



My tent in Umkanyakude's bush camp.



Australian Gerard Kirkham with his huge warthog.

Below: My 7x57, loaded with 150gr PMP, Pro-Amm ammunition accounted for this impala ram.



Below: The nyala bull I stalked – to get his picture.



When I was a teenager I could not get enough of the Afrikaans author PJ Schoeman's books. He grew up on a Natal farm where he learned to speak Zulu and hunt birds with his little *bafana* friends. After graduating to antelope hunting and centre-fire rifles he spent more time with older Zulus around campfires, some of whom were experienced hunters, and listened to their stories. Zulus are good story tellers and they make free use of metaphors to add "meat to the bones".

In Schoeman's stories the Zulus describe the Natal bushveld as a place of many shadows where huge, mean old buffalo bulls lurk, ready to make any careless hunter pay with his life. Also mentioned were shy bushbuck, secretive nyala, the deadly black mamba and that master of stealth and power, *ingwe* (the leopard). Schoeman turned the Natal bushveld into a mythical place for me, a place whose creatures you talked about only in hushed tones. After reading those books I had to visit those dark bushes where, in some places, even the sun struggles to find its way in.

To date I've had my share of hunts in this mythical place – the most recent being on the property of Mark Sutherland, a medical doctor who was born in Zululand, speaks Zulu fluently and runs Umkanyakude Safaris. The name Umkanyakude means to 'stand out' or literally 'shining from afar' and refers to the fever tree which, when seen from a distance seems to shine or glow. The property lies right in the heart of the Zululand bushveld, about 20km north of Hluhluwe and a few kilometres west off the N2 national road. The terrain comprises beautiful dense riverine bush, hills and open acacia