
Ross's Turaco

(*Musophaga rossae*)

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Musophagiformes*

Family: *Musophagidae*

Characteristics: Ross's is the second largest of 28 turaco species weighing about 1 pound; L 15-18 in. Their short, rounded wings make the birds weak flyers but a long tail helps with balance as they hop from branch to branch with feet that are well adapted for perching. Plumage is indigo-blue with bright red primary feathers and a two inch crest. A short, yellow bill extends to the forehead to create a shield-like structure. Vivid yellow skin surrounds the eyes. Male and female are so alike that DNA testing is necessary for identification. Juveniles are duller in color overall. Turacos are often referred to as "go-away-birds" (although they aren't at all related to African go away birds) due to a call that sounds like "g,way."

Behavior: Living is very social, either in small family groups or large flocks of up to 30. They forage in groups during day but roost on their own. Monogamous and territorial, they aggressively defend their home range from other turacos and predatory raptors.

Reproduction: Males and females build a platform nest of sticks and twigs 52 ft above ground. A clutch of two eggs is incubated 21-24 days by both parents. Other flock members bring food to growing chicks who will explore trees around nest before fledging at around 28 days.

Diet: Wild: Frugivorous- fruits, flowers, and seeds of both wild and cultivated plants.

Zoo: fruit and veggie mix, parrot pellets, softbill pellets

Conservation: Least Concern. CITES: Not globally threatened. Considered relatively common in most parts of its range.

FYI: AKA Lady Ross's turaco.

Extremely popular in aviculture due to the relative ease of captive management and their interesting, active behavior. The beautiful, brilliant red of underwings is from color pigments in the feathers themselves rather than light reflection as with other bird species.

SOURCES: San Francisco and Gardens. www.sfzoo.org
The Beauty of Birds. www.beautyofbirds.com



Range & Habitat:

Woody vegetation in numerous countries of equatorial Africa



Lifespan: 20-30 years in captivity;
10-15 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Fourth toe rotates forward or backward to better grip branches.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least concern

