

"People also looked out for the oystercatcher nests and marked them with red tape and even sat near them to guard them from uncaring people and their dogs, not to mention the sneaky gulls who also like to steal eggs and little chicks."

"Eventually more and more Black Oystercatcher babies got to grow up and now they are no longer endangered. But we are still very happy when we see them, especially if they have a chick with them."

I wondered if Lindy would also be happy to see baby kittens.

Activity suggestion:

Do Black Oystercatchers eat oysters?

What colour are the Black Oystercatchers' feet and beak?

Explain in your own words what "endangered" means.



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THE OYSTERCATCHERS



BY STRIPES
THE ECO-CAT

One day everyone came to the Green House all excited. So I also ran round the room a few times and jumped on the table, even though I didn't know why. I was sure one of my humans would start with "Did you know, Stripes..." and then tell me.

It wasn't long before my Rob human said Lindy was coming. "Yippee", I thought, "I have a new human". I wondered if she also liked cats.

Well, I need not have worried. Lindy loves telling stories, even to a cat. It wasn't long before I was settled on her lap. She told me she had stopped by the sea in Hermanus and looked at the view across Walker Bay. On the rocks below she saw something that made her very happy. There was a pair of Black Oystercatchers with a baby chick.

"A Black what?" I asked, "And do the oysters run very fast like rats so you have to be quick to catch them"?

"No, no, Stripes", she laughed. "An oyster is a sort of snail that lives on rocks in the sea and once it's stuck to the rock it doesn't move. The Black Oystercatcher is a bird that eats shell fish such as limpets and mussels that grow on the rocks. They

don't really catch oysters at all."

"So why call it an Oystercatcher", I wondered.

But Lindy continued "African Black Oystercatchers mate for life and some pairs have been known to live together for up to 20 years".

"That's longer than most cats live", I thought.

"They breed once a year at the beginning of summer and lay stony-coloured eggs on the sand or rocks. And that's been a big problem, because the summer holiday is the time of year when humans like to go to the beach with their dogs and beach buggies. The Oystercatchers couldn't raise any chicks because of the disturbance around their nests with people and dogs and buggies rushing around and over them. Eventually there were very few Oystercatchers left. When there are only a few left of any animal or plant, we call that 'endangered.'"

"You still saw some today, right"?

"Yes, Stripes", Lindy said. "Some kind people worried about the oystercatchers and started to tell the holiday people about the problem with their dogs and the beach buggies."