

FLAMINGO *fallout*

UPDATE ON KIMBERLEY'S FLAMINGOS



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The success of the Lesser Flamingos breeding at Kimberley's Kamfers Dam delighted birdlovers locally and internationally. It seems, however, that the site is not secure from man-made pressures, and the birds now face an uncertain future on their dedicated island in the dam.

Further north, Africa's largest breeding site for this species, Lake Natron, is also being threatened by continued development pressure.

Sceptics did not believe that Kamfers Dam's artificial island would be used for breeding, especially considering that Lesser Flamingos *Phoenicopterus minor* typically breed in the shallow waters of vast, isolated pans

Some of the juvenile flamingos that successfully fledged at Kamfers Dam.

(see April/May 2008, pages 42–49). But they were proved wrong, and conservationists rejoiced at the success of the breeding event, especially considering the final tally of about 8 500 chicks.

This is the first time that Lesser Flamingos have been recorded breeding in South Africa, and it is only the fourth breeding locality for the species in Africa (Sua Pan, Etosha Pan and Lake Natron are the others). By July, few chicks remained on the island, as the majority of the young birds were now foraging and roosting with adults away from the breeding site, and some had already turned up at other wetlands.

Regular breeding of Lesser Flamingos at Kamfers Dam could reverse the negative population trend in southern Africa of this Near Threatened species. Kamfers Dam provides permanent water with an abundance of the flamingos'

preferred food (cyanobacteria) and the safety of a large island, and annual breeding is therefore likely.

Environmentalists are, however, deeply concerned about two threats to the dam's flamingos. Kimberley's main sewage works is operating way above capacity and, as a result, inadequately treated sewage water and even raw sewage are being pumped into the dam. A further potential threat is the proposed construction of approximately 6 500 houses at Northgate, the neighbouring property. The development will take place beyond Kimberley's urban edge and the Wildlife & Environment Society, Kamfers Dam's landowners and other environmentalists consider there to be other, more appropriate sites for this development.

When the flamingos move off the island in early August, scientists will boat across to collect unhatched eggs (which will be deposited in museum collections), do maintenance work to the island's edge (caused by water erosion), repair the four large ponds and install a webcam.

For regular updates and images of Kamfers Dam and its flamingos, visit www.andersonafrica.co.za.

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SAVE THE FLAMINGO

A group of concerned individuals and organisations in Kimberley, South Africa, has started a campaign to obtain funds and support for the conservation of Kamfers Dam and its flamingos.

The dam and its flamingos are threatened by a proposed housing development and deteriorating water quality. Visit www.savetheflamingo.co.za if you'd like to obtain more information, to sign the petition and/or contribute funds.