



The hunting party meticulously follows the eland tracks. "The eland outmaneuvered us repeatedly, instinctively staying downwind and vanishing into the endless miombo woodland," the author wrote.

THE UNTAMED CORNERS OF AFRICA

*Mozambique Provides Exceptional
Adventure for This Hunter*

BY KEVIN FAZENDERIO

The eland emerged from the trees only 40 yards away. It moved like a shadow, massive but impossibly quiet. For days, we had tracked hoofprints so large they seemed unreal. Yet even those huge tracks had not prepared me for the Livingstone eland now standing before me.



The author came to Mozambique hoping to find an old warrior of a buffalo. He was successful, taking this 11-year-old bull.



Author Kevin Fazenderio with his beautiful Livingstone eland that had eluded the hunting party for days before finally showing itself. "I took a deep breath, steadied myself and racked the bolt with authority this time. The eland raised his head and looked straight at me. As he stood slightly quartered and alert, I fired," he wrote.

My PH spread the sticks in front of me. I mounted my .416 Rigby, took a deep breath and began a slow, deliberate squeeze of the trigger. Time seemed to stop, my focus narrowing to a single point.

Then I heard a "click."

It was a dryfire that sounded like thunder.



My original inspiration for traveling to Mozambique was buffalo, not eland. I wanted to hunt an old buffalo in one of the most untamed corners of southern Africa. I worked with Jannie Otto to find Mashanbanzou Safaris and the Niassa Reserve.

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The scars and weathered bosses of the bull buffalo.

Mashambanzou's vast concession, spanning over 500,000 acres, is a rugged landscape of endless miombo woodlands interrupted by occasional meadows and scattered remnants of subsistence slash-and-burn farming.

Decades of civil war and pervasive tsetse flies have left this region untouched by modern development. Sadly, years of unchecked poaching had depleted wildlife populations until the dedicated efforts of conservation-minded outfitters like Mashambanzou Safaris helped breathe life back into the ecosystem. Today, thanks to their work, the area boasts thriving herds of Cape buffalo, Roosevelt sable, Livingstone eland, leopards, lions, Niassa wildebeest and many other species.

Mashambanzou's commitment to conservation is both significant and effective. They employ more than 60 local residents as trackers and game scouts, empowering the community while working to eradicate poaching. Their dedicated management has transformed this concession into a haven for both wildlife and hunters seeking a true wilderness experience.

I came with hopes of finding an old warrior of a buffalo — a “dagga boy” nearing the end of his days. I quickly learned that for those willing to endure the scorching heat, the relentless tsetse flies and grueling days of tracking, the opportunities to encounter one of these ancient bulls are tremendous.

The process of tracking small groups of buffalo bulls through dense woodlands, thorny scrub and tall grass was both demanding and deeply rewarding. My professional hunter, Edwin Young, and his team of trackers expertly translated the slightest sign into a clear indication of the buffalos' mood, pace and direction.

Over the course of the hunt, a visiting hunter can improve his skills just by observing the trackers at work. This improvement only allows one to more fully appreciate the abilities of an experienced Professional Hunter and a gifted team of trackers as they find bent blades of grass and effortlessly decipher between old and fresh tracks.

On Day 3 of tracking buffalo, our perseverance paid off. We located a small group of bulls, and after careful stalking, I was able to take an 11-year-old buffalo. He was an old warrior, his scars and weathered bosses bearing witness to a life of fending off lions and competing bulls.

We celebrated that night in camp, with me secure in the belief that nothing could rival the challenge of tracking and hunting a buffalo in Niassa.

But I was wrong.

The next morning, we began looking for a Livingstone eland and early in the day, we crossed an enormous set of tracks. Our spirits soared at the prospect of finding an exceptional bull.

I continued to dream about the bull that was making those impressions over the next four unrelenting days of tracking. The eland outmaneuvered us repeatedly, instinctively staying downwind and vanishing into the endless miombo woodland.

We covered nearly 30 miles through the vast Niassa Reserve, and with each passing hour on the trail, Edwin's confidence never wavered. By the end of the third day, if my confidence was not shaken, I was at least beginning to appreciate that this eland had grown so large by eluding the attempts of more gifted and experienced hunters who had preceded me.

But after four days of tracking, the pattern broke. After countless hours of consistently managing to stay downwind of us, the eland reversed its course and inexplicably walked straight back on its own tracks.

I soon realized that I had forgotten to reload when I had unchambered a round earlier while stopped at the vehicle. My practice is to always unchamber a round as I approach the vehicle and then rechamber a round as we are leaving. This time, I remembered doing the former but somehow forgot to do the latter.

The eland heard the dryfire and froze, his massive head lifting as he sniffed the air, ears twitching in response to the strange sound. Edwin shot me a glance that, as he later admitted, hid disappointment under his unchanging expression.

He had assumed the hunt was over.

I kept my gaze fixed on the eland and slowly worked the bolt, pulling it back and then sliding it forward, trying to chamber a round. I moved too cautiously — the massive CZ extractor claw failed to grasp the cartridge, and the bolt wouldn't close. I was in disbelief. I was staring at the largest eland I had ever seen or was likely to see again, and I still had no round in the chamber.

The bull shifted his weight, preparing to bolt.

This was my last chance!

I took a deep breath, steadied myself and racked the bolt with authority this time. The eland raised his head and looked straight at me. As he stood slightly quartered and alert, I fired.

The bullet hit just inside the shoulder. The eland wheeled and crashed through the undergrowth, the

forest exploding with sound as he disappeared into the miombo. Edwin and I exchanged a glance — equal parts relief and disbelief. We immediately took up the track.

It didn't take long. Just 50 yards from where he had stood, we found the eland lying still at the bottom of a dry creek bed. Approaching the fallen giant, I was struck by his sheer size and magnificence. Up close, the beautiful spiral horns, powerful frame and the light, almost ethereal sheen of his coat left me in awe.

Reflecting on the safari now, I am filled with gratitude. Taking such a magnificent animal was a privilege, but it is the lasting relationships and the memories of a shared adventure that resonate most. The rugged beauty of the Niassa Reserve, with its wild, untamed expanse and the camaraderie of Edwin and the excellent teams at Jannie Otto and Mashambanzou, has left me dreaming of another trip to Niassa. 🐘

Kevin Fazenderio is an SCI Member who lives in New Jersey.



The author takes a selfie with a group of smiling young children from the local village.