

Turaco Cooperative Breeding Program

by David Hancock, Blaine, WA

The USF&WS with the passage of the Wild Bird Conservation Act (ACT) effectively prohibits the importation of CITES birds into the US. A few specific birds were excluded in the ACT and a few families of game birds, waterfowl and cranes are exempt from this act's restrictions but of course still need the CITES paperwork.

The ACT provides for Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) approved zoos to import wild caught CITES species for display or breeding. However, the only way for private persons to import a CITES bird into the U.S. is to establish an approved Cooperative Breeding Program. The approved cooperators can be in or outside the U.S. This process is really very simple and is in place to assure that any CITES species that come into the U.S. are coming to serious breeders with a definite plan to assure adequate distribution of the blood lines.

The bottom line is that any removal of birds from the wild will not harm the wild populations and that imports, preferably of captive bred offspring, will assist in preserving the species' genetic diversity through a well defined breeding program.

At this time there are about 20 approved Cooperative Breeding Programs (CBP) that cover from a single species to our program covering 13 species. For the Turaco CBP, the Hancock Wildlife Research Center is the Oversight Organization.

Our program is a little different than several others in that my breeding collection of turacos and hornbills, etc., is situated in Canada though we have some Washington State facilities. The new ACT, however, also prohibits me distributing our Canadian bred offspring (largely produced from breed-

ing stock I imported from the U.S.) back into the U.S. This Turaco Cooperative Breeding Program will now permit us to distribute the Canadian captive bred blood lines to U.S. breeders.

At this stage we are not planning importation into the U.S. of any wild caught stock but as we develop the network of competent breeders and get a better assessment on wild stocks and we get grips on various stud book programs, we may wish to introduce more genetic diversity. Initially we will be undertaking European and Asian exchanges of captive birds. The option to use wild caught birds to increase genetic diversity is still some time in the future.

I am most anxious to make contact with any turaco keepers and breeders as part of my International Turaco Census, which is done in cooperation with the AZA Turaco TAG, AFA and International Turaco Society. We first need to know what our turaco resource is and then we can best plan breeding programs to ensure maximum genetic diversity.

I have recently also been asked by the Hornbill TAG to survey the private sector to determine those breeding stocks. If you have or you know of anyone who has a turaco or hornbill please contact me. I will provide some additional notes on rearing and on the census. We have had a reasonable year producing about 40 young turacos and our first five hornbills.

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