



THE EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER

By Robert Smith August 2 2026

Roberts Birds of southern Africa — 7th Edition, describes Eurasian Oystercatchers as “rare Palearctic migrants” which mostly occur in South Africa during the summer months.

They are recorded throughout the year, but young birds are known to overwinter and have an agitated flight-call which is slightly more rapid and persistent to that of the African Black Oystercatcher.

The species breed from Iceland to central Russia and far eastern China.

Overwintering birds are mostly seen North of 20° in Africa and those that move southwards habitually take an easterly route down to South Africa.

The Eurasian Oystercatcher is highly gregarious in the non-breeding period, and their presence in association with African Black Oystercatchers on the Knysna Estuary, suggests that they accept each other's company and do not see each other as competitors.



**Eurasian
Oystercatcher**



**African Black
Oystercatcher**

By comparison, the Eurasian and the African Black Oystercatchers are more or less the same size, with the Eurasian Oystercatcher measuring 40-45 cm and the African Black Oystercatcher, 42-45 cm. The Eurasian Oystercatcher has a weight of 400-700 g, while the slightly larger African Black Oystercatcher tips the scales at between 665-730 g.

References:Hockey, PAR et al; Roberts Birds of Southern Africa, VIIth Edition; John Voelker Bird Book Fund; Cape Town; 2005. Hume, R; Birds of Britain and Europe; Doring Kindersley; London; 2002.