

BONGO from the JUNGLE

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #179 –

Cameroon is a small country on the west coast of Africa; it sits slightly above the equator and shares borders with six countries – Nigeria, Central African Republic and the Congo being the most well-known. Advanced safari hunters come here mostly for dwarf forest buffalo, forest sitatunga and some of the duikers; but bongo is the real prize.

A 500-700 pound spiral-horned antelope, the western bongo lives mostly in the rain forests of central Africa.

Around camp, every square meter of ground is covered by forest, except for the dirt roads, a few scattered villages and our camp. Large trees, up to 250 feet in height, form a broken canopy; the understory is 10-30 feet in height and so dense that in only a few spots does sunlight briefly reach the forest floor. Below the understory are a few

leaves, but mostly vines, small brush, briars and tree trunks. Visibility is good out to 10 steps, but everything disappears at 30 steps. Technically, it's a rain forest; but this truly is the jungle.

The hunt began by driving the old dirt logging roads, looking for tracks. Only tracks the width of three fingers are mature bulls. Our team was five trackers, six dogs, the PH and myself – the driver staying with the car. We cut the track at 9:00 a.m. on the first day and slowly followed it through the jungle, with the trackers using their pangas (corn knives) to cut the access. Forty minutes into the hunt, the dogs bayed. Immediately we took positions behind



Larry with his "first day" bongo, from deep in the Cameroon jungle. His rifle is The Nearly Perfect Safari Rifle: 375 H&H, with a 30mm Leupold VX-7 1.5x -6x. At 10 steps, on 1.5 x, the field of view is very generous.

trees for safety. If/when the bongo breaks from the dogs, you never know which direction he will go; he just follows the easiest route. In seconds the bongo broke and ran past us at about 12 feet, exactly where we were standing a few seconds before. Bongo hunting is not without danger

"Bongo hunting is not without danger..."

to the hunters and the dogs. He stopped out of sight a short distance behind us and the dogs again put him to bay. We approached quickly and first saw him at 8 steps. From my kneeling position, I could see only his horns and neck and put a bullet where I thought his shoulder was. He struggled and I fired a second shot to put him down.

After processing the bongo, the trackers loaded everything into bush-made backpacks and we walked back on the same trail, but at a faster pace. What an exciting first morning, hunting in the jungle.

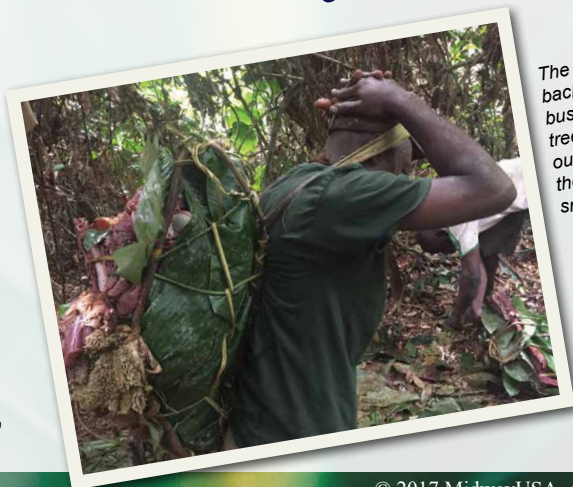


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Kika Camp
Rain Forest of the East Province
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Six dogs quietly tagged along with us, through the jungle, until they smelled the bongo and put it to bay just a few yards in front of us, but completely out of site.



The trackers made backpacks from small bushes, vines and tree bark; and packed out everything except the hip joint and the small intestines.