



Oxpecker research opportunities with the Endangered Wildlife Trust: Honours/BTech project bursaries

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.

The Operation Oxpecker project has been running for 12 years with the aim of reintroducing Red-billed Oxpeckers into suitable areas within their historical distribution range to restore this ecosystem service. However, little is known about the long-term survival of these birds in their new environment.

We are looking to answer the following research questions:

1. How effective are Red-billed Oxpeckers in the control of ticks on livestock?
2. What is the prevalence of wound-feeding of Red-billed Oxpeckers on domesticated and wild stock?
3. What management interventions could be taken to reduce the incidence of wound feeding (e.g. changes in dipping regime, application of wound treatment products)?
4. How well do relocated Red-billed Oxpeckers survive in their new environments?

We are offering two student bursaries valued at R20 000 each. These projects can be based in the Limpopo province, KwaZulu-Natal or the Eastern Cape.

To apply, please send the following to vacancies@ewt.org.za (Incomplete applications will not be accepted)

- A full CV (including your academic record and names and contact details of three referees),
- A letter from your prospective supervisor,
- Proof of registration for Honours/ BTech and
- A short motivation for which research project you would like to undertake and why

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

Leigh Combrink oxpecker@ewt.org.za

Applications close: 20 February 2015

Please note: The Endangered Wildlife Trust reserve the right not to fill this position. Should you have not heard from us within 14 days, please consider your application unsuccessful.