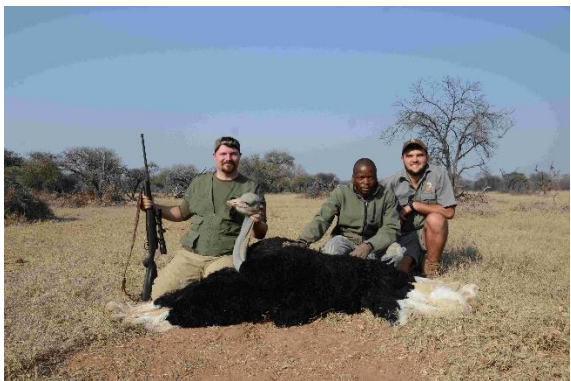
Joebear at his happiest!!



While me and Joe were at it, Harm guided Stan Millis and Greg Kovalchick. Stan hunted with us 13 years ago and wanted to come back ever since. They hunted the plains to the east as well as the hills to the north and bagged some beautiful animals. Stan took a big bushbuck on the same day that Greg got his kudu. Greg used a quite out of the ordinary crossbow that fired two arrows at a time. He was a crack shot with it and put those broad heads at the right place six times in a row to win him the HKA.



When we met Mike Aittama in Traverse City last year, we knew we were going to have some extra fun on this hunt. Then in early September Mike brought his son Hunter, son in law Joe and nephew John with him. We've hunted, laughed, partied, laughed, sight seeing to Kruger, laughed, hunted some more and laughed again. Mike showed some other talent he has and wrote a song about the hunt. What a great time we've had! Baboon, Vervet Monkey, Gemsbuck, Waterbuck, Black wildebeest, Blue wildebeest, Ostrich, Zebra, Nyala, Kudu, Springbuck, Impala, Sable and more were on the ground. Both John and Hunter won the HKA. New friends for life for sure!!!



Jeff McMinn an avid bow hunter, hunted with us before. This time he only wanted to hunt a little and do a lot of sightseeing. Jeff brought his wife Chara, his mom Dianne and her husband David along for the adventure. Sable and Gemsbuck were the only two items on the hunting menu. The weather played along, and the big ones came in at the right time and the success was his to have. Cape Town and Kruger Park filled in the rest of their trip, and they went home with great memories of our beautiful country.



Getting towards the end of the season in early October we've had another real colorful hunt when the physicians showed up. Brennen & Melissa Kerr, Billy & Rachel Reichard, Danny & Casey Coulter as well as their friend Micah Baumgartner came for their first hunting experience in South Africa. We had a lot of "hunting luck" but I couldn't believe my eyes when we took 3 nice kudus on one day in the hills south of us. Melissa made the shot of the season when she took her Black wildebeest at 358 meters on the open hills of Mpumalanga. Micah was like a kid in a candy store and enjoyed himself immensely. At one stage he had a blue wildebeest and a zebra down only 100 yards apart. Brennen took the biggest Steenbuck in Matwetwe Safari history at 6 inches. Big ones like that are very hard to find, so for that achievement Brennen ended up with the no. 1 spot on the Matwetwe Top Ten this year. All together we were surrounded by smiles and laughter all the time. For sure they will be back one day!



The second last safari of the season was when the brothers, Chad & Adam Druckenmiller came to hunt. It was late October, and many people would think that it is too late in the season to get good quality trophies anymore. This is where the phrase: "you don't take, the bush will provide..." comes in. They both took some real nice trophies, but it was Chad's Sable at 45 ½ inches and Kudu at 54" that stood out. The kudu dressed out at an astonishing 435lbs. The Giraffe hunt made for a real out of the ordinary surprise when the first shot only stunned him, and he ran straight towards us. Although not a charge, it made for quite an adrenalin rush when this huge animal fell only 15 feet in front of us after Harm and Chad's artillery opened up on him. A great hunt with two great guys!!!



Like two years ago Cary McAfee closed the season for us. This year Sable was the number one animal on his list. Cary got a good one and went on to take Duiker, Steenbuck, Red hartebeest as well as a monster Mountain Reedbuck. Cary always travels by himself, and it was great to hear all his stories and life experiences he shared with us around the fire. A good friend for sure!!!



Again, it is with a humble heart that I look back at the 2023 season. The biggest season ever. The highest number of clients as well as the highest number of animals taken in a single year. With many records broken with bigger trophies in quite a few species. One never plans something like this. When it gets busy, the whole team just work harder to make sure everything works out. But when you look back you see that it was not possible by yourself. Firstly, your own health and talents are a gift from God. Secondly, the other people in the team, their loyalty and skills are not a given. Thirdly, the clients and their positive adventurous attitude that wants to pursue, learn, and enjoy are the most important piece of the puzzle. Lastly our Dear Lord left us with this wonderful environment that he created for us to manage and conserve wisely so that future generations can have and experience like we can. With the absence of any of these pieces, the puzzle wouldn't be complete and the industry as well as this beautiful natural environment will not be there.

I want to thank everyone in the puzzle from the depth of my heart. From Jimson and Jova that sometimes found the impossible track to the skinners and cleaners that worked long hours to make sure everything is up to standard. Thanks to Leon that fed us so good. Thanks to Gian that went the extra mile at any hour of day and night. Thanks to Herman and Themba that made us laugh so much while bringing the good ones home. Thanks to Harm that was dumped into the deep end and swam like a champion. Thank you to my wonderful caring wife, Annie that were always there to give advice and supported the team. Thank You to our Dear Lord that He made it all possible and saved us through His Son Jesus Christ. I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and hope that you will enjoy your Festive season with all your loved ones around you.

Have a happy new year and come and say hi to me and Harm as we go through the marketing circuit during the 2024 marketing season in Michigan and Ohio.

Until we meet again...

Yours sincerely

Hendrik Botha

