



RSA R39⁰⁰

FOCUS ON NAMIBIA

My passion for hunting and nature was born on the hunting farm I grew up on in north-west Namibia.

Already as a youngster I was actively involved in the hunting industry, even taking quite a few trophy animals myself. But I'd always dreamed of hunting a big trophy eland bull, and in 2011 I set myself the challenge of taking one.

In early June we left Joburg for the 1885-km drive for our annual hunting trip, this time in the Ngarangombe Conservancy close to Grootfontein, well known for its big herds of eland that move freely through the largely unfenced area. We've been hunting Namibia every year for 25 years, staying for two to six weeks.

I decided to skip the early morning hunt with my father and his four friends, to be fresh when I started that afternoon. I went out alone and sat behind a big camel thorn tree approximately 70 metres from an old salt lick where I knew lots of game normally gathers. With a slight breeze blowing in my face, just taking in all the sights and sounds of nature, enjoying it to the fullest, I waited to see what came out of the bush.

Nothing came, and when it became dark I decided to call it a day. There was a full moon, and I knew hunting was very difficult then, as the animals are especially skittish and drink late at night. On top of that, it was the best rainy season in this area for 40 years – over a 1000 mm, which didn't make it easy to hunt in the very long grass and thick vegetation.

The next morning the hunters and trackers all left before sunrise, with my dad driving most of the time. It was the coldest morning I've ever experienced – minus 2°C on the back of the vehicle. Damn, it was cold!

We dropped off the hunters with their trackers to walk and stalk different areas of the 8,000-hectare farm. We'd pick them up later when it started heating up, and head back to camp. My dad and I drove around the farm's border, not wanting to disturb the areas where the others were hunting.

At about 7:30 a.m., we turned right along the fence line and continued several kilometres until we reached a cattle fence. Getting out to open the gate to the next camp, I noticed a waterhole about 2.5 km away. I also saw a small herd of six eland



Hunting The New #1 Rowland Ward Cape Eland

By PH Charl Kemp

standing next to fence, some 500 metres away, enjoying the morning sun. The two bulls and four cows immediately started trotting into the bush, and one cow jumped the fence.

I knew the others would quickly follow. I walked about 300 paces, rifle loaded and safety on, then stopped to listen. I stood still for about 10 seconds, and then heard the distinctive "click...click...click" of an eland bull's hoofs clamping together as he walked. When he steps, the pressure of his weight opens his hoofs, and when he picks up his foot, it's like being spring-loaded and the two hoofs hit each other... click and click and click. I could hear him walking, not running, towards the fence, but I still had no idea how far from me he was.

"My heart was bursting out of my chest from excitement as I realized his extraordinary size – he was enormous!"

I stood up against one of the fence posts to take perfect aim with my custom-built Mauser .30-06, loaded with Norma 180-grain Nosler Partition ammunition, ready to shoot if he came out. Within 30 seconds, I saw him in the open area next to the fence, and he looked straight at me. I knew he was on his way to jumping over. Within five seconds of his walking into the open, I took off the safety, aimed at his shoulder and, for a split second, realized just how big he was body-wise. I didn't look at the horns – there was no time – held my rifle tight, and squeezed the trigger.

I could hear that the shot struck well. But the eland dived forward with his head down, turned around, and headed into the bush! I felt very confident about my shot, and I knew he wouldn't be far. Just then a whole bunch of eland ran out the bush and jumped over the cattle fence.

I stood dead still, my eyes fixed on the herd to see if "my" eland was amongst them. Luckily, not! Only a young bull and four cows ran frantically into the bush. I stood a while longer, waiting patiently. Maybe, just maybe, he too would come running out of the bush.

Alas, nothing came. Through years of hunting, I learnt that after you shoot to listen for the animal's reaction. I decided to walk back to the spot from where I'd fired my shot and saw from the bull's tracks that I'd hit him, because the hooves were opened up when he ran away.

The excitement bubbled inside of me as I pointed out the tracks of my wounded eland to my dad. We started following them, looking for blood. At first all we saw were tracks, tracks, and more tracks. Then suddenly, 50 metres into the bush, we sighted our first droplets of blood. I was slightly concerned that there were so few and that he'd already gone so far. We carried on further and further into the bush, with only a few drops of blood here and there. Then there was a puddle of blood.

The anticipation was building up inside me – words cannot explain the feeling. My heart started beating faster and faster. The amount of blood and the way he was running into thick "swarthaak" were all good signs. He could not be far. I reloaded my rifle with the safety on, just in case another shot was necessary.

We carried on walking cautiously through thick bush, keeping a watchful eye. Suddenly we spotted a brown heap about 10 feet in front of us. All we could see were the back legs stretched out towards us – the rest of the body was lying in the bush. Step-by-step we hesitantly approached, not sure if the eland was alive or dead. But as we got closer, we saw no signs of life. My heart was bursting out of my chest from excitement as I realized his extraordinary size – he was enormous! We walked around to his front side, clearing all the branches and bushes in our way to get a better look. All that mattered at this point was the dark brown tuft – that's



Certificate of Publication

Rowland Ward's Records of Big Game

Trophy Cape Eland
Measurements 46³/₄ 35 10¹/₄ 10¹/₄ 41 inches
Locality Grootfontein, Namibia
Date June 2011
Owner Charl Kemp

Rowland Ward
EDITOR

Kemp received the official measurements after a 32-day drying period. His Cape eland is the new #1 Rowland Ward - "at least for the time being."

all I wanted to see. I was ecstatic when I saw it. But then the horns got longer and longer as we cleared the surrounding brush, although I could see that the right horn was shorter than the left, as a piece had broken off.

I could not believe my eyes when I saw the slightly bent left horn. Never in my wildest dreams had I thought I would shoot such a bull. When hunting, I always carry my Rowland Ward measuring tape, but that day I'd left it at

camp. We estimated the horns at at least 45 inches and the shooting distance at 230 metres.

Next was the hard work of getting my trophy eland upright for photos. I really couldn't complain though, this, after all, was what I had dreamed of. My dad, a weightlifting champion, and I together couldn't get the huge eland upright, so we walked back to the *bakkie* to fetch the other hunters to help us.

Luckily, the vehicle was equipped with all the necessary gear, so we could clear some 200 metres of trail through the bush to my eland. At long last we got the bull upright for photos, and then loaded him into the truck without dragging or damaging the cape.

Back at camp I measured the horns. The longest one was 119.5 cm – just over 47 inches! A potential new #1 Rowland Ward trophy and the best present I could have given myself.

As we skinned him for a shoulder mount, I investigated where, exactly, the bullet had hit and its path of penetration. I'd hit the shoulder, where I'd aimed, and thought the bullet would still be inside. I was stunned to see the exit wound just behind the other shoulder. After his night in the cold room, we weighed him: 420 kg.

I cherish the fact that I'd walked and stalked my trophy eland bull in an area where the majority of farms are not enclosed so that eland herds can move freely between them – my biggest challenge

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Namibia: 2011

and hunting accomplishment by far.

I received the official measurements from Casper Taxidermy in Grootfontein, after a 32-day drying period. The left horn's final measurement is 118.5 cm, an astonishing 46 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The broken right horn measured 89 cm, 35 inches long. With Rowland Ward's current #1 measuring 46 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, my bull is the new #1 Rowland Ward – at least for the time being.

Charl Kemp worked as trainee PH until he was 21, then completed his PH course and exams and qualified. He also qualified as a Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) guide. He has also completed "Big Five" hunting courses and advanced rifle handling to enhance his skills for both hunting and field guiding. 🍷



The current Rowland Ward #1 Cape eland horn measures 46 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. After a 32-day drying period, the left horn of Kemp's eland measured 118.5 cm, an astonishing 46 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and the broken right horn measured 89 cm or 35 inches - making it the new #1 RW Cape eland.