



Study opportunity: MSc or PhD research at the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Project: Evaluation of the ecosystem service of the control of ticks by Red-billed Oxpeckers on domesticated and wild stock

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) invites applications for the above study opportunity. The successful applicant will fall under the School of Life Sciences (UKZN) and forms an integral part of the EWT's Operation Oxpecker Project. The study area will be in the Limpopo province.

Red-billed Oxpeckers *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* provide an ecosystem service in controlling ticks on both domestic stock and wild game. Red-billed Oxpeckers are also known to cause conflict with landowners through the aggravation of wounds on livestock. Although some work has been done looking into this subject, there is no comprehensive study that encompasses all aspects of the relationship between Red-billed Oxpeckers and their hosts. Such information is necessary to provide scientific evidence of the benefits of Red-billed Oxpeckers as part of a holistic approach to livestock management.

This study has the following overarching aims:

1. To determine the efficacy of Red-billed Oxpeckers in the control of ticks on livestock
2. To determine the prevalence of wound-feeding of Red-billed Oxpeckers on domesticated stock
3. To investigate the influence of dipping on the wound-feeding behaviour of Red-billed Oxpeckers

The candidate will be required to design and implement experiments to test the efficacy of Red-billed Oxpeckers in tick control.

The successful applicant will have an honours degree in Zoology or equivalent, relevant ornithological field experience and a demonstrated ability to work independently in the field. The successful applicant will need a Code 8 driver's license, should also have their own transport and be willing to travel extensively, especially within the Limpopo province. Experience in conflict management and fluency in Afrikaans will be added advantages.

To apply, please send a full CV (including your academic record and names and contact details of three referees) and a short motivation for why you wish to undertake this research to alisonj@ewt.org.za and oxpecker@ewt.org.za.

For more information or to discuss details of the project, please contact:

Leigh Combrink, EWT
Operation Oxpecker Project Co-ordinator
email: oxpecker@ewt.org.za or cell: 081 476 9790

Prof. Colleen Downs, UKZN
School of Life Sciences
email: downs@ukzn.ac.za

Applications close: 27 June 2014

Please note: The University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Endangered Wildlife Trust reserve the right not to fill this position.