

The International Turaco Society

aims to:

- research and promote good husbandry practices
- support conservation projects that have an impact on wild populations
- unite turaco enthusiasts around the world.

The I.T.S. has commissioned the making of a pin badge featuring the beautiful Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, *Tauraco ruspolii*, currently listed as vulnerable, in Ethiopia.



Ruspoli's Turaco - pin badge - 33mm (max)



INTERNATIONAL TURACO SOCIETY

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Prince Ruspoli's Turaco

Tauraco ruspolii



Prince Ruspoli's Turaco

Nik Borrow



Prince Ruspoli's Turaco
near Wadera, Ethiopia - Nik Borrow

Turacos are a distinctive group of birds endemic to tropical Africa. They are shy, frugivorous and live in forests or dense woodland habitats, descending to the ground only occasionally to bathe or drink.

The Prince Ruspoli's Turaco was named after Prince Ruspoli, who was a 19th century Italian aristocrat, naturalist and explorer. In the early 1890s he went on an expedition to Ethiopia, to collect new species for science, but unfortunately halfway through his visit he was trampled to death by an elephant. When his collecting bag arrived back in Italy, it contained a colourful, long-tailed bird – clearly a new species of turaco, but because he had omitted to label the bird with the location, it was impossible to tell where in this vast country it had been found.

The turaco remained a mystery for another half century. Then in the 1940s, it was rediscovered and found to inhabit a restricted range in southern Ethiopia around Arero, Bobela, Sokora and Negele. Coupled with infrequent sightings, this has given them a reputation for being close to the brink of extinction. However, recent evidence suggests that the species is not as uncommon as once thought, though its distribution is still very small and is threatened by loss of habitat. They are currently listed as 'Vulnerable'.

The Ruspoli is a spectacular green turaco with a fluffy whitish crest. It displays large crimson wing patches in flight and moves just like a typical turaco, bouncing through the trees and flying occasionally with short bursts of wingbeats and long glides. Its calls

include a hollow series of "krow" notes and a series of high-pitched, metallic calls.

They are found in lush woodland and scrub from 1250–1860m, preferring acacia or conifer woodland and fruiting trees. It inhabits many of the same areas as the White-cheeked Turaco *T. leucotis*, but is segregated by its preference for drier forest, although some hybrids between the two species have been observed. The typical Ruspoli measures c.40cm from beak to tail and weighs 200-290g. The International Turaco Society has previously supported field research on Prince Ruspoli's Turaco, and hopes to use proceeds from the sale of pin-badges to help fund future surveys.



Prince Ruspoli's Turaco
near Negele, Ethiopia - Nick Bray