



*The Grey Plantain-eaters are one of the uncommonly kept species of touracos in captivity. This is the Western Grey Crinifer piscator.*



*Black-billed Touraco Tauraco shuitti.*

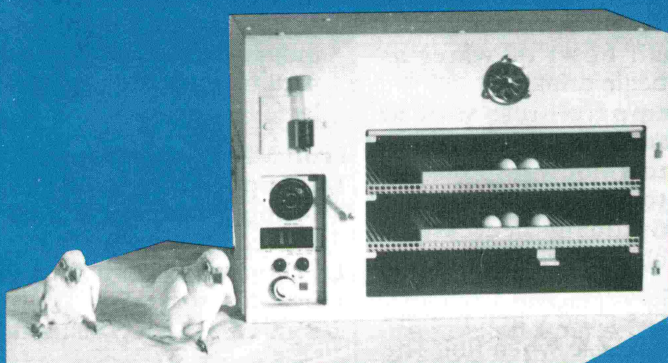


*The Bare-faced Go-away Bird Corythaixoides personata is another one of the uncommon touracos. They do not have the green body coloration of the more common species.*

## Grumbach Incubators

"The Best for your Egg"

The finest in German engineering. Solid state, automatic turn & humidity. Models from 84 to 432 egg capacity. First time available in the U.S. Introduced at the AFA convention in Phoenix.



Write or phone for free catalog.



**Grumbach®**

**Swan Creek Supply**

12240 Spencer Road, Saginaw, MI 48609

(517) 642-2716

Sales and Service

FAX (517) 642-2130



# Touracos

by Leon Milne  
Fallbrook, California

The family of *Musophagidae* is comprised of touracos, Plantain-eaters and Go-away Birds which are native only to Africa. There are 20 different species in this group. Most species can be acquired in American aviculture. The family of touracos must be surgically sexed to guarantee that one has a true pair. Most bright colors in birds are produced physically by refraction from microscopic feather structures, however, the greens and reds of the touracos are true pigments. The rich red pigments are called turacin and the greens, turacoverdin. In museum specimens, the red deepens with age, for the copper in turacin darkens as it slowly oxidizes.

Touracos can be kept with many different species of birds. The more planted and larger the aviary, the more species you can put in it. It is not wise to put two different pairs of touracos in the same aviary. The touracos love to run along the perch and when gliding from limb to limb, one can see the full splendor of their crimson red wings. If you look close enough, you'll observe that they can direct their outer toe either backward or forward as do owls and ospreys. Touracos in the wild are found from sea level to as high as 11,000 feet. They are known to be hardy and can withstand cool temperatures.

The diet of a touraco consists of diced papaya, canteloupes, grapes, Mexican bananas, figs, apples, guavas, ripe mangoes and berries. This

group is also known to eat leaf matter, so finely grated broccoli sprinkled into the mix of fruit will be enjoyed. Dog pellets (bite sized) can also be given. A pinch or two of calcium mixed into the fruit mix should be given every day because very little or no calcium will cause eggs to be laid without their outer shells. Vitamin powder should be added two to three times a week as well.

The touraco family is known to have one to three (usually two) off-white eggs. They are laid at two day intervals. Both parents share duties in the incubation of the eggs and in the feeding of the young. The shortest incubation period for touracos (Hartlaub's) is 20 days and the longest period in this family is 31 days for the Great Blue Touraco which is the largest of all the touracos. In the wild, these birds nest on a platform made up of sticks which is lined with twigs. In American aviculture, there are many different nests that can be suitable for the touracos. First, a good size wicker basket and/or a wooden box, one foot in diameter and at least four inches deep (to ensure the eggs cannot fall out), can be used. The box should be lined with sticks, twigs and dried grass. Lining of the box is very essential to the survival of the babies, because they have been known to develop spraddle legs without it. The nest should be placed as high in the aviary as possible to guarantee the birds will feel secure. When the young hatch, their eyes are already

open and they are covered with a black down. When the young reach the age of around ten days, their bill darkens and the egg tooth is shed. They develop very rapidly and, surprisingly, leave the nest before they are fully fledged.

## Great Blue Touraco

(*Corythaeola cristata*)

This large, beautiful bird lives in the rainforests and gallery forests from Guinea, Sudan, Zaire, Uganda, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Angola.

The Great Blue has not been reared in American aviculture because there is a very limited number of birds kept here. This bird needs a lot of care and may be suitable only for the more experienced touraco breeder.

## Lady Ross's Touraco

(*Musophaga rossae*)

This touraco is indigenous to Guinea, Nigeria, Cameroon and the Central African Republic. This species also occurs in small areas of the Ivory Coast and Ghana.

This species was bred for the first time in the U.S. at the Houston Zoo in 1979. This species is becoming difficult to acquire. Those in captivity are, however, reproducing more consistently.

## Violaceous Plantain-eater

(*Musophaga violacea*)

This bird lives in Senegal, Gambia, Guinea and Nigeria. It also occurs south to the Ivory Coast and Ghana.

The Violet Plantain-eater was first bred in 1985 at the Brookfield Zoo. This mostly glossy, blue bird is fairly common but can become quite flighty in your aviary.

## Purple-crested Touraco

(*Musophaga porphyreolopha*)

The range of this bird is from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and eastern South Africa.

The Purple-crested Touraco was first bred in 1979 at the Houston Zoo. These birds can now be acquired by the private breeder but they are often

### The Wright Roost

Jeri Wright

(206) 838-9802

NOW HAND-FEEDING

Hyacinths & other macaws, Cockatoos

Conures & Amazons

Domestic, Close-Banded

Roudybush Distributor



difficult to find. Very few are imported.

### **Rwenzori Touraco**

(*Musophaga jobnstoni*)

This species occurs in the Rwenzori Mountains of Uganda and is also found in the slopes of the Birungu Volcanoes in southwestern Uganda.

They have rarely been imported and it's probable that there are none in captivity in the U.S. at the present time. Of the entire touraco family, this bird lives up to the highest elevation of 11,000 feet.

### **Red-crested Touraco**

(*Tauraco erythrolophus*)

This bird is indigenous only to Angola.

The first successful breeding was at the Washington D.C. Zoo in 1969. This touraco is also a good species to start with, because of its great beauty and it is very placid.

### **White-cheeked Touraco**

(*Tauraco leucotis*)

This species is indigenous to Ethiopia and Sudan.

This touraco was first bred in the 1960s by Edgar Marshall Bohem and the subspecies *T.l. donaldsoni* was first bred in 1932 by Alex Isenberg. These are great touracos to start with for a beginner.

### **Yellow-billed Touraco**

(*Tauraco macrorhynchus*)

This bird is found only in west Africa from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast to Ghana and subspecies *T.m. verreauxii* is found in Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, the Congo, Angola and a small island called Bioko.

It has been imported into Europe a few times and has not yet been established in American aviculture.

### **Bannerman's Touraco**

(*Tauraco bannermani*)

This bird's range is only found in a small area in Cameroon.

As Fry, Keith and Urban says, "unless Oku Forest is conserved, this species will almost certainly not survive." This species has not been kept in aviculture as it is near extinction.

### **Fischer's Touraco**

(*Tauraco fischeri*)

This species of touraco occurs in Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania. The subspecies *T.f. zanzibaricus* is a resident of the island of Zanzibar.

The Fischer's Touraco was just bred recently in 1991 by Sid Milne, a private breeder, in Fallbrook, California.

### **Ruspoli's Touraco**

(*Tauraco ruspolii*)

This bird is only found in a small area in Ethiopia.

The Ruspoli's Touraco is a very rare bird and has not been kept in aviculture.

### **Green (Guinea) Touraco**

(*Tauraco persa*)

It is common in the forests of Gambia, Guinea-bissau and sweeping through the coastal countries of Guinea to Nigeria. It is also found in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Gabon, Congo and northern Angola.

This bird was first bred in 1980 by the Houston Zoo, and is now quite common in aviaries in North America. It is mostly covered with a grass green color and can be identified easily by its completely green crest.

### **Buffon's Touraco**

(*Tauraco p. buffoni*)

Its range is from Liberia, Senegal and Gambia.

This bird was first bred between 1985 and 1986 by the Houston Zoo. This touraco is fairly uncommon and can easily be mistaken for the Guinea Touraco, *T.p. persa*.

### **Shalow's Touraco**

(*Tauraco p. shalowi*)

This bird is from Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi.

The first breeding of this bird was at the Seattle Zoo in 1975. This beautiful touraco is very popular for a private collection.

### **Knysna Touraco**

(*Tauraco p. corythaix*)

The range of this touraco is from South Africa to Zululand.

The Knysna Touraco was first bred in the 1960s by Alene Erlanger who was a private collector. This bird is now very rare, even in zoo collections.

### **Hartlaub's Touraco**

(*Tauraco hartlaubi*)

The range of this bird is from Tanzania, extending into Uganda and Kenya.

The Hartlaub's Touraco was first bred at the Bronx Zoo in 1974. This bird is one of my favorites because of its beautiful color and its availability. It can be a little flighty, however.

### **White-crested Touraco**

(*Tauraco leucolophus*)

Its range is from southern Sudan and Uganda to western Kenya.

This touraco was first bred in 1977 at the Houston Zoo. This bird is cherished by both zoos and private collections. Within this species, there are more females than males.

### **Black-billed Touraco**

(*Tauraco schuitti*)

The range of this bird is from Zaire, Angola, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and it extends into the Central African Republic.

This is a bird you don't see too often in private aviaries. It is quite shy and delicate and should not be a bird for beginners.

### **Livingston's Touraco**

(*Tauraco p. livingstonii*)

The Livingston's are indigenous to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania.

This species, to my knowledge, has not been bred in the U.S. Even though this bird is quite common in aviaries, they tend to require more care than other species of touracos.

### **Grey Go-away Bird**

(*Corythaixoides concolor*)

This bird is indigenous to Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Zaire, Malawi, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa.

This mostly grey bird was first bred at the Houston Zoo in 1969. The Grey Go-away Bird is fairly common but is not popular because of its color.

### **Bare-faced Go-away Bird**

(*Corythaixoides personata*)

The range of this bird is from Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia and Zaire.

There are very few birds of this species in the zoos and even less in private aviaries. Although this species is

unusual in appearance, it is still very beautiful.

### **Western Grey Plantain-eater** (*Crinifer piscator*)

The range of this bird is from Mauritania and Senegambia to Sierra Leone. It is also found in coastal Liberia, Central African Republic, Congo and Zaire.

This Plantain-eater is a very unusual looking bird and is very uncommon in private collections. If this bird is not worked with by breeders, we may see it disappear from private aviculture as did the Knysna (*T.p. corythaix*) and the Donaldson's White-cheeked (*T.l. donaldsoni*) Touraco. It was first bred at the Houston Zoo in 1990.

### **Eastern Grey Plantain-eater** (*Crinifer zonorus*)

The distribution is from Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Zaire, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda to Burundi.

This Plantain-eater is very uncommon in private and zoo collection and has not been recorded to have been bred in the U.S.

### **White-bellied Go-away Bird** (*Criniferoides leucogaster*)

This Go-away Bird is from Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and the Sudan.

The very rare White-bellied was first bred in the 1930s by Alex Isenberg. There are quite a few specimens around the zoos today but are less common in the hands of private breeders.

### **General Notes**

The first breedings of the touracos related in this article are only for the United States. The greatest success of these birds has been from the Houston Zoo. If you are a beginner, please do not be discouraged. These birds can be bred if dedication and tender loving care are given to them. These touracos can be very rewarding for many reasons, but especially for their beauty and splendor.

### **References**

- C. Hilary Fry, Stuart Keith and Emil K. Urban, 1988, *The Birds of Africa, Volume 3*.  
Austin, O.L., 1961, *Birds of the World*, Golden Press, New York.  
Lindholm III, J.H., 1987, Touraco propagation in zoos, (the IZY Breeding Records; 1959-1981) *Honeycreeper* II (No. 1) 15-22.  
Berry T. Robert, 1979, Touracos, *the AFA Watchbird*, Vol. VI, No. 4. ●

## **Judge us by the company we keep**



U.S.D.A. • U.S. Center for Disease Control • Mayo Clinic • Saudi Royal Family  
Sloan-Kettering Institute • Walt Disney World • Busch Gardens • Opryland  
Six Flags • Lion Country Safari • U.S. Army • U.S. Air Force • VA Hospitals  
Countless Zoos • Universities and Game Preserves throughout the Free World

*Write for our free catalog!*

## **The Humidaire Incubator Company**

Department W, P.O. Box 9, New Madison, OH 45346-0009

**(513) 996-3001 • FAX (513) 996-3633**

Serving the world for 61 years

## **NEKTON® NEKTON®**

### **Experience NEKTON-BIO**

**A MULTI VITAMIN TO ENSURE  
HEALTHY FEATHER GROWTH AND  
TO PROTECT AGAINST PLUMAGE  
DEFECTS.**

**PROMOTES SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF THE  
MOULT.**



**TRY NEKTON BIO TODAY  
AND SEE THE DIFFERENCE !!!**

**NEKTON U.S.A., INC.**  
14405 60th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida 34620  
Phone (813) 530-3500  
FAX (813) 539-0647

NEKTON-PRODUKTE  
W.-GERMANY