

2020 Worldwide Turaco Census Report

Compiled by Kateri J. Davis, April 12, 2020



Figure 1: Red Crest Turacos are the most commonly kept turacos in the world.

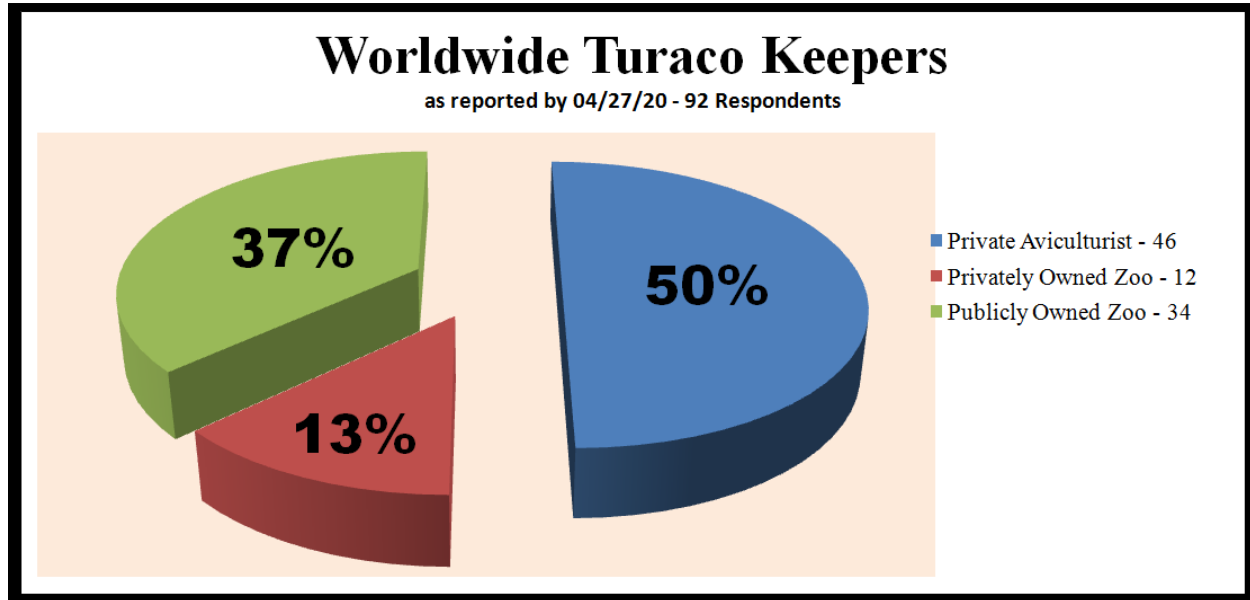
The turaco family is a group of beautiful, medium size softbilled birds that are generally seen only in zoos by the general public. These frugivorous African birds are bold and display well. Most of the species are brightly colored which helps their popularity in the softbill avicultural community. Unfortunately, they require large flights or aviaries as they are strong, active birds and do not do well in groups as adults so usually have to be kept one pair to a flight. This deters many aviculturists since they do not all have the space to house such birds.

In Feb. 2020, Kateri Davis conducted a census for turaco keepers with the goal to see the current status of turacos in aviculture. The last survey of this kind was done by her ten years ago in 2010. Since that time, aviculture has been impacted by more restrictive animal rights legislation, far fewer shipping options, the closing of bird clubs and shows, and fewer people getting into the hobby.

The 2020 survey was available for two months and posted on social media like Facebook, as well as other venues. Ninety-five people* worldwide participated and a total of 622 turacos were reported. Participants were a mixture of private aviculturists, privately owned zoos that were open to the public, and publicly owned zoos. The information provided helped form a picture of how turacos are currently faring in aviculture. Although much of the data was not surprising, some of it provided proof that turacos have a good chance of surviving in aviculture, for at least another ten years. (Knock on wood!)

Worldwide Data

The data showed similarities between turaco keepers. Almost all participants reported that they also kept other softbill bird species. Most participants had an interest in breeding turacos as well as keeping them for display. Intraspecific and interspecific aggression was mentioned as an issue that deterred breeding success.



Finding the appropriate gender or a different bloodline of a species was reported as a major struggle. This has been a trend seen in the last twenty years. Many turaco species are, or most likely, highly inbred. For most species, imports were stopped long ago so individuals are descendants from only a few lines. Tracking bloodlines and communicating them to new owners is rarely done or done well. With the rapid disappearance of shipping options which enable moving the few surplus individuals of a bloodline around, inbreeding, and the problems that arise from that, will likely become more and more of an issue. Unfortunately, shipping is extremely connected to aviculture. Kill shipping, kill aviculture, especially of uncommon birds such as turacos.

Data showed turaco keepers have a range of experience. About 50% of the participants had over eleven years of experience keeping turacos, and half of that had over 21 years. Thirty percent of participants were beginners or relative beginners with 1- 4 years of experience.

Several respondents were brand new to turacos which was encouraging data to see. It was in this group that the most pet turacos were reported, which was not surprising as the majority of turacos advertised for sale online in the USA are handfed and promoted to the pet trade. It will be interesting to see if turacos can find a steady niche as house pets as they are not suited to that life being that turacos are so active, messy, and not cuddly.

Turaco longevity was mentioned a couple times in the survey. Several keepers had turacos over 25 years old. One participant reported a female Red Crest age 27 and a male White Cheek age 26. Another has a Lady Ross that was over 27 years old. A third reported a male White Cheek age 29 that was still siring and raising chicks.

USA Data

The 65 USA participants reported a total of 442 turacos of eleven different species and one hybrid type. Although not all AZA turaco holders participated, the zoological community had a great showing. Not all private turaco holders participated either but all the known aviaries with large turaco numbers did. All in all, this census seems to be an accurate view of USA turacos.

The most commonly kept turacos were the Violet, Red Crest, and Persa species, with Lady Ross a close fourth. White Cheek species, which was one of the most commonly kept turaco ten years ago, is now fifth. Violets have high numbers mainly due to the availability of imports within the past ten years, and the species is an easier species to breed, so these numbers may continue to improve.

Of note were the higher numbers of the rarer birds like the Lady Ross, Livingston, and Great Blue compared to ten years ago. Hopefully aviculturists will be able to continue that trend. The much sought after, but delicate, Great Blue species have higher numbers not only due to recent imports but also more successful husbandry and rearing practices that have been discovered. Lady Ross and Livingston numbers are also higher than the past ten years as a few people have been successfully concentrating on breeding them. Numbers shown of the rarer species may actually look more encouraging than they should though. Many of the individuals reported are not viable breeders due to extreme age, infertility, injury, or not being paired up successfully.

As stated earlier, inbreeding is occurring in captive turacos. The turaco species that have the most diverse bloodlines available in the USA are the Violets and Great Blues as they were the most recently imported species. Violets have higher number of individuals by far in aviculture than Great Blues, and are easier to breed, so they have the most diverse bloodlines of any turaco species.

Sadly, the grey group of turacos continues to be almost non-existent in the USA. Only a few Western Greys were reported, despite imports in the past ten years of Western Greys and the rarer species like Bare-Face and Grey.

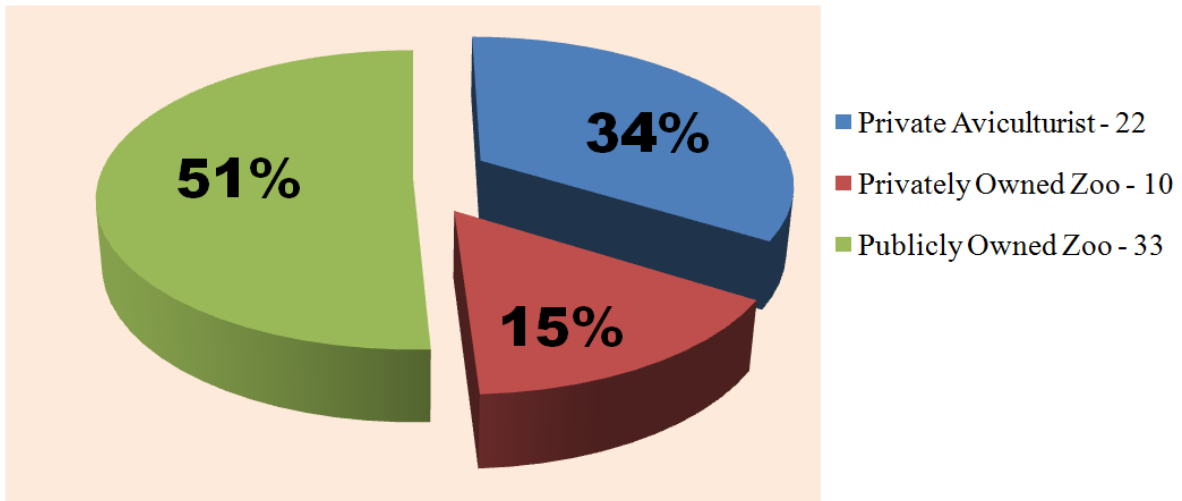
Interestingly, private aviculturists are doing the most turaco breeding and hold the most turacos in the USA. Many zoos reported that they were not breeding their turacos yet, either by choice or just nature. A few private aviculturists have turacos enrolled in AZA Studbooks and work with the zoo community.

Mathematically, there is an average of 6.8 turacos per USA respondent, however only five respondents (all private aviculturists) hold 207 individuals, which is almost half of the total birds. These five aviculturists (3 from Florida and 2 from Oregon) hold from 20 - 84 turacos each. The largest turaco holder (84 birds) resides in Florida, and Florida by far has the most reported turaco keepers of any state.

USA Type	Number of Respondents	USA Number of Turacos	%
Private	22	278	63%
Privately Owned Zoos Open to the Public	10	43	10%
Public Zoos	33	121	27%

USA Turaco Keepers

as reported by 04/27/20 - 65 Respondents



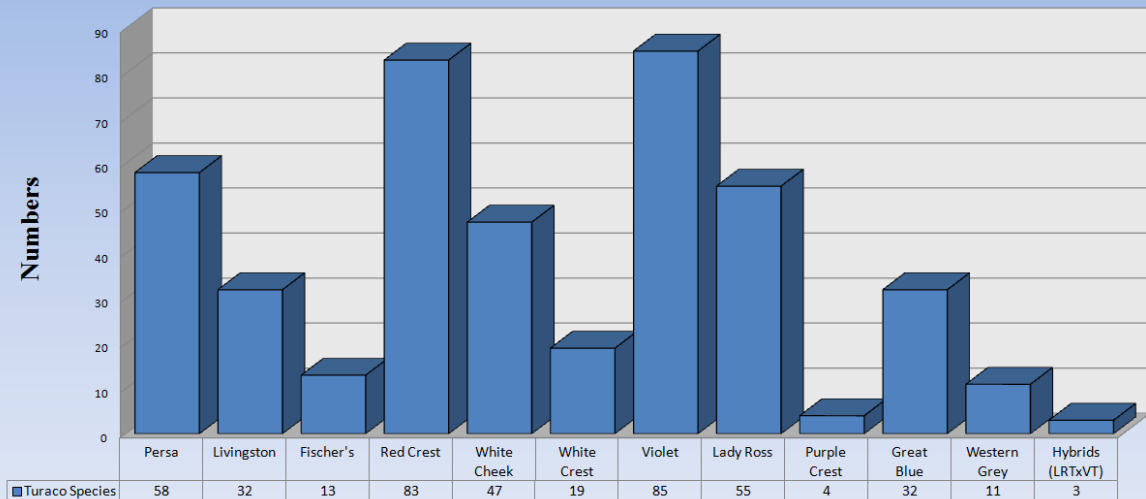
USA Turacos' Genders (Males, Females, Unknown)

Persa			Livingston's			Fischer's			Red Crest			White Cheek			White Crest		
26	27	5	13	15	4	5	6	2	46	36	1	26	21	0	9	10	0
45%	47%	9%	41%	47%	13%	38%	46%	15%	55%	43%	1%	55%	45%	0%	47%	53%	0%

Violet			Lady Ross			Purple Crest			Great Blue			Western Grey			Hybrids (LRTxVT)		
41	40	4	26	25	4	2	2	0	17	13	2	8	3	0	2	1	0
48%	47%	5%	47%	45%	7%	50%	50%	0%	53%	41%	6%	73%	27%	0%	67%	33%	0%

USA Turaco Numbers

as of 04/27/20, 65 Respondents

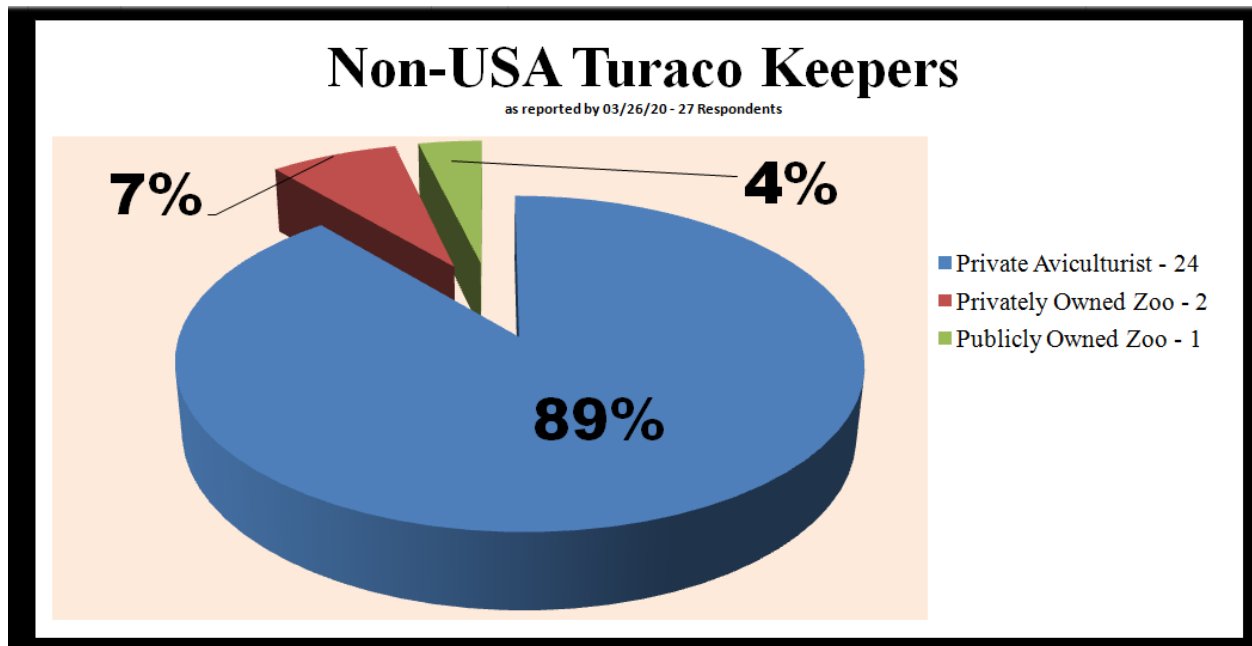


USA Turaco Data										
State	# of Respondents <i>Pr=Private, PrZ=Priv Zoo, Z=Public Zoo</i>		# of Turacos	Keepers' Focus <i>(More than 1 choice per respondent was possible)</i>			Main Breeding Techniques <i>(More than 1 choice per respondent was possible)</i>			
				Breeding	Display/Non-Breeding	Pet	Parent-raised	Incubate Eggs	Pull Chicks	Haven't Bred Yet
Alabama	Z	1	2		1					1
Arizona	Pr	2	7	2			1	1		
California	Pr	1	1			1				1
	PrZ	3	23	2	3		2			1
	Z	5	16	1	5		2	1		2
Colorado	Z	1	2		1					1
Florida	Pr	6	170	6	1		3	5	2	
	PrZ	2	3		2					2
	Z	5	32	3	5		3	2	1	
Georgia	Z	1	2	1	1					1
Illinois	Z	2	4	1	2		1			1
Indiana	Z	1	6		1		1			
Kansas	Z	3	7		3		2			1
Louisiana	Z	1	4	1	1		1			
Michigan	Pr	1	6	1		1				1
	PrZ	1	2		1					1
Minnesota	Z	1	2		1		1			
Missouri	PrZ	1	1		1					1
Nebraska	Pr	2	4	1		1	1			1
New Jersey	Z	1	1		1					1
New York	Z	3	16	3	2		3	1	1	
North Carolina	Pr	2	9	2	1				2	
Ohio	Z	2	2		2					2
Oregon	Pr	2	65	2	1		1	1		
Pennsylvania	PrZ	1	4	1	1		1			
	Z	1	3		1					1
Tennessee	Pr	2	8	1	1		1	1		1
	Z	1	4	1	1				1	
Texas	Pr	2	4	2						2
	PrZ	2	10	1	2		1			1
	Z	2	9	2	1		1	1		
Virginia	Pr	1	2	1	1		1			
Washington	Pr	1	2	1		1				1
	Z	1	7	1			1			
Wisconsin	Z	1	2	1						1
TOTALS:		65	442							

Non-USA Data

The 27 Non-USA participants reported a total of 180 turacos of fifteen different species. Respondents were from twelve different countries around the world. The majority of participants were private aviculturists. Since this was an English based survey, it was surely limiting to many, but this was still a great showing. Although not be a complete view of all turacos held worldwide, it is a start.

The White Cheek, Persa, and Red Crest species were the most popular, which was similar to the USA counts. Some species such as the Black Billed were reported but were non-existent in USA aviculture. Non-USA keepers have a wider range of species available compared to USA aviculturists.



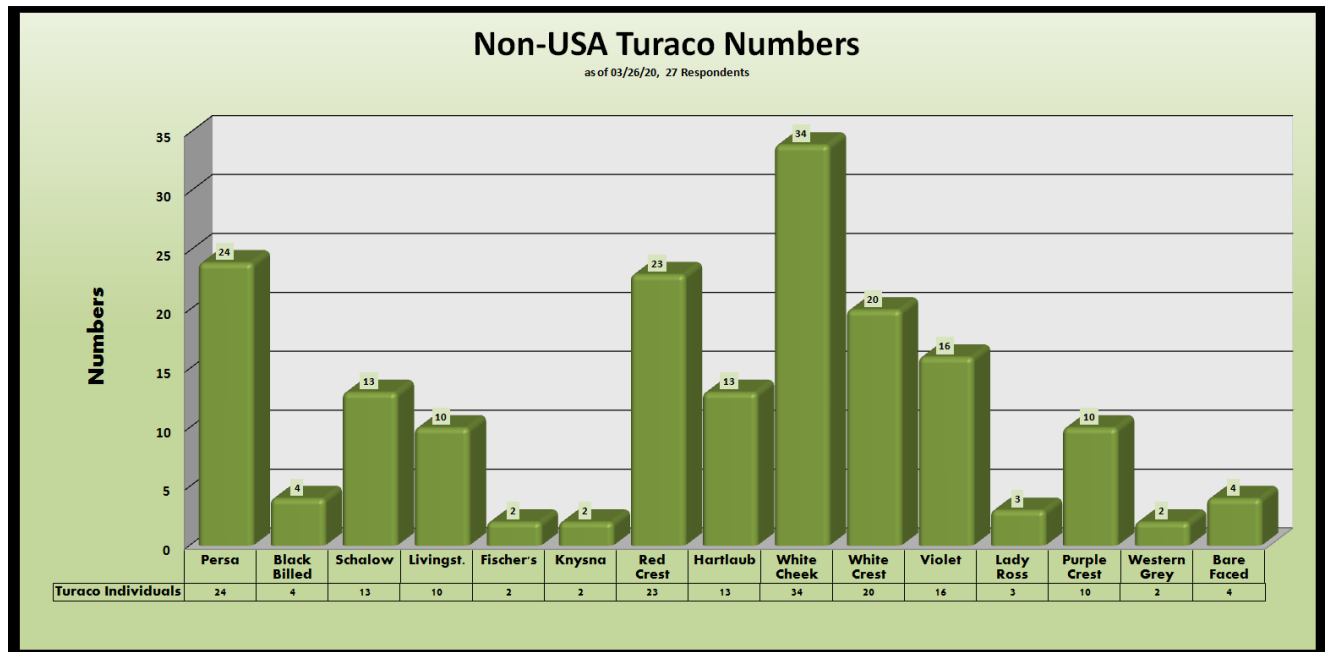
Non-USA Turacos' Genders (Males, Females, Unknown)

Persa			Black Billed			Schalow's			Livingston's			Fischer's			Knysna		
10	12	2	2	2	0	6	7	0	5	5	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
42%	50%	8%	50%	50%	0%	46%	54%	0%	50%	50%	0%	50%	50%	0%	50%	50%	0%

Red Crest			Hartlaub			White Cheek			White Crest			Violet			Lady Ross		
11	12	0	4	7	2	16	17	1	10	9	1	8	8	0	1	1	1
48%	52%	0%	31%	54%	15%	47%	50%	3%	50%	45%	5%	50%	50%	0%	33%	33%	33%

Purple Crest			Western Grey			Bare-Faced		
4	6	0	1	1	0	1	1	2
40%	60%	0%	50%	50%	0%	25%	25%	50%

Non-USA Turaco Data									
Country	# of Respondents <i>Pr=Private, PrZ=Priv Zoo, Z=Public Zoo</i>	# of Turacos	Keepers' Focus <i>(More than 1 choice per respondent was possible)</i>			Main Breeding Techniques <i>(More than 1 choice per respondent was possible)</i>			
			Breeding	Display/Non-Breeding	Pet	Parent-raised	Incubate Eggs	Pull Chicks	Haven't Bred Yet
Belgium	1 - Pr	2		1					1
Brazil	1 - Pr	4	1		1		1	1	
Canada	2 - Pr	25	2	1		2			
Cyprus	1 - Pr	2	1	1		1		1	
Czech Republic	1 - Pr	4	1	1		1			
Denmark	1 - Pr	19	1	1		1			
France	3 - Pr	8	3	2		2	2	2	
Germany	1 - Pr	11	1		1	1		1	
Netherlands	1 - Pr	2	1			1			
South Africa	2 - Pr	22	2			2			
Spain	1 - Pr	10	1		1				1
United Kingdom	12 (9 - Pr, 2 - PrZ, 1 - Z)	71	10	6		9		1	3
TOTALS:	27	180	24	13	3	20	3	6	5



In Conclusion

Turacos are a wonderful group of birds that will hopefully be a part of aviculture for many years to come. Thank you to all the people who took time out of their busy day caring for their birds to fill out this survey census!

**Note: Three zoo institutions had multiple keepers report their data. One private reported twice. These duplicates were removed from the data reports for accuracy.*

About the Census Taker:

Kateri J. Davis has been raising turacos and other softbill species since 1990. She and her husband run the Davis Lund Aviaries, <https://dlaviaries.wordpress.com/>. She wrote the book "Turacos in Aviculture", Birdhouse Publications in 2012.

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