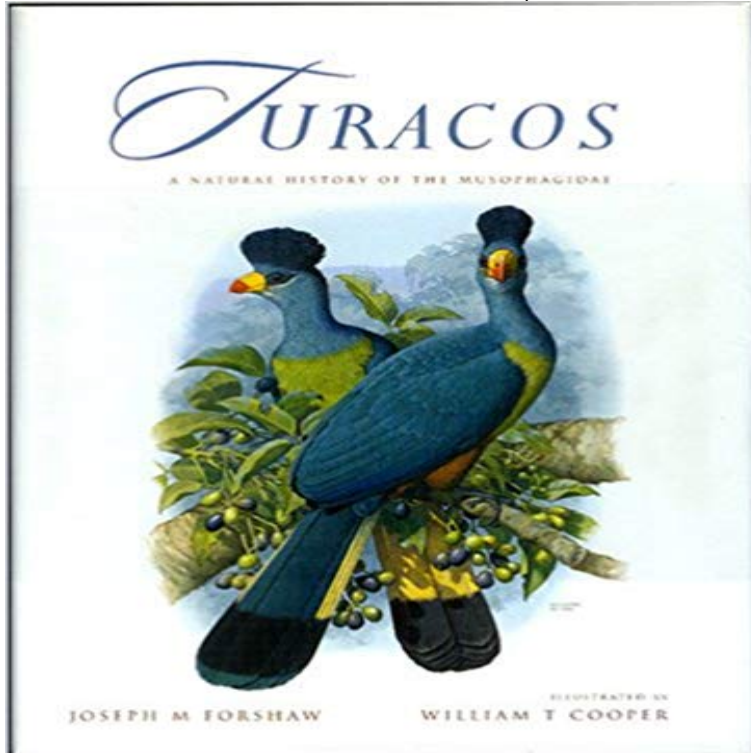


Turacos: A Natural History of the Musophagidae



Birdwatchers visiting forested areas of Africa invariably are captivated by brilliantly-coloured turacos, which hop and jump about in the treetops. Likewise in open woodlands, the less colourful, though starkly bold and inquisitive go-away birds and plantain-eaters instantly attract attention with their loud, distinctive cries. Encounters with these charismatic birds in the wild prompted Joe Forshaw and William Cooper to produce this book so that readers may share an appreciation of the special appeal of one of the most distinctive of all bird families. Some species are well established in aviculture, and much of what is known of their habits comes from studies of captive birds. In marked contrast is the lack of studies of wild populations, and only recently have researchers commenced field investigations in an attempt to resolve longstanding uncertainties. Pigeons, parrots and gamebirds are among groups considered to be allies of turacos, but a linkage with cuckoos generally has been advocated. However, biochemical analyses have questioned this long-held association, and turacos now are included in a single family within a separate order -- Musophagiformes. Distinctiveness of this family is manifested in certain plumage features, the most notable of which is the presence of two complex copper pigments not known to occur in any other living animal! We are gaining a better understanding of these fascinating birds, but much remains to be learned. Published information on all species, together with personal field observations and unpublished accounts from fieldworkers are brought together in this fine publication, and in his Foreword, Hilary Fry points out that publication is most timely for comprehensively reviewing what is known about the species. Again, the Forshaw and Cooper partnership heralds another landmark publication, combining

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