



Safari Story: Ox Peckers are Everyone's Friend

Description

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While we sit and watch the majestic large mammals grazing and herding in front of our open safari vehicle we are not aware of a the subplot playing out around us. The ox pecker is hard at work rushing about the backs of the animals cleaning ticks and other parasites from their hides and their cries go unnoticed by us among the other noises of the bushveld.

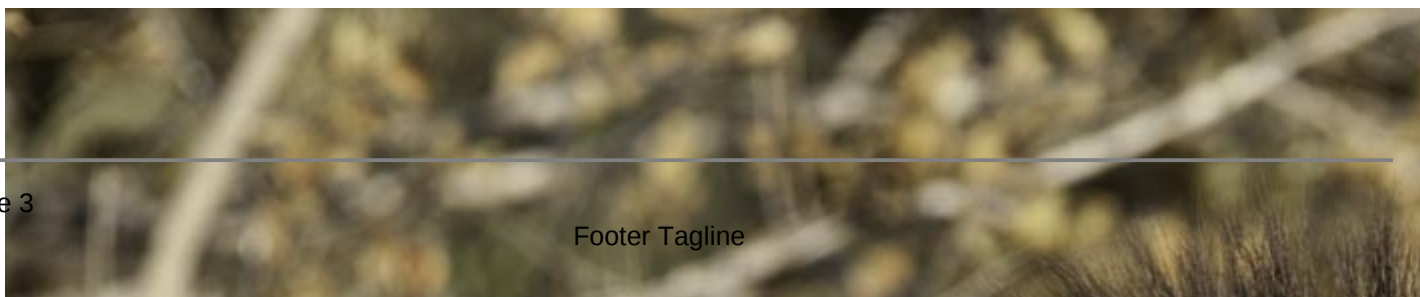


Impala spend much time grooming so they enjoy help



Even the fierce buffalo bull enjoys a visit from the ox pecker

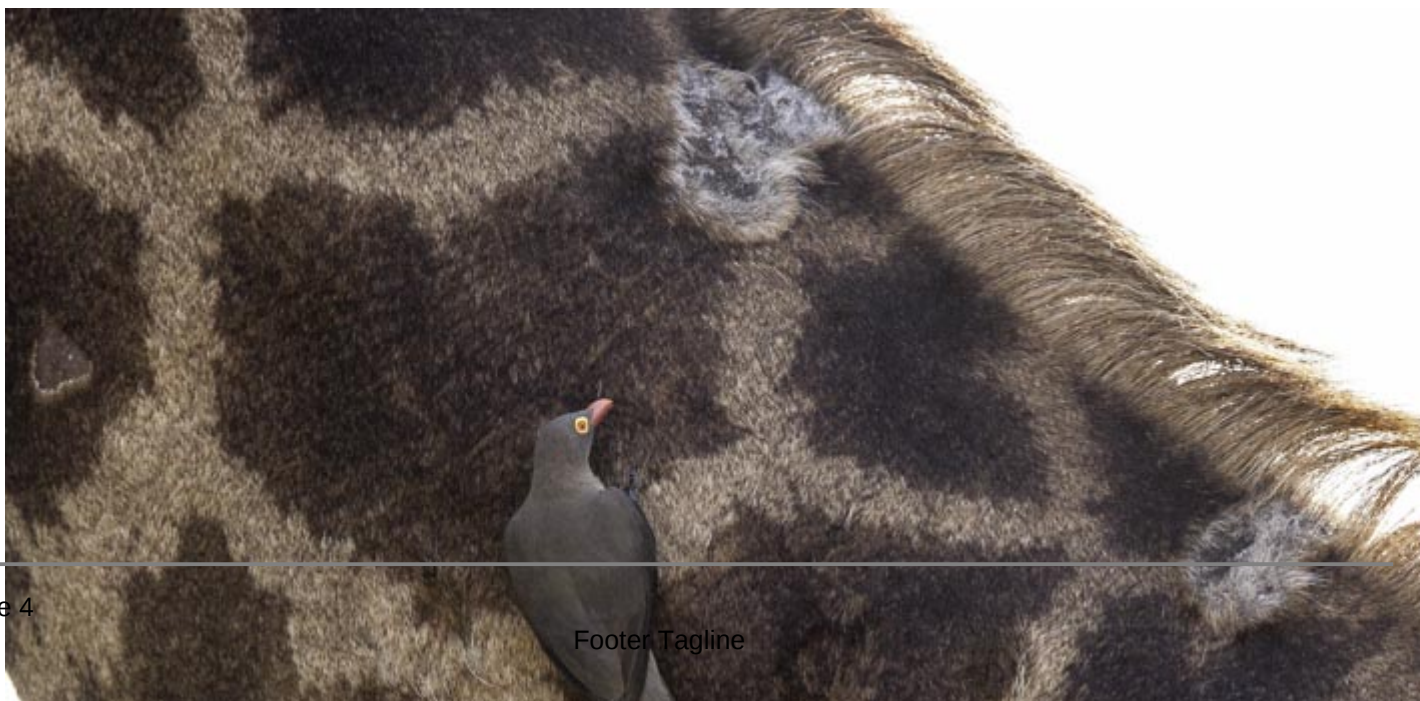
The red billed ox pecker eat the ticks and other small parasites found on the skin and coats of buffalo, kudu, zebra, giraffes, and other animals. Their bills are especially adapted to this lifestyle as are their feet. They also are known to clean open wounds by consuming the rotting wound tissue. The ox peckerâ€™s presence minimizes the time the host animals needs to spend grooming to remove parasites themselves.



ox pecker ventures into a zebra's ear



Ox Peckers feel safe and take a break on the back of a rhino



Ox peckers working the large surface area of a giraffe

The birds act as watchmen; their rattling alarm calls giving their hosts advance notice of approaching predators.

Category

1. African Wildlife
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