

CROCODILE at FIFTY PACES

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #48 —

“Do you want to shoot a croc?” With that simple, unexpected, whispered question from my professional hunter, this story begins; you see, we were looking for a hippo to shoot for lion bait – and the thought of bumping into a croc never crossed my mind. “Well, I don’t know; where is he and how big?” I whispered back. We were walking alongside a dry riverbed, in pretty tall grass, crossing through many ditches that carried water down the river during the rainy season – a decent area for hippo, but not a likely place to find a crocodile.

The croc was about 50 yards to our right, by a small pocket of water that we couldn’t see, and the trackers had spotted him as they stepped off the higher ground and into the ditch. I moved forward quietly for a look. All we could

see was the middle part of the left side of a crocodile – no head, no tail, no legs; just the middle. He was perfectly broadside, facing left. “Do

you want to shoot him?” “How big is he?” “I can’t tell, but he’s pretty good – perhaps 10 feet.” “Ok, I’ll shoot him.” In hunting, and especially in Africa, shot opportunities often come just that quickly, so one must always be mentally prepared to make a quick decision – yes or no. This was an unusual situation, as we could only see half of the trophy.

My rifle was an original Winchester Model 1895 in 405 Winchester (made in 1904), plenty of cartridge, but you have to hit a croc just right, or he immediately takes off – into the water, which they are never far from.



This is the entire pool of water and not much to hide in; but if he were only wounded, it would have been a nightmare to have gotten him out.

We could just see the crease in his skin, behind his left front leg, and the PH said to shoot him there. We were in no hurry; the PH carefully set up the sticks, I settled in, carefully took aim and squeezed the trigger. The croc never moved, and there was no evidence of a hit; so I shot him again – with the

“...you have to hit a croc just right...”

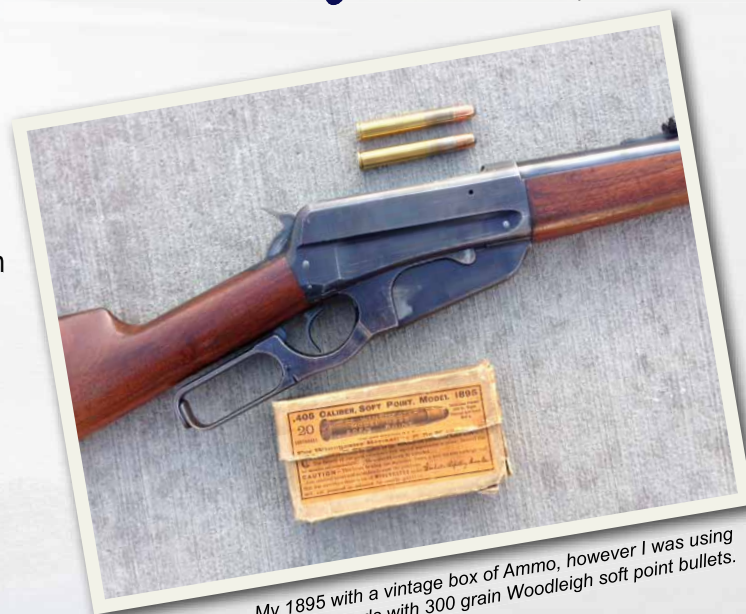
same aiming point and got the same results. “He must be dead, let’s go see!” Both shots were practically in the same hole and the croc was dead, however we put one additional shot into his brain – just for our peace of mind; and with that shot he flopped into a small pool of water below.

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The trackers tied a rope around his leg and pulled him out.



My 1895 with a vintage box of Ammo, however I was using reloads with 300 grain Woodleigh soft point bullets.