

MEDIA RELEASE
22 November 2024
For immediate release



**INTRODUCING BIRD OF THE YEAR 2025:
THE RED-BILLED OXPECKER**

BirdLife South Africa is thrilled to announce that the **Red-billed Oxpecker** (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) is Bird of the Year 2025!



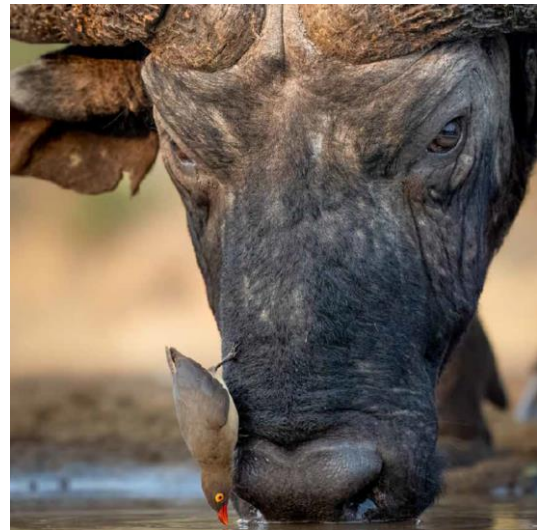
Red-billed Oxpecker
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[Find out more about Bird of the Year 2025](#)

BirdLife South Africa (BLSA) has named the [Red-billed Oxpecker](#) (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) as their Bird of the Year (BOTY) for 2025. The Red-billed Oxpecker, also known as the *Rooibekrenostervoël* (Afrikaans), *ihlalankomo* (isiZulu), and *ihlalanyathi* (isiXhosa) will be celebrated all year long, beginning with the release of an informative BOTY poster with the January/February 2025 issue of *African Birdlife* magazine, followed by infographics, social media posts, merchandise, and more. Resources about the BOTY will be made available for learners on BLSA's website, and the merchandise (such as T-shirts and enamel pin badges) will soon be available for sale from the organisation's [shop](#), among other initiatives to celebrate the Red-billed Oxpecker throughout the year.



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“It is an aptly chosen Bird of the Year”, says Mark D. Anderson, BLSA’s Chief Executive Officer. While the oxpecker’s population was at one time shrinking in its South African range, Anderson celebrates its resilience, saying “It represents a conservation success story, as its numbers have increased and its range has expanded”. The Red-billed Oxpecker’s distinctive looks make it a joy to spot. Visitors to the Kruger National Park and other protected areas will be familiar with this bird, watching with amusement as it crawls over antelope and other ungulates, feeding on the ticks that parasitise them. Oxpeckers perform a service to their hosts as well as the overall ecosystem by controlling tick populations. It has been proposed that they also benefit their hosts by providing an early warning system of approaching danger; of particular interest is how this communication may help rhinoceroses avoid danger from poachers.¹

This symbiotic feeding strategy is a vivid example of the complex but fragile relationships that exist in the natural world. Dr Lorinda Hart, BLSA's Birds & Agrochemicals Project Manager: "Although the population increase can partly be attributed to reintroductions into areas where they had previously been extirpated, farmers have assisted this useful species by...using more oxpecker-friendly alternatives to control ticks and other ectoparasites on their cattle and game."

Dr Linda van den Heever, BLSA's Species Conservation Programme Manager: "Until a few decades ago, the Red-billed Oxpecker was confined to large protected areas...but is now encountered in areas of the Eastern Cape, a province where it was absent until relatively recently," among other range increases into the North West province.



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Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson, BLSA's Head of Conservation: "The Red-billed Oxpecker has an interesting social system, as it is a cooperative breeder where up to seven helpers will assist the breeding pair to raise their young", which are normally raised within holes in trees. The Red-billed Oxpecker is a fascinating bird, and is becoming a more common sight in rural areas of eastern South Africa, and BLSA hopes the BOTY initiative will help South Africans appreciate the resilience and resourcefulness of this incredible bird. To find out more about the BOTY, keep an eye on the Bird of the Year 2025 [webpage](#).

[1] Plotz, R. D., & Linklater, W. L. (200518). Oxpeckers Help Rhinos Evade Humans. *Current Biology*, 30(10), (1965-1969.e2). doi: [10.1016/j.cub.2020.03.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2020.03.015)

[Find out more about Bird of the Year 2025](#)

For more information, high res photographs and to set up interviews, please contact:

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Should any of the above (low res) images be used, please make sure you credit the respective photographers.

Notes for the editor:

BirdLife South Africa strives to conserve birds, their habitats and biodiversity through scientifically-based programmes, through supporting the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources and by encouraging people to enjoy and value nature.

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More information about Bird of the Year 2025 will be made available from January 2025 at: www.birdlife.org.za/bird-of-the-year-2025.

The Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust is the sponsor of Bird of the Year 2025.