

Turacos in Brazil

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In the mid-1990s, when it was easy to import into Brazil, birds from all over the world were arriving almost daily at our airports. Although many Brazilian birds are a world reference for beauty and many others are targeted due to their rarity, the decade of the importation of birds into South America will never be forgotten.

Amongst lorikeets, starlings, parrots and other passerines, the turacos were newcomers to our country so they drew considerable attention. The first large batch of imports brought in a considerable number of Hartlaub's Turacos. All Brazilians who kept exotic birds in captivity, kept Hartlaub's in their collection. Early breeders reported it was a beautiful bird, common and extremely easy to breed.

Years later, the Great Blue Turaco, the Buffon's and the Grey species that arrived then, were also quickly bought by collectors, but their management was different and the market was still almost non-existent in relation to diets for frugivorous birds. There was a high mortality rate amongst these birds, with the exception of the Buffon's, but nobody was really worried about this, because there were always new birds in stock from any importer in business at the time.

In 2001, when virtually all species of the predominantly green colour and genus *Musophaga* were still available in small numbers, there were very few turaco breeders left, due to the fact that interest in their purchase had declined. Also poultry farmers had chosen to keep other species that were easier to treat and required less space, as is the case with parrots.

The result in Brazil was catastrophic over the next decade for many birds, including turacos, with only seven species surviving with a few pairs and some with only males, as is the case with Red-crested Turacos and Lady Ross's, making these rare birds. Consequently there are few turaco breeders in operation today.

My experience with breeding turacos

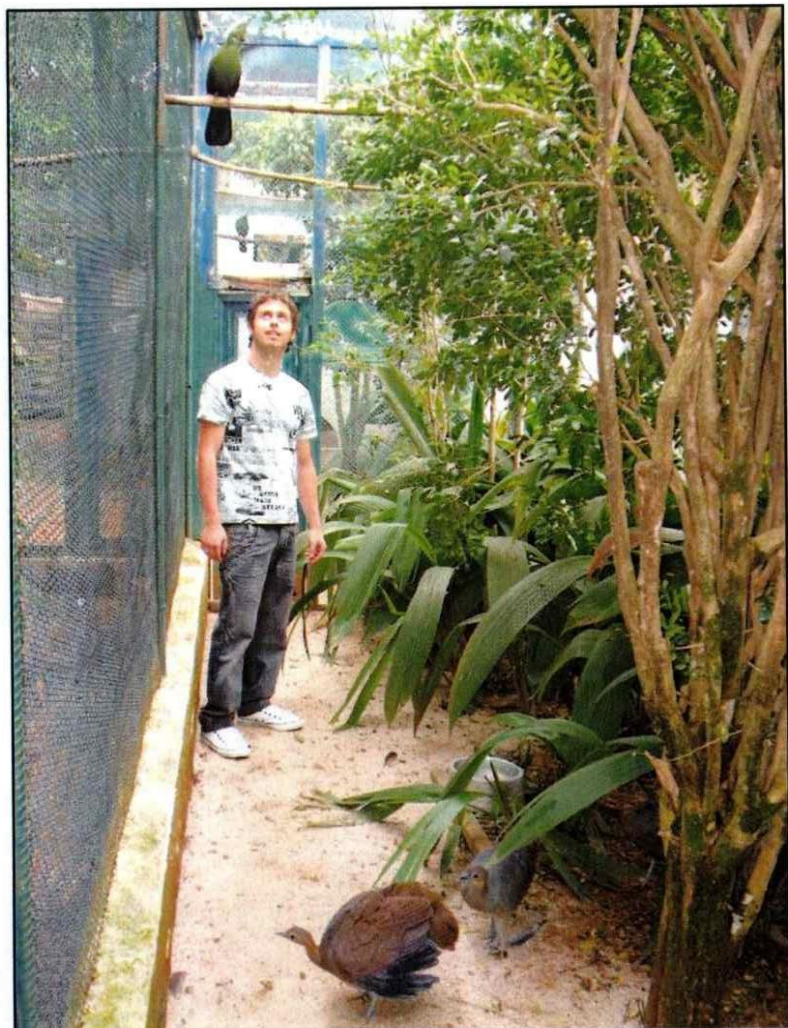
Today, in a town in the state of Sao Paulo, with the help of some friends, I keep approximately ninety-five species of birds left by my grandfather, a great breeder, Sérgio Polezel. Amongst them are fruit-doves, Goura Pigeons and other seed-eaters, starlings, mynas, lories and lorikeets, tinamous, exotic and Brazilian parrots and my favorite: the turacos.

Arranged in large enclosures, the success of these breeding birds from 2006 until 2010 was quite significant, with an average of thirty young turacos per year. However, further work is needed with a few species so as to increase their populations. Ironically we never trade Hartlaub's Turacos, due to the rarity of this bird currently in Brazil. Only *Violaceous Musophaga violacea* and *White-cheeked Tauraco leucotis* are traded more frequently, as they breed well and there are still a good number of specimens in some collections.

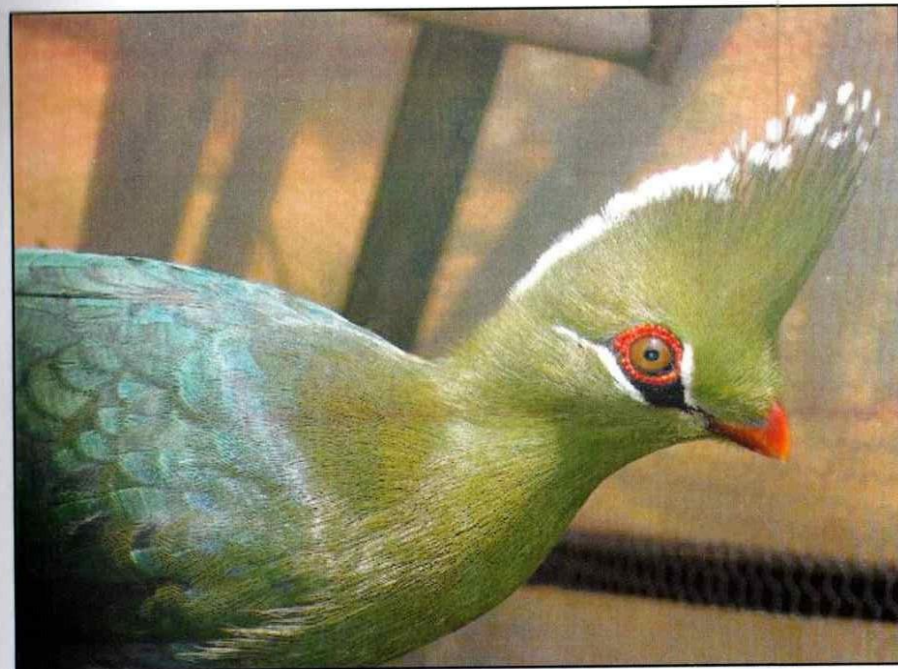


Some of our flights housing turacos

All our pairs are kept separated by species, as is recommended by all experienced breeders of these birds, but so as to enjoy the aviaries they are in, we often keep our turacos with tinamou species, as is the case with our Livingstone's Turacos that live well and breed with groups of Solitary Tinamou *Tinamus solitarius*. To date, there has only been one case of aggression between Violaceous Turacos and a pair of Brown Tinamous *Crypturellus obsoletus*, when during the breeding season, the turacos attacked these tinamous.



Livingstone's Turacos with a group of Solitary Tinamou

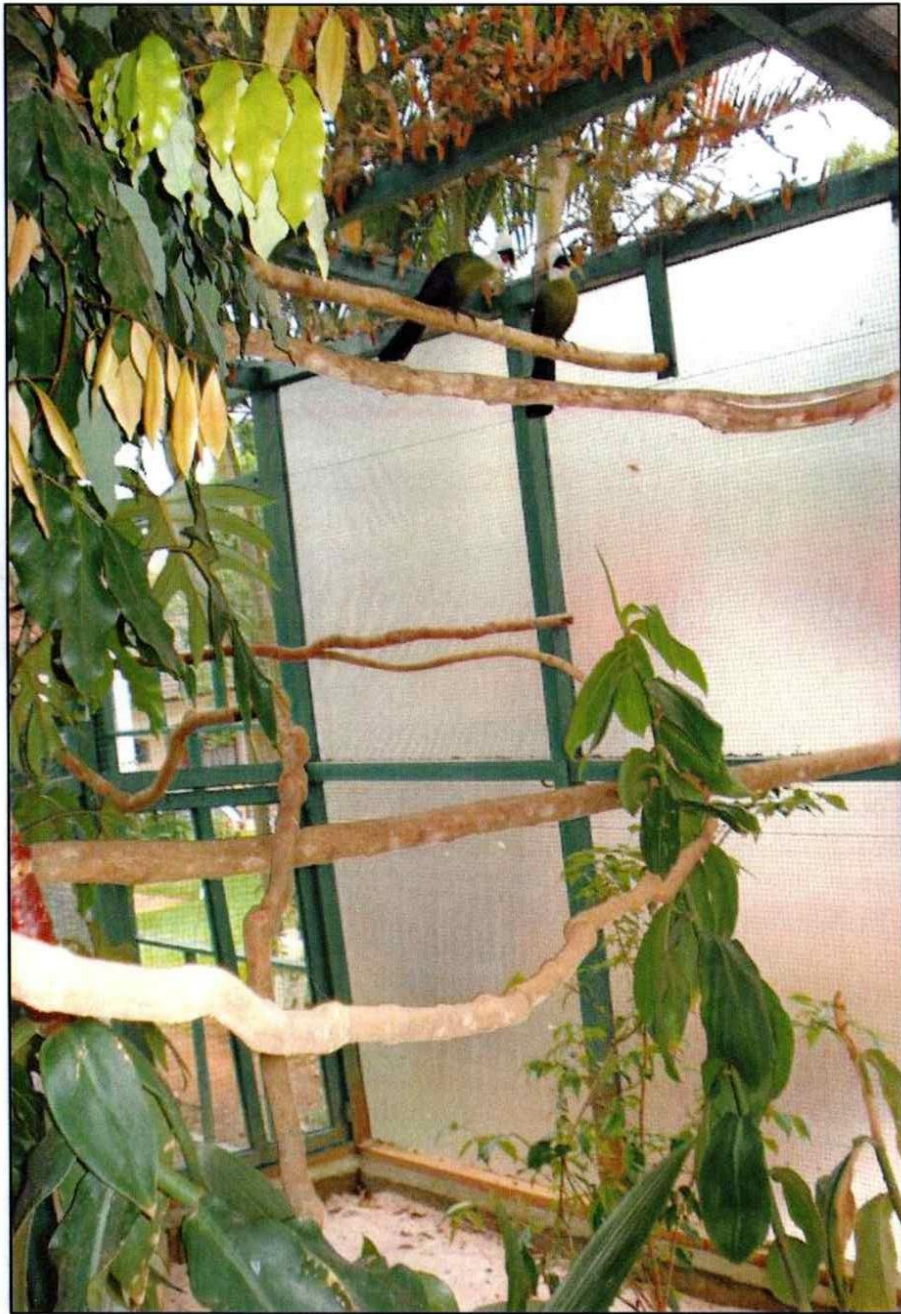


One of my Livingstone's Turacos

As Brazil is a country with a good climate, tropical fruits are easily accessible to all, and to feed the turacos we offer a blend of fruits with: banana, papaya, apple, pear and grape, including some cooked vegetables. We offer another container of food pellets for frugivorous birds.

The aviaries are relatively large (2m x 8m x 2m), each with two nests available amongst the shrubs at a high level. As the temperature in the state of Sao Paulo varies from more severe winter days between 10°C – 14°C to summer days which average between 20°C – 30°C, the pens have no need for enclosed areas to keep the birds in times of low temperature.

The species we keep are: *Tauraco buffoni*, *T. leucotis*, *T. livingstonii*, *T. hartlaubi*, *T. fischeri*, *T. leucolophus* and *M. violacea*. To date, only *T. fischeri* and *T. leucolophus* have not had chicks yet, because, I believe, they are the latest species to join our collection.



A pair of our White-crested Turacos

Reproduction

After ten days of sitting, we remove the eggs from pairs and then use artificial incubation until they hatch. Feeding of chicks from hatching until the day they feed themselves is done with mashed banana mixed with the powder NutriBird A-21. Chicks from one to ten days old are kept in greenhouses with a constant temperature of 35°C and are fed every two hours. In the third week of life the chicks are put into greenhouses with a constant temperature of 30°C and are fed every four hours.



When the fledglings are a month and a half old they are placed in small cages and stay inside the nursery building, being sold or housed in our collection after they reach three months old.

The turacos are evidence of the good work done here in relation to their breeding in Brazil. However, despite having breeding success, our major concern now is to maintain and build pairs with different bloodlines because, as has been said before, there are only a few individuals of some of the species in captivity.

