

Violet Turaco



Scientific Name:

Musophaga violecea

Range:

West Africa from Gambia and Senegal to Cameroon

Habitat:

Open woodland, riverine forest, humid forest edge

Average Size:

Length: about 21 inches
Weight: about 12-14 ounces

Lifespan:

About 30 years

Diet:

Wild: Fruit, especially figs and plantains, occasionally snail and insects

Zoo: Rainforest produce mix, rainforest dry mix

Reproduction:

Incubation: 21-24 days

Clutch size: 2 eggs

Appearance:

Glossy violet plumage covers the body except for the thick red bill, yellow forehead and russet crown. The crimson primary flight feathers are most easily seen as the bird flies overheads.

Predators:

Cats, foxes, rodents, birds of prey

Population Status:

Stable



About the Animal

The Violet Turaco, with its beautiful purple-green plumage with red highlights is a shy bird that prefers to hide in the dense canopy.

Occasionally found in flocks of 10-12, they move along the branches searching for fruit and other food items.

Sometimes called plantain- or banana-eaters, these birds generally avoid both fruits, preferring to eat succulent figs and other juicy fruit.

Originally placed in the cuckoo family, recent DNA investigation suggests that turaco's probably share a common ancestor with nightjars like the Tawny Frogmouth.

Mating and Reproduction

Although turacos prefer to live in small flocks, nesting is solitary. The nest is a simple platform of sticks. Adults form monogamous pair bonds, and both parents contribute equally to incubation, brooding and feeding. Hatchlings are covered with a thick down and grow quickly, leaving the nest to climb around in the trees assisted by well-developed claws on their wings. Adults feed their chicks predigested fruit.

Amazing Information

The greenish cast of the turaco's feathers does not come from the structure of the feathers, as with most birds, but from a special pigment unique to turacos called 'turcoverdin'. A special pigment called 'turacin', again found only in turacos, colors the red feathers.



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