

Dogs of Bokoli

by James E. Johannes

This was my second trip to Africa and the first for Lisa Saban and Bryan and Laurie Gregory. We flew from Seattle to JFK, and then on to Casablanca, our first stop in Africa. Lisa, Bryan and Laurie flew several days ahead of my flight and stayed in Marrakech. They also arrived a few days before me in Kinshasa. The flight to Kinshasa included a stop in Douala in Cameroon, where I had previously visited in 2006. I arrived early Sunday morning and only was at the hotel for three hours before we flew on to Basankusu in a twin-engine turboprop. We had a stop in Mbandaka before arriving in Basankusu.

The first Basenjis we saw were in Basankusu, living just across the street from our hotel. Little did we know that these two dogs would be connected to the dogs we chose to bring out of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Only after our return from our trip up the Maringa and Lomako rivers did we learn that they also came from the

Female dog in Basankusu



Photo by James Johannes



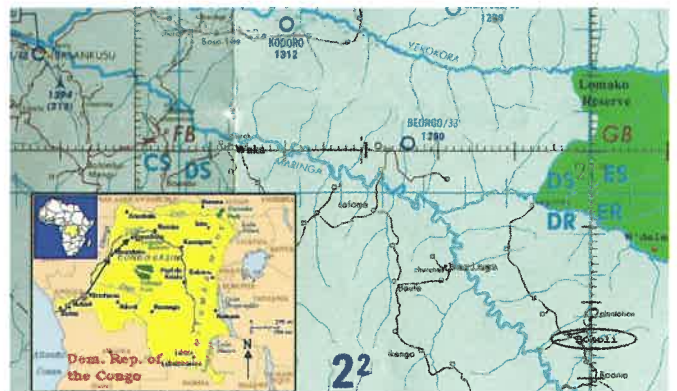
Photo of a Bokoli male dog

Photo by James Johannes

town of Bokoli. The female was pregnant and we considered trying to buy her. We decided against this because she was wary of us and was very close to giving birth on our return. She was a very nice red and white, with nice wrinkle, and could have easily passed for a Basenji seen in the U.S.

The day after our arrival in Basankusu we started our trip up the Maringa River. GoCongo provided a boat with crew. The crew consisted of Terence, who was our translator and guide. Our cook was Evelyn. Alino was the motorman, and, for security, we had Handsome Ancient Man. An extra passenger came along. Kadju was a park ranger for the Lomako Reserve, and he would travel with us as far as Lingunda. He had good knowledge of the river and assisted our travel.

Map showing the area we traveled in the DR Congo. Bokoli is south of the Lomako reserve.





Puppies Kadju acquired

Photo by Laurie Gregory

After four days we arrived in Lingunda, located on the Lomako River. The reserve headquarters was based here and this is where we registered and paid a fee to stay four days at the Lomako Reserve. We were the first official tourists to the reserve since its official opening at the end of 2009. Kadju offered to help find us puppies from deeper in the forest while we were in the reserve. We continued up the Lomako and reached Ndele, where we would be staying in the reserve.

Toward the end of our stay, we heard from some people bringing supplies up river to the reserve that Kadju had found seven puppies. On our return to Lingunda we immediately went with Kadju to his house to see the puppies. There was one tri-color, one with lots of white and red, and four who were very light red and white with black dorsal hairs. There were three males and four females. Chairs were set up for us and the local people crowded around while we looked at the puppies.

Bokoli dogs



Photo by Bryan Gregory

Kadju holding a puppy



Photo by James Johannes



Bryan and Lisa with Mosika and Lokoso (in the basket) after our return from Bokoli.

Evaluating the dogs, we found the tri was in poor health, one of the lighter-colored red and white had a bad bite, and one had too much white. We settled on three littermates, two females and a male. I selected the male and named him Mobengi (hunter). Laurie selected the other female and named her Lokalanga (peanut). Lisa decided to take the remaining littermate and named her Lola ya Zamba (heavenly forest).

We decided we wanted to see the mother of the puppies we selected and possibly get more puppies. All the puppies Kadju acquired came from Bokoli. It was approximately 36 kilometers from Lingunda. We hired a motorcycle and driver to take us down the next morning. Not all four of us could go. We had to do shuttle runs since Terence, Bryan, myself and Kadju would be going down to Bokoli. Kadju rode down to Bokoli first. We started hiking and after going 10 kilometers Bryan and I rode together. We arrived in the afternoon and were

James with Mobengi



Photo by Laurie Gregory



Boy holding Hunting Bell that we purchased

Photo by James Johannes



Laurie with Lokalanga

Photo by Lisa Saban



Male dog in Basankusu Photo by James Johannes

seated on the village chief's veranda, and under a chair was a sleeping red and white puppy. He was the fourth puppy we acquired and we named him Mosika (far away). Bryan and Laurie decided to keep him. It was hot and humid while we awaited Terence's arrival before touring the village and seeing their dogs. A mob of children and some adults followed us. Most of the dogs were red and whites, with some tri-colors and mahogany tri-color. Along the way we acquired our fifth and final puppy. Terence and the locals named her Lokoso (greedy) because she was hungry all the time. Lisa decided to keep her. The dogs in Bokoli are used for hunting. After letting the villagers know we were interested in buying hunting bells, we were able to get two.

Our return to Lingunda was easier because we were able to rent two more motorbikes with drivers. The puppies were placed in a basket tied to the back of the motorbike I was riding. It was a rough ride for them and Lokoso did not want to leave the basket at the end of the trip. She soon came out for food. We decided to use Ntomba for the prefix for the dogs we acquired. This is the clan name for the Mongo people living along the Maringa and Lomako rivers.

This trip was exploration to see what dogs were in the area. We were in Bokoli for a short time but found dogs we saw to have some of the physical characteristics being lost in the domestic Basenjjs. Plans are being made to travel back to Bokoli in 2012 and explore farther south and east into the forest. Lisa is also thinking of going in 2011.

Lisa with Lola ya Zamba

Photo by Laurie Gregory

Bokoli female dog

Photo by James Johannes

