

**Konstantin Popov** (Russia) hunted in Sudan during January 2011 and was able to collect both the aoudad (Barbary sheep) and the Nubian ibex. Konstantin did a great job with his report, which is called "A Desert Dream: My Expedition to the Nubian Desert, Sudan," so we will use excerpts from it here:

*For a long time I could not make up my mind about this trip. The biggest hurdle was the news coming from the country – not too magnificent to say the least. But the only outfitter was pushing 77 years old and I knew the more I procrastinated, the harder the opportunity would become.*

*Being an adrenaline junkie I decided to add some extra excitement to what promised to be an already exciting hunt and booked a tour for January 2011 – the exact month the referendum on South Sudan independency was planned. I would fly to the northeast of the country – straight to the Nubian Desert and the Red Sea Hills, where it is possible to hunt the Barbary sheep (aoudad) and the Nubian ibex. I also knew that if luck were on my side, the Eritrean gazelle and the Salt's dik-dik could be additional trophies.*

*My adventures started right after I arrived in Khartoum and went through the customs. I was offered two options: either I left my weapon with them for "safekeeping" until my trip out of the country, or I could pay a huge deposit. Of course I chose the deposit.*

*At midday I returned to the airport to fly to Port Sudan – a city in the northwest on the bank of the Red Sea. In a couple of hours I was met there by **Angelo Dacey**, the legendary 77-year-old outfitter who had spent the past 50 years hunting in Africa. I was really delighted to see him – a legend alive – so cheerful and vivacious as if powered by some hidden engine. His hunting tales and stories about great trophies and famous hunters were pretty fascinating! Our arrival at the camp made a sensation: Angelo is a much-respected man in these parts and the local ladies simply adore him. Each time he visited was like Christmas to these people – he always arrived with tons of gifts. We had to stay overnight in the camp, and could move to the ibex hunting area only in the morning.*

*At 10 a.m. our journey began. We had a team of nine, including two Arab elders from a nearby village who knew some of the local dialects as well as their native Arabic. Our way lay to the closest mountain range, a couple of hours' ride from the main camp. There we were to meet the local mountain guide; we had a plan to sneak up on the animals and hunt them with close approach.*

*We were aware of the great possibility to find some gazelles on our way there, so we kept looking around as we chatted hoping to spot these timid animals. After years of the long wars, poaching and drought, the number of gazelles had dramatically decreased, and ostriches had disappeared completely. Suddenly I spied a yellow spot in the distance quickly moving near the hills. A gazelle! Luck was on my side – it was a trophy buck looking for a safe spot on the nearby hill. Unfortunately, shooting a running gazelle is a nigh*

*impossible task, akin to just throwing away some of my ammo. Sadly I followed the buck with my eyes and noticed the increasing distance – 250, 280, 310 yards ... In just a second my trophy would disappear behind the heights.*

*There are certain things in life that can be easily explained and other things that can be explained with a lot of difficulty and then there are those that we cannot explain at all, what happened next falls into the third category. For as I watched it run, the buck suddenly stopped and looks back. The gods of the hunt must be smiling down upon us this day, I think. Instantly I was down on my knee, my aim at its blade and shot. The sound of my rifle is nearly covered by the enthusiastic cheers of my Arab friends. I have struck my target.*

*We put the gazelle in the car and moved along to the point of our rendezvous. I foolishly thought to myself, if it was going to be this easy I would likely be able to shoot an ibex that day as well. But, apparently, our guide did not think the same. Actually, he*

*did not seem to think anything at all – when we arrived for our "rendezvous point," he was nowhere to be found. His children told us that he had left to the neighboring village to see his relatives. But we did not find him in that village either; and we had nobody to replace him with – he was the only guide in the village. Between curses, Angelo managed to explain to me that the locals were not too obliging and there was nothing we could do about it. All was not lost however, as he had a backup plan – a deal with the other village to perform a driven hunt.*

*In the evening we arrived in the other village. They seemed to be cooperative and confirmed their readiness to help us the next day, so we set our camp closer to the mountains about a couple of miles from the settlement. Around 3 a.m. we*

*were awakened by the loud voices of the villagers getting ready for the hunt. We only had need for 10 to 12 people, but at 5 a.m. we were surprised to discover that there were more than 50 of them ... including babies. Their spokesperson arrived pretty soon after and demanded taking everybody as beater-ups and also increasing their salary some times. The last thing we needed were 50 beater-ups, who could spoil any hunt pretty easily. Our negotiations led to nothing. Soon, we along with the whole tribe left our camp shouting something in a squeaky tone.*

*It took us two days to get to the desert. We drove along many identical-looking sand drifts in a direction known only to Angelo. Only the brief glimpses of white shiny bones pointed to the fact that some time now long since passed this was an old nomadic path that we were moving along. The desert's end was as sudden as its beginning. Feeling relieved, we rode straight into a little village near an oasis. There we should have met both our trackers. The first one was eagerly waiting for us, but the other one had mysteriously disappeared – he went to see his relatives in some other valley. It seemed that the sand dunes weren't the only things*



Konstantin Popov (Russia) took this aoudad from Sudan in 2011.  
Konstantin was hunting with Angelo Dacey Safaris.



that appeared to repeat in the desert. Only this time we were eager to find him because we could not start the hunt without the second tracker. It took us two days to find him and his relatives in the desert. Finally all the team was gathered and we could start our aoudad hunt the next day.

We got up after sunrise. While the cook was making us some porridge, I found a precious moment to survey the barren land around me. Though our table was in the shadow of two shriveled dying acacias, there were no other plants visible. We camped near a small mountain range in the middle of the desert. We were surrounded by masses of yellow sand and naked black mountains. The closest and, for all I knew, only well was 20 miles away (about half a day trip in the dunes), so we would have to watch our water supply carefully; rationally, we could use it only to drink and make some food.

So, here is how the hunt happens: early in the morning the area is searched for the tracks of the large males. If such tracks are discovered (usually they lead deep into the mountains) the hunter just needs to follow them and claim his prize.

A long seven days had passed. Despite the heat we searched, despite the blistering wind we searched, despite our tired bodies we searched all the mountains around. During this time we did see occasional tracks but despite following them into the mountains the animals always eluded us. Angelo put on a brave face that must have come from his many years hunting this area and the many frustrations he had undoubtedly encountered before, but deep down I knew he was in dismay over our lack of luck. Finally we agreed that we would do the aoudad search for two days and then return to the ibex zone.

In the morning, while riding around a far-away territory, we discovered a fresh sheep trail. The tracks, which had been left by two species, went deep into the desert and up a mountain range to a zone where it had not rained for at least a year. The sheep probably driven crazy by the heat had just left there.

Luck was on our side once more. To our great relief there were no signs the sheep had left their lair for the night, but the question remained of how long would this luck hold out. We started our search fully powered by sudden hope. Alas, after a half-day of laborious searching we found nothing but coal black stones with nothing for the animals to eat.

We managed to get back down to the car a couple of hours later and rode around the range looking for the exit trail again. But still, there was no sign of their exodus. By all logic our sheep had to still be somewhere in the mountains. Looking around at our exhausted faces, Angelo asked me if I was willing to go back up into the mountains. I knew this was most likely my last chance to see the sheep – at least seeing them would be better than nothing, I thought. So I summoned together all my strength and got ready for one last dreaded trip.

It soon became obvious that our final search would be carried out under the moonlight. The trackers checked the possible passes between the stones, while I looked around using my binoculars. Suddenly one of the trackers asked me to check something with my binoculars (I am the only one in the group to have them) – he thinks he spotted something on a far-away slope, about 800 yards. I looked through my binoculars and I saw movement: a sheep, standing on the big rocks and looking at us. I saw its long mane curling on its chest and legs; undoubtedly a ram – a lonely ram. There were no other animals to be seen. After only a couple of seconds the ram turned around and started to go up the narrow ravine, hiding behind the huge stones. After such long and wearisome days of chasing, I could not bring myself to simply let it go. Going up a couple of meters, I fell flat on a tall big stone and tried to find the best position. The locals were looking at me indifferently. The distance was 730 yards, and I could see only its back showing a little behind the rocks. I aimed, and seconds later a loud bang filled the air. The animal was still going up. I had missed it, I was sure. So I got him in my sight again, corrected my shot and repeat the sequence. The aoudad changed its direction. This means one thing – I got it!

With my faithful gun I ran about 100 yards higher, cutting the distance between us. Once again – a convenient stone and I started



This Nubian ibex from Sudan was taken by Konstantin Popov (Russia) in 2011. Konstantin hunted with the legendary Angelo Dacey Safaris.

to aim. My heart was pounding heavily in my chest as if willing to jump out, I could feel my lungs working as a huge pair of bellows fanning the fire of my desire for this trophy. I lost my breath; the lack of oxygen was getting to me, causing my head to spin. I shot two more times and started to run up the slope again. The aoudad should be somewhere near. And there he was: with a huge red spot on his chest, he was slowly moving away, still trying to hide behind the rocks at about 300 yards. Realizing he was mine now, I made a final precise shot.

Three days later, we had crossed the desert and changed our hunting team; our next camp was located near a pretty big mountain chain. Its real name – Red Sea Hills – now seemed unsatisfactory to me: these things are a lot bigger than any hill one can imagine. Soon we discovered something interesting while clearing the camping site – a couple of almost transparent scorpions. These “neighbors” surely made every morning remarkable – we made sure to check our shoes carefully before we put them on. Two hours before dusk, we decided to check out the hills, as there was a chance to hopefully notice fresh ibex tracks. Suddenly, after turning for the millionth time, our tracker stopped straight. About 100 meters from us I could see a huge, statuesque ibex. Like a photo from a postcard proudly displayed on a gas station card rack, the goat was standing proudly on a huge rock, showing us his side. The only thing missing from this iconic image were the words “Welcome to whatever city you happened to be in.” This sight was incredibly fascinating – the animal looked like it was an offering to me from the strict local hunting gods who had observed all the difficulties we had had. With a single bullet from my gun, I accepted that offering gratefully.

I have looked through all my photos and then sat staring out the window and thinking. I have had some hard hunts in my life, but seeing only one sheep, one ibex and 15 gazelles (12 of them more than a kilometer away) in a 23-day search – that was for the first time in my long hunting career. And also only three chances to get an aimed shot; thankfully I’ve used them all. My respect for Angelo grew immeasurably. There are only few people who can organize such long and complex expedition-style hunts. No, actually I have underestimated Angelo’s role – he is the only man who can do this!

Konstantin is one of just over a dozen GSCO members to hunt with Angelo over the past 10 years. He is one of the very, VERY few to get both Sudan mountain trophies on the same trip. Our congratulations to him and a true legend, Angelo Dacey.

