

# Breeding the Lady Ross's Touraco

(*Mussophaga rossae*)

by Leon Milne  
Fontana, California

The distinctive characteristics of the Lady Ross's Touraco are its erectile crimson-colored crest and its bright yellow bare facial skin behind and above its eyes. The beak and frontal shield to the crest is also yellow. The body is a glossy violaceous blue-black color with the breast and tail lacking the hint of green. Its eyes are brown and its legs and feet are black. The sexes are alike so these birds must be surgically or feather sexed to guarantee that one has a true pair.

The Lady Ross's Touraco is indigenous to Guinea, Nigeria, Cameroon and the Central African Republic. This species also occurs in small areas in the Ivory Coast and Ghana.

The Lady Ross's Touracos I managed were housed in a tall aviary belonging to Mr. Jim Gunderson along with a pair of Victorian Blue-crowned Pigeons. The aviary dimensions were 10 feet wide, 11 feet long, and 10 feet high. This aviary was heavily planted with many shrubs and trees, which helped these touracos to feel more secure as they were quite shy. Their nest was approximately seven feet above the ground and was located in a very secure (planted) area of the aviary. The nest itself was a bowl-shaped, thick wicker basket. It was 14 inches in diameter and seven inches deep.

Their first clutch was laid in the month of July 1989. The two eggs were laid on the 19th and the 21st. Both parents shared in the incubation process. The first egg hatched on August 17th and the second on August 19th. The incubation period took 28 days. The babies were removed from the nest when they were approximately 11 days of age. The babies were hand-fed for the next six weeks. At this time, the babies were independent and were able to feed themselves.

Their second clutch was laid on the 18th and 20th of September. As with the first clutch, they were laid two days apart. These babies hatched on the 16th and 18th of October 1989. Again, the incubation period was 28 days and the staggered hatching shows that the incubation started when the first egg was laid.

The diet for the adult touracos was a mix consisting of rice, Mexican bananas, pears, apples, finely grated carrots, peas, canteloupe, red grapes and corn. A powdered vitamin was mixed into the food. If too much of the powdered vitamin was added, the birds would not eat the fruit. A slice of papaya was also fed in the morning.

The diet for the baby touracos when they were pulled for hand-feeding included cubes of bananas,

interested in  
something  
different?



join the  
**International  
Softbill Society**

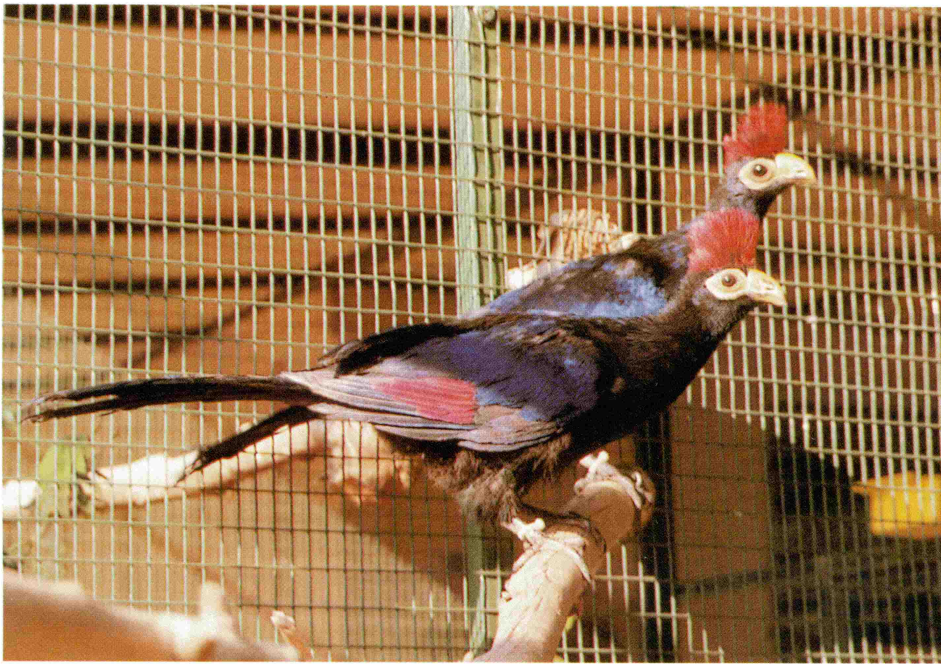
Dedicated to the dissemination of information concerning softbilled birds among interested persons worldwide and to promote the establishment of captive self-sustaining populations of such birds through effective husbandry and management practices.

Membership in the International Softbill Society is open to anyone with an interest in softbills. **Individual membership is \$20.** Foreign membership (outside U.S.A.) add \$5 (total \$25) in U.S. funds. Write to **Ken Reininger, 3120 Cedar Vale Rd., Nedrow, New York 13120.** Members receive our informative publication, *The Honeycreeper*.

**Greenwings  
Buffon's  
Hyacinths  
Militarys  
Blue and Golds  
Scarlets  
Redfronts**

- ALL BIRDS ARE CLOSED BANDED and VETERINARIAN CHECKED
- UNRELATED PAIRS AVAILABLE

**Joanne Abramson**  
**RAINTREE MACAWS**  
BREEDING AND RESEARCH  
P.O. Box 1271, Fort Bragg, CA 95437  
707-964-4380



*First clutch: two Lady Ross's Touraco males, 59 days old, start to show their adult plumage.*

melons, peas, and peeled apples (the babies could not digest the skins). Blueberries and the flesh portion of red grapes were also given. Soaked Zupreem monkey chow was fed through a syringe for the first few

days after the babies were removed from the nest.

The plumage of the baby touracos consisted of fine black down covering their body and legs. The bill and frontal shield was black, fading to a rich

yellow color. At three to four weeks of age, the crimson coloration of the crest began to show. Red feathers started to show through in their wings at around three and one half weeks. The glossy, violaceous coloration in the breast, wings, and tail also began to show at that time.

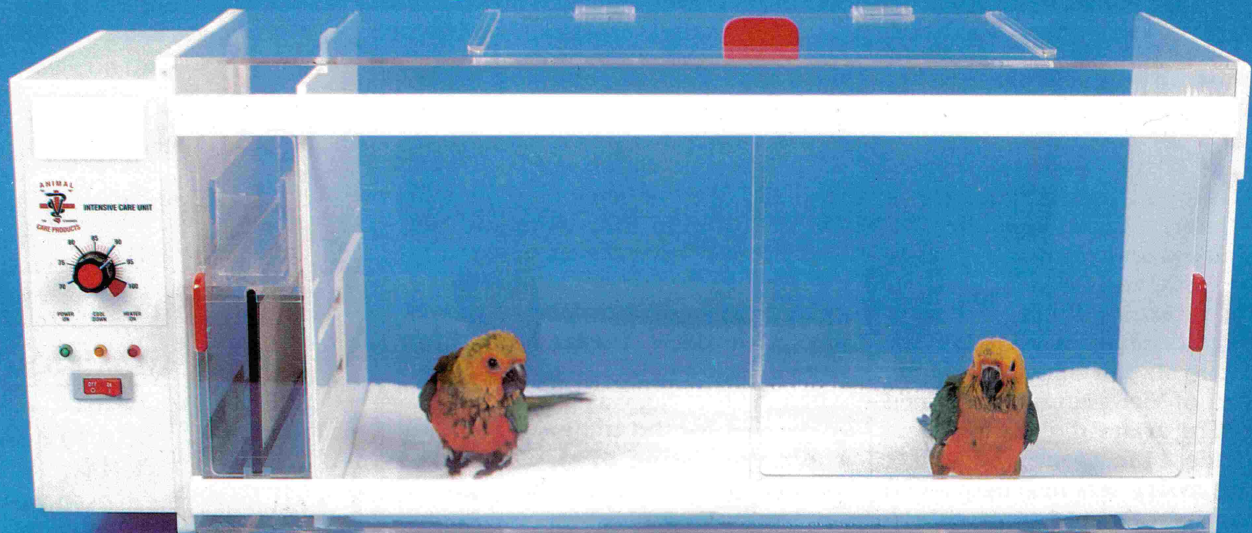
Information concerning the Touraco Studbook can be obtained by writing: Ms. Rochelle D. Plasse, Supervisor of Birds, Houston Zoological Gardens, 1513 N. MacGregor, Houston, TX 77030.

**Mr. Leon Milne observes:** "There are vast amounts of unusual and wonderful birds in American aviculture. Back home, in New Zealand, almost all exotic birds we see are to be found in bird books. This is due to very strict import restrictions, under which the only foreign imports permitted come from Australia, so we don't get many birds in our collection. If you get a chance of getting a rare bird, you have to study as much as you can. Now at the age of 18, I have had the chance of working with Mr. Gunderson's collection. I have the opportunity to breed these birds. I am now striving to know much more about birds. So far, I owe a great deal of my knowledge to Mr. Dale Thompson and I'm particularly appreciative of what I've learned from my father, Mr. Sid Milne.

**Editor's Note:** The author of this article was 16 years of age when he and his family moved from New Zealand to the United States. ●

## Animal Intensive Care Unit

Birds in Need Will be Getting More ...



... And That's the Best Reason of All

- HANDFEEDING
- INJURED
- ILL

The "AICU" ANIMAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT, was designed, veterinary tested and proven by Hannis L. Stoddard, III, D.V.M.  
 Outside dimensions 31-3/8 x 14-1/2 x 13. Inside dimensions 24 x 12 x 12.

- TEMPERATURE
- HUMIDITY
- FILTERED AIR

CALL OR WRITE FOR INFORMATION AND FREE BROCHURE  
 Animal Care Products, 3179 Hamner Ave., Suite 5, Norco, CA 91760 • (714) 371-2465