



POTENTIAL NEW GREEN LABEL FOR TICK CONTROL PRODUCTS

16th September 2015

Start

To heighten the awareness around oxpecker conservation in South Africa and to spearhead the development of a green labelling system for the farming sector, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) launched a competition in January 2015 for the design of a green label for oxpecker compatible products. The competition called for graphic design and art students around the country to submit designs for a new green label which could be used by industry to easily identify oxpecker compatible products.

In the early 1900s the oxpecker population severely declined and this gave rise to oxpecker conservation in South Africa. Oxpeckers provide a valuable ecological service through the removal of ticks from cattle and game. The increased trophy hunting of game species, the outbreak of Rinderpest, and the increased use of ectoparasiticides many of which contained Arsenic which is lethal to both ticks and the birds, led to the oxpecker population crash.

With the emergence of new chemical ingredients on the market, which were considered “safe” to use in the presence of oxpeckers, the expansion of oxpecker populations through targeted reintroductions into areas within their historic range became a possibility. The first official oxpecker translocation occurred in 1988 where a number of birds were relocated by SANParks from the Kruger National Park to the Limpopo province. This being a success, further reintroductions were conducted over the next decade.

In 2002, the EWT established the Operation Oxpecker project to take over this role with the aim of promoting the use of oxpecker compatible pesticides by livestock farmers and to coordinate the reintroduction of oxpeckers as natural tick control agents in specific areas of South Africa. The project has since facilitated 23 translocations of a total of 598 birds. Successful reintroductions of these birds have occurred country-wide and many landowners have since switched to using oxpecker compatible tick control products. The conservation status of the Red-billed Oxpeckers has thus improved in South Africa. Their national conservation status has recently been changed to Least Concern from previously being listed as Near Threatened.

Currently, products that are considered oxpecker compatible can be identified by a logo or sticker on the product. There is a large variety of label designs on various products and each agrochemical company has their own design for an oxpecker compatible label. This often causes uncertainty amongst farmers when selecting products. To rectify this, the EWT is working towards developing a standardised green-label for all oxpecker compatible products.

“We were excited to receive so many interesting and innovative ideas.” said Leigh Combrink the EWT’s Operation Oxpecker, Project Coordinator. After a lengthy period of stakeholder consultations with companies that manufacture

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.

the tick control products, as well as veterinarians, cattle and game farmers, and the general public, the judges finally selected three finalists.

First place was awarded to Ntokozo Nzuza, a 23-year old student from Durban who is currently studying towards her BTech in Graphic Design at the Durban University of Technology. This was the first design competition Ntokozo had entered. “My lecturer once told me in a past project how I must sometimes think as Visual Communicator instead of a Graphic Designer in other words focus on how I can communicate the message visually to the audience in an identifiable manner and keep it simple... In this case it was helpful to focus on what the product is for and design for it instead of focusing too much on the design only” said Nzuza who loves being a graphic designer, exploring and finding herself creatively.



In second place was a design by Daniel de Bruyn who is currently completing his BTech degree through the Central University of Technology in Bloemfontein. Daniel says “Graphic design is very competitive. The designer has to think outside of the box at all times and also has to find a compelling way to communicate with the public in a graphical way.” He gained his inspiration from an image of an oxpecker inside the ear of an animal saying that using only the top half of the bird improves the emphasis of awareness.

Third prize was awarded to Nicolene van der Vorst who is currently studying for her BTech degree at the Durban University of Technology. Nicolene loves what she does and enjoys making people’s visions a reality. Having received the advert from her lecturer, she set about creating a design where the oxpecker was the main focus. She says “the style was intended to be clean and neat for easy viewing. The theme was consideration/ compassion, by having the two birds facing and overlapping each other created a heart. A symbol greatly recognised and associated with love and care.”

“Together with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and the companies that manufacture tick control products, we are hoping to develop a single green label to identify oxpecker-compatible products. We also aim to create awareness around the dips that are the most appropriate to use in areas where the birds occur”, explained Combrink.

The EWT would like to thank all the students who took the time and effort to contribute to this initiative. The range of ideas was fascinating and it was exciting to see the interest people took in supporting oxpecker conservation. For more information on the EWT – oxpecker conservation work contact Leigh Combrink on 011 372 3600 or oxpecker@ewt.org.za or www.ewt.org.za. The Operation Oxpecker Project is proudly sponsored by the Green Fund and the Ford Wildlife Foundation.

NB: High resolution images available on request.



Winning Logo



1st runner up



2nd runner up

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