

BUFFALO at the MUZZLE

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #180 —

This story starts with The Nearly Perfect Safari Rifle, we built back in 2011; I've used it exclusively in Africa since. But, this was the first time Brenda and I had hunted in the rain forest, where humidity is very high. After 36 hours in country, I loaded my rifle for the first time. Small problem, I could only get two rounds down. The wood had swollen slightly preventing a third cartridge. In retrospect, we didn't allow enough clearance in the bottom of the blind magazine box.



An old logging trail is immediately to my front; the jungle is everything behind me.

Two down and one up should be fine; but, for safety, this camp doesn't want clients to have a round chambered, while in the thick jungle; so, there were only the two down. PH Peter had carried my rifle

all safari, to keep me fresh for the shot. His lead tracker carried his. Our plan was that he would hand off my rifle and take his, at the first sign we were getting close to buffalo. I would chamber a round from my pocket, flip the scope covers and have three rounds available.

We'd been on the track for an hour, when the dogs barked 60 yards away. Quickly we cut the distance in half, and stopped. Peter chambered a round in my rifle - but the top round popped from the rails early, which he noticed and removed. He handed me the loaded rifle and the second round. They say there's only time for one shot in the jungle, but my brain wanted two!



The PHs say this is an extra big Dwarf Forest Buffalo – top ten in SCI books. PH Peter Wood, from Zimbabwe, on the right.

We stood quietly in the dense understory of the rain forest, with the trackers to our left. I put a second round in the gun and unlocked the scope covers, Peter called and the buffalo came immediately – from 30 yards. At first there was just noise and brush movement, but he quickly presented a shot. At ten yards, I pulled the trigger; but in all the confusion, I had forgotten the safety. I hollered "safety" to my PH and reached to push it off.

"We'd been on track for an hour..."

At four yards, the buffalo turned hard to our left, presumably going for the trackers. Peter put a bullet from his 458 Lott behind the shoulder. My shot was one-step later, entering the left rear hip and stopping under the hide on the off shoulder. Down he went. Had he not turned, he would literally have been at my muzzle! Clearly, the most important service a PH can provide is saving your life.

Midway^{USA}

Larry Potterfield

Kika Camp
Rain Forest of the East Province
Cameroon, Africa
9 May 2017



My Rifle, with an empty 375 H&H case, and recovered Nosler Partition bullet. The gloves were hot, but nice to wear in the jungle.