

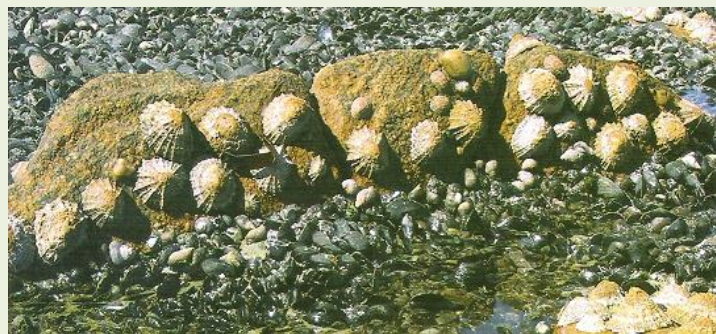
# Swarttobie, African Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus moquini*



The African Black Oystercatcher is a very colourful bird with its jet-black body, pink legs and bright orange-red bill and eyes, and is endemic to the coast and offshore islands of southern Africa south of the Sahara. It is usually found in pairs, but also roosts in flocks of 20 to 100 birds.



It occurs on rocky and sandy shores and estuaries and feeds largely on mussels and limpets, but also on worms and whelks. The bird has an important effect on the ecology of rocky shores by substantially reducing the densities of limpets and algal beds can develop.



It lays its eggs in scraped hollows on the shore and breeds from October to March, peaking early January. The eggs and chicks are extremely well camouflaged which increases the chance to be damaged by vehicles on beaches. They are endangered and are being protected by law.



(SOURCE: BRANCH, G.M., et al. 2005. *Two oceans: a guide to the marine life of southern Africa*; MACLEAN, G.L. 1993. *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*.)