

Pitter-patter of little feet on flamingo isle

STAFF REPORTER

FOR THE SECOND consecutive year, flamingos are breeding on the artificial island at Kamfers Dam and more than 100 chicks have already been noted.

According to Mark Anderson, executive director of BirdLife South Africa, the first chick was observed on the island last week.

According to the Save the Flamingo Association, the number of chicks is growing daily.

"The first egg was laid on October 23 and there are now already hundreds, perhaps thousands, of eggs on the island," the association said in a statement. "The breeding event is six weeks earlier than last summer, perhaps an indication of the flamingos' acceptance of the new breeding site."

Kamfers Dam's breeding island was constructed by Ekapa Mining in September 2006 - the only artificial breeding island for Lesser Flamingos in the world.

The flamingos also bred last summer, with an estimated 9 000 chicks being produced.

"If one considers that the southern African Lesser Flamingo population only numbers about 100 000 individuals, Kamfers Dam contributed significantly to this relatively small population during the past summer," the statement said.

Kamfers Dam's Lesser Flamingos made history and world news in January this year when the first chicks were observed. The breeding event represented the very first time in recorded history that Lesser Flamingos had ever bred in South Africa.

The island's breeding flamingos are monitored around the clock by members of the Save the Flamingo Association via a small camera that was installed on the island with funding from Nedbank, Ekapa Mining and Nugen.

Audio facilities, infrared lights, and 24-hour monitoring allow conservationists to monitor any illegal activities and possible disturbance to the breeding flamingos. The camera also provides an excellent opportunity for scientific research and a PhD study by a student from Clemson University in the USA will commence there next year.

It is hoped that the live stream with full colour images will soon be broadcast throughout the world via Africam's website. "This will allow people around the world to view the breeding flamingos and to share in the jubilation of Kimberley's conservationists," the organisation stated.

"The webcam will also provide a unique opportunity to inform millions of people about the conser-

vation plight of flamingos, not only those at Kamfers Dam, but all over the world."

The breeding island is S-shaped to limit erosion, and allow the flamingo chicks access onto and off of the island in the two sheltered bays, and is 25 metres by 250 metres in size.

The island is covered with a layer of clay, and has four large ponds, fed by a submersed pump which is powered by three large solar panels.

Ekapa Mining moved 26 500 tonnes of material during the construction of the island, with the project costing about half a million rand.

During recent months Ekapa Mining has conducted rehabilitation work on the island, including packing 2 500 sandbags around the island's edge and conducting repairs to the four ponds.



FLAMCAM: This image of a little flamingo chick and its nurturing parent was taken by a camera on Kamfers Dam's flamingo breeding island recently. The breeding event is the second in two years.

Picture: Supplied

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