

PH Spotlight

ANDY CLARKE

Andy Clarke, of Clarke Safaris, specializes in offering world-class hunting in some of the finest hunting grounds of Southern Africa, namely Mozambique, Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia.



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Andy (center) with two Bushman trackers, considered amongst the best in the world.

What do you wish a first-time dangerous game client knew before arriving?

The thought of coming over on a first big game hunt can be daunting but it is important for the client to have practiced and be confident with his weapon of choice, to be competent off sticks out to 110 yards, and to be familiar with the anatomy and kill zone of the species he intends on hunting. As a PH, it is important to communicate with our clients and to share with them as much of our knowledge as possible, prior to the hunt.

How often do things go about as planned?

Whilst hunting dangerous game, we are often faced with unpredictable situations, yet as long as we work as a team and all play our part, things tend to go according to plan, far more often than not.

Who and how many people make up your best hunting team?

I have had the privilege of hunting with some incredible trackers over the years, particularly in Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. If you have a good tracker to

assist you, your ultimate team should be made up of three people: client, tracker and PH. Dangerous species have extremely acute senses and any additional members of the hunting party, such as casual observers and camera operators, tend to lessen your chances of success.

What makes a good client into a great client?

Over the past 15 years, a great client may include a number of things but most important is a client that you can rely on to play his part in making a quick and good shot when required. A great client is well practised, listens to what the PH advises and respects each member of the team. The importance of communication cannot be stressed enough.

Do you have favourite DG guns, optics and gear?

First and foremost, my Heym .500 Nitro Express. Having such a reliable rifle that allows you a quick second shot is a great advantage when you find yourself in a sticky situation, and that day always comes!

When it comes to binoculars, I am a huge fan of the Swarovski's. If you can afford them, buy them. A top end Leupold scope will never let you down. In bullets, Swift A-Frame is the best. Provided you place your shot right, it will never let you down. In the case of elephant or whenever a solid is required, the Hornady DGS is a great choice.

A good, lightweight, comfortable pair of boots is very important. Buffalo and elephant hunting can require many miles of tracking.

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What is your favourite DG species and why?

Cape Buffalo – they generally offer a great challenge. Hunting them will make any person's adrenaline pump. The reward of bagging a good old dagga boy after many days of hard tracking is very tough to beat. There is good reason why it has acquired the name "Black Death."

What's the best advice you received as you were growing up and doing your PH apprenticeship? Who are your mentors and heroes?

I was taught patience from a very early age. The best advice I ever received was that when you have a wounded buffalo in thick cover, give yourself as many hours as daylight will allow before following up. A buffalo is an expert at getting the wind in his favor and waiting for you. The sooner you follow him, the fresher he is likely to be, and the greater the chance of facing a high speed charge.

My mentors include Mark Whitehead of Mark Whitehead Safaris who taught me all the fundamentals of hunting in my early days. Rob and Barry Style of Buffalo Range Safaris played an important role in teaching me the art of hunting dangerous game during my apprenticeship with them in Zimbabwe. Duncan Paul, one of the founders of Hunters and Guides, played a pivotal role in keeping me in the game and advising me on starting my own company, Clarke Safaris, in 2012. This turned out to be the best decision I ever made.

What are your experiences with poaching, anti-poaching and anti-hunting efforts?

As a dangerous game PH, you often find yourself involved with anti-poaching efforts. Mark Haldane's anti-poaching unit in Coutada 11 and 12 is without a doubt the top unit in Africa, having been funded by clients and DSC. I have spent time working with this fine unit during my time up there.

As far as anti-hunting goes, we hunters need to educate those who don't understand what an essential role trophy hunting plays in combatting poaching and protecting the fine species that Africa has to offer.

If she was willing, would you take your mother on a dangerous game hunt and would you be her PH?

My mother has never been interested in hunting herself but has always been very supportive of what I do. Yes, I would definitely take her hunting for dangerous game if she gave me the chance! 

Favorite celebratory food and drink after a successful hunt?

A fine scotch whisky and soda along with a good venison meal.

