

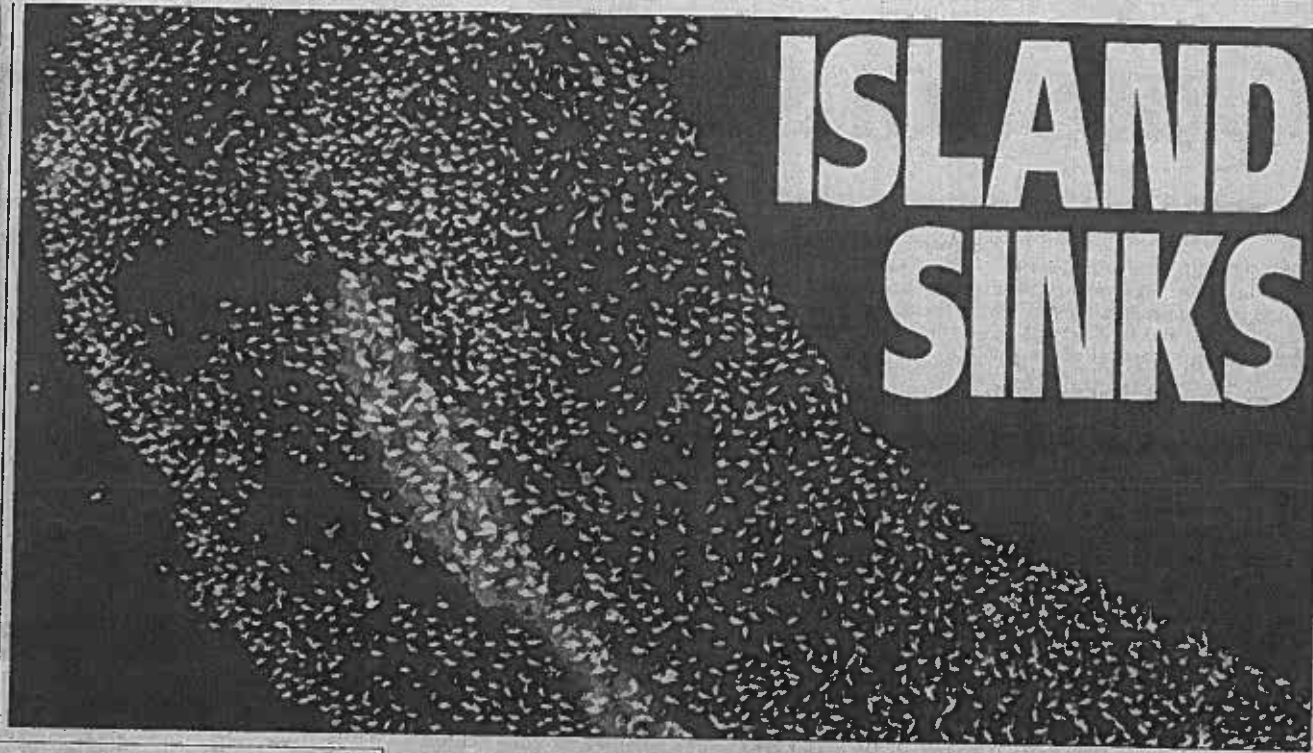
CITY ISLAND GOES UNDER

NO BREEDING: While a few Greater Flamingos are now breeding on the Kamfers Dam Flamingo Island, only a small part of the island is above water and it is expected that the breeding event will only be a small fraction of what it was in previous years. According to Bird Life South Africa Chief Executive Officer, Mark Anderson, it is estimated that the number of Greater Flamingo chicks and eggs is around 160. Seen here is a flooded subway under the railway line next to the dam.

Picture: Izéll Muller

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ISLAND SINKS



PAIY BEANGSTROM
NEWS EDITOR

WHILE a few Greater Flamingos are now breeding on the Kamfers Dam flamingo island, only a small part of the island is above water and it is expected that the breeding event will only be a small fraction of what it was in previous years.

Bird Life South Africa Chief Executive Officer, Mark Anderson, said yesterday an aerial survey of the man-made breeding island had been done over the weekend.

"Unfortunately only a small part of the island is above water," Anderson said.

"From the images taken during the survey, it is estimated that the number of Greater Flamingo chicks and eggs is around 160."

He added that the Greater Flamingos were breeding on and between the nests built by the Lesser Flamingos during the previous breeding season, on a very small strip of island that still remains above water at the moment.

Tania Anderson of the Save the Flamingo Association added that "if the Lesser Flamingos bred at all this season, they may have done so during October and November and it would have been a very small breeding event".

"It is estimated that only between 150 and 200 Lesser Flamingo chicks could have been raised on the small breeding strip

of island, based on the number of nests and space available.

"This is approximately only 10 percent of the number of chicks produced during the previous breeding season from October 2009 to April 2010 when about half of the island was flooded and many chicks and eggs lost.

In 2008/9 a record 13 000 chicks hatched on the breeding island and in 2007/8, 9 000 chicks hatched.

The water level at Kamfers Dam is currently at its highest point with the municipality recently completing a R60 million refurbishment of the Homevale Waste Water Treatment Plant, to ensure that it can cope with the current peak inflow of about 37 mega litres per day.

Before the refurbishment, about 80 percent of the sewage works were either not operational or in a deteriorated state, resulting in poor quality sewage effluent flowing into Kamfers Dam.

The refurbishment, which is now only awaiting the electrical installation of three refurbished aerators, means that the quality of the treated effluent flowing into Kamfers Dam has improved drastically and is now up to the required standards set by the Department of Water Affairs.

The high water level is also believed to be threatening the foundations of the two railway lines that pass near the dam.

Sol Plaatje Municipality

spokesman, Sello Matsie, explained yesterday that except for about six mega litres per day of water, which is used by the golf course, De Beers and Parks and Gardens, all the effluent treated at the Homevale Waste Water Treatment Plant, was pumped into Kamfers Dam.

He added that the level of Kamfers Dam was also increased by the recent rainfall because all the stormwater drains flowed into the dam.

"In December last year we put out a tender to pump 38 mega litres per day of water from Kamfers Dam to the Langleg Pan. The intention is to pump out this volume of water for a period of a year which will bring down the water level at Kamfers Dam to an acceptable level. We hope to start pumping by March 2011."

He added that the project to pump away the water would also assist the water levels once the municipality started unlocking development in the city.

Matsie explained that high level of the water at Kamfers Dam was due to several factors.

"In the past De Beers used the water during the diamond washing process but as they scaled down their operations, this meant less water being needed."

The ideal level of Kamfers Dam is 1 156 metres above sea level. In December last year, however, the level was 1 178 metres above sea level.

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