

BRENDA'S MONSTER Leopard

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #30 —



It doesn't get much better than this – a huge leopard and a happy hunter.

Any male leopard is a great trophy; but sometimes, in far away and remote places, you find a real monster. We were hunting in Maasailand, in northern Tanzania, just below the border with Kenya. The principle vegetation there is thorn bush and grass. The area is sparsely populated by the Maasai and Dorobo tribes, who have lived there, with little change, for thousands of years. The Maasai herd sheep and cattle and the Dorobo, who curiously speak the same language, are hunter/gatherers.

There are a few dirt roads that the outfitter grades each year before the hunting season, but mostly there are just trails through the thorn bushes, created by the livestock. Our trackers were all Maasai and one day a young herdsman waived us down to say that he had seen the tracks of a huge leopard at a distant waterhole with no access by road.

supplies', as we didn't want to drive the new road in the night. We built a blind, cleared a place for our camp a mile or so away and cut and piled a thorn bush barricade to keep out the wild critters.

“...the biggest leopard we had ever seen.”

Brenda Arrived at 4:30 and went directly to the blind. In remote areas, leopard often come in during daylight hours and indeed the leopard showed up an hour later. After all this work, it was a one hour hunt, for the biggest leopard we have ever seen. We slept on tarps on the hard ground and drove happily back to base camp the next morning, with this monster leopard.

Labor is pretty cheap there – one dollar per day per person, so our PH had one of our trackers and a team of four locals cut in a road to the waterhole. They used



This was our spike camp – way out in the bush.

nothing but corn knives and it took four days; then we drove three hours to the waterhole, hung an impala leg for bait and drove out.

Brenda was the one that wanted a big leopard, but since my car knew how to get there, we checked the bait. It was nearly noon when we arrived and the leopard had fed the night before, but Brenda was in the other safari car, three or more hours away. We were able to get a message to her PH by radio and asked them to bring some 'overnight



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This was the dining area of base camp; we missed it that night.