



HUNTING REPORT

BY TIM MACMANUS

CLICK! CLICK! A QUARTER PAST SIX



“A quarter past six, a quarter past six. That’s when the goose shooting will get really good,” Joe Da Silva assured me. I didn’t have a watch on because I was on a hunting trip in Africa. I didn’t care what time it was because we weren’t trying to catch an airline flight that day. The only flight my son, Zach, and I were trying to catch was the flight of Egyptian and Spur Winged geese just minutes outside of Cape Town in South Africa. The sun was setting beautifully. Zach and I had been in the hide/blind for about an hour and a half, and we had shot a few shells at a couple of flocks of ducks since arriving. I thought to myself, “We’re going to get skunked after Joe promised me the goose hunt of our lives.” After thinking that for 10 minutes, Joe said, “You hear that?” I had earplugs in, so I pulled one out and noticed a faint cackling sound. As I listened, the crescendo of hundreds of Egyptian geese became louder and closer. Within 30 seconds, the sky around us was filled with geese. Joe excitedly yelled, “Shoot those there!” We let the lead fly, and Zach and I each dropped our first Egyptian geese in South Africa. Joe threw his left hand up near my face, pointed at his watch and said, “Like I said, a quarter past six.” As I stared at his beautiful gold watch, I saw 6:14 pm. The next 30 minutes proved to be the wildest, most exhilarating and most spectacular goose shooting of my water fowling career.

With the help of some great wing shooting friends like Sterling Burnett, Charles Shelton, William Nixon and others, I have become an avid water fowler and wing shooter over the past seven years. I am always in search of a new experience in God’s great outdoors. In 2005, I was trying to assist a friend in setting up a plains game hunt, and my friend’s schedule only allowed 2 days to fit it in.


During this process of finding a hunt close to Cape Town is when I met Joe Da Silva of Cape Town Hunting Safaris over the internet. Joe advertises very regularly in several hunting publications, so I decided, after chatting with him on the phone and checking a few references, to recommend his operation to my friend. The hunt turned out to be a rousing success with kudos for Joe and his great service as well as his lovely wife Nicole, who is the definition of hospitality and charm. In January 2007, I was fortunate to meet both Joe and Nicole in person when they came to the Dallas Safari Club convention. I had a trip planned in May 2007 to celebrate my son Zach’s graduation from Texas A&M, where he had been the President of the Texas A&M Chapter of Ducks Unlimited, the #1 university fund raising DU chapter in the nation. Joe insisted we work a few days into our safari schedule for him. When Joe is looking into your eyes and insists you hunt with him, you will most likely comply as the Da Silva charm is difficult to resist. Besides, he was talking GOOSE HUNTING, one of my favorite hunts! Now that we had a great adventure on the calendar with Joe, Zach and I were both anticipating an extremely memorable goose shoot.

Joe picked us up at Johannesburg Airport as he was there dropping clients from a cape buffalo hunt. Since I had never visited the East Cape, I asked Joe if we could drive down to

the East Cape because Zach and I wanted to see and experience as much of the countryside as we could during our stay. We stopped at one of Joe’s East Cape operations near Craddock and stayed in a very comfortable ranch house. Even though it was quite cold and threatening rain, we were up early the next morning looking for springbok. Joe offered Zach a

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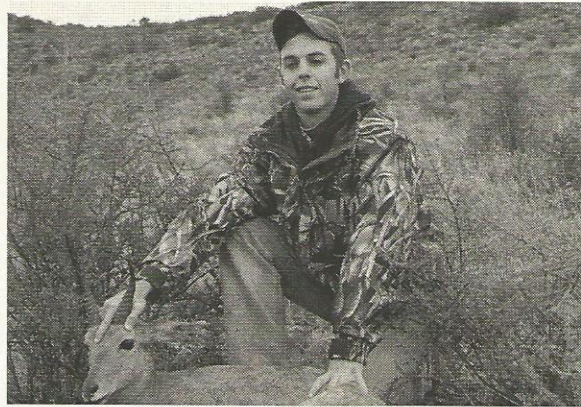
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springbok as a college graduation gift. Zach gave a hearty "Yes Sir" to that offer and off we went into the nasty weather. We finally were able to get within 350 yards but because of heavy winds, Zach missed his springbok by just a bit and that hunt was over as the entire herd ramped the horizon just a few seconds after his shot. Just like any hunter, Zach was very dejected about missing. Being a highly experienced PH, Joe told him we'd get the next one like any great PH does when you miss.

Little did we know that Joe's statement would come true very quickly. Just 10 minutes later, we were driving around to another area of the ranch when Zach yells, "What's that?" Joe threw up his glasses and with an increased pitch and urgency in his voice said, "That's a mountain reedbuck. Zach, you must shoot him quickly!" Zach has not hunted extensively in Africa but from my stories about PH language and what they mean when they say certain things, he knew that he must shoot. He took a quick aim and squeezed off. CLICK! Yep, the dreaded empty chamber. The buck began to walk away. As only a 22 year old can do, Zach quickly reloaded, and his 300 Remington roared in less than 2 seconds. Shortly after that, we were all admiring a beautiful 7 inch plus mountain reedbuck that will put Zach's name well into the record book. This was an incredible trophy for Zach to start with on his South African safari.

Staying focused on our objective of seeing the beautiful East Cape countryside, we traveled toward Port Elizabeth with a side trip to the beautiful Addo Elephant Park. For our second night, we stopped at a charming B&B at Jefferies Bay just west of Port Elizabeth.



many 5 star restaurants there. After all this activity, we were finally ready for my number one priority with Cape Town Hunting Safaris, our goose shoot.

Joe lives about 30 minutes from the Water Front in Cape Town on a farm in a very quiet, rural setting. We stayed at Joe and Nicole's home as our home camp and drove an incredibly short 5 minutes to the pond where we would be goose hunting. We were following in the foot steps of Terry Blauwkamp, long time DSC member and Camptalk contributor through his "Reloading" column.

Terry had hunted geese twice with

The next morning, we were on the road again to head for Cape Town for our goose hunt. The drive from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town is beautiful and stunning with canyons, rapidly rising mountains, beautiful rivers, huge waves on the beach and expansive grasslands. We arrived in Cape Town that evening, and after a fine meal and good sleep, Joe surprised us with a trip to hunt fallow deer the following morning. We attempted several stalks on a herd of about 40 fallow deer with two excellent bucks. These deer were quite sharp and stayed out in the wide open. Even though we put several good stalks on them, the herd never allowed us to get set up for a good, clean shot. We also enjoyed some guinea fowl shooting, as well as jump shooting some yellow billed ducks. Anytime during our adventures when I would ask about the goose hunting, Joe just kept talking about the geese arriving at "a quarter past six." Early in the afternoon, we headed for a quick tour of Signal Hill overlooking Cape Town. We then ventured down to the Cape Town Water Front to get a tasty afternoon snack at one of the

Joe only two weeks ahead of us and enjoyed tremendous success in the same area we were hunting. You can ask Terry when you see him about his goose hunts with Joe Da Silva. We set up the blind and decoys in about 15 minutes on the east end of a 5 acre lake. We were facing west looking into the sun with the wind at our backs. Within just a few minutes of setting up, we got several shots at ducks. After about 15 minutes, the bird traffic stopped, and it was very quiet as the sun sank slowly toward its daily retreat on the western horizon.

As the sun set, I was convinced we were skunked. We had only seen four geese during our sit, and they were over a quarter mile away. Remember, I didn't have my watch on. Then, Joe said, "Listen". That's when we heard the orchestra of geese sounds increase as they flew to where we were. When the geese started pouring in, the decibel level was incredible. After Zach and I dropped our first two geese, that's when Joe showed his watch. It said 6:14 pm. He had assured me all day that shooting would begin at a quarter past six. He was off by one minute. As waves of geese



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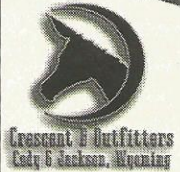
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would come in, I would unload my Winchester 1300 DU 12 gauge at them and reload as quickly as I could. No matter how quickly I reloaded, I would always loose at least one shooting opportunity during the reloading process. Remember the "CLICK" Zach experienced with his mountain reedbuck? I was frantically reloading my 12 gauge when a group of six geese swung in close over our decoys. I quickly shouldered my 1300 and focused on the lead bird. When I pulled the trigger, you guessed it, "CLICK." I had forgotten to put one in the chamber during all the excitement. Zach was shooting fast and feverishly with Joe's Remington 1100 as well doing more damage than I was on the Egyptian geese. As a water fowler, I must confess I flock shot those geese many times. It was overwhelming at some points just how many geese were in front of us. At one point, Joe put his arm around my shoulders, and with great enthusiasm said, "Do we have the geese or do we have the geese?" I laughed so hard for about a minute that I had difficulty shooting. Even though it was getting dark, Joe kept hollering, "Keep shooting. Keep shooting." Zach used the new quarter moon in the western sky to highlight one goose and knock it down.

As it grew darker after sunset, I could barely make out the geese anymore. I saw a group of a dozen geese coming in from our right and

picked one out of the flock. As I swung on this bird, my shotgun and Zach's shotgun went off within milliseconds of each other. Yes, indeed! The famous old water fowler trick - we picked the same bird. That goose was crushed by the Czech lead shot we were shooting. When that goose hit the water with a huge splash, I turned to Joe and said "Our work is done here!" I was both exhilarated and exhausted and can't begin to tell you how much fun this goose shoot was. It was an unbelievable experience to have that many geese around us. It reminded me of a clay target duck flush at a five stand course where the targets just never end. The only exception would be we had more targets to shoot.

All you water fowl hunters and wing shooters be advised, during the 2008 DSC Wild Spirit Convention auction, Joe Da Silva of Cape Town Hunting Safaris is offering a 4-day bird hunt for two hunters from his base camp just outside Cape Town. Joe also offers the South African smorgasbord of exceptional and exotic plains game as well as hunts in Mozambique and Tanzania. One of Joe's clients has shot one of the largest vhal reedbucks in the record books. He also offers exceptional Cape buffalo hunts on some extremely large properties across South Africa. Joe and Nicole Da Silva are exceptional hosts, and being a native Capetonian, Joe can take you places in Cape Town no one else ever will,

as well as provide you with some very keen wing shooting. Keep your eye on this donation if you are a wing shooter. I believe it will prove to be an awesome time.

Our goose hunt in South Africa was an incredible experience! When I stop and close my eyes and think of that evening, I can still see large, ghost-like Egyptian geese flying all different directions in the twilight, hear the symphonic sound of their honking and cackling and beating of their wings as they swirled about. I've hunted in many spots across Texas, Oklahoma and Saskatchewan for waterfowl and have seen some spectacular hunts, but Zach and I traveled one-third of the way around the world to experience a hunt that most water fowlers dream about. It was the wildest goose shoot I have ever seen. My only disappointment with this hunt was we were only able to do it once because we had other hunting objectives and a tight time schedule during this trip. BUT I'M STILL EXCITED! I'm excited because as long as Joe Da Silva and Cape Town Hunting Safaris are around, I can be blessed by heading back to the Dark Continent and have another heart pounding, wild goose shoot only 30 minutes from beautiful downtown Cape Town.

Find Cape Town Hunting Safaris on the web at www.capetownhunting safaris.co.za CT

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