

PRESS RELEASE

Conservationists hopeful for breeding flamingos in Norfolk as flock expands beyond ‘magic 40’

It is hoped that the breeding fortunes are on the up for a group of Greater Flamingos at Pensthorpe Natural Park, near Fakenham in Norfolk, which has welcomed 20 new birds to join its resident flock of 29.

The new birds, which have come from Slimbridge Wetland Centre, near Gloucester, take the Pensthorpe flock beyond the ‘magic number 40’ which, according to experts, can help to boost breeding rates amongst the birds.

Flamingos are notoriously social birds that enjoy living in colonies of sometimes over 100. The larger the flock, the more likely the birds are to mate.

The new birds, which are in excellent condition, range from two to 30 years old, and have settled well into their new surroundings at the Norfolk nature reserve.

12 of the new birds are female whilst eight are male, taking the gender split of the entire flock to 24 males and 25 females.

Slimbridge Wetland Centre already has a large flock of successful breeding flamingos so were happy to release the 20 birds to support Pensthorpe’s own breeding efforts.

Chrissie Kelley, Head of Species Management at Pensthorpe Natural Park, comments: “The birds were quickly and successfully integrated with the resident flock and I’m pleased to report that they are all doing really well. They’re displaying lots of positive behaviours and we have high hopes for positive nesting attempts.

“Obviously breeding conditions depend on many factors including the size and space of the enclosure and the ratio of males to females, but having over 40 birds here at Pensthorpe for the first time in our history presents a really exciting opportunity to see the possibility of having our own baby flamingos hatching in the Wensum Valley!”

Flamingos build their nests out of mud, stones and feathers and do so about six weeks before they lay their eggs. Flamingos tend to lay just one egg that hatches after a 30-day incubation period.

Deb Jordan, owner of Pensthorpe Natural Park, comments: "Our flamingos are a firm favourite with visitors, so we are thrilled to be able to announce an even larger, happier flock!

"Naturally we are watching their behaviour closely, but early signs indicate that the new birds are thoroughly enjoying their new home in Norfolk."

All 49 flamingos are on permanent display within the new Wetland Discovery Area at Pensthorpe Natural Park, which opened in July.

This is the second time this year that the resident flock has expanded, after welcoming four famous flamingos from the Kensington Roof Gardens in London back in February.

The reserve, which is located within Norfolk's stunning Wensum Valley, is renowned for its work in conservation, having played a fundamental role in the research, breeding and care of species such as Red Squirrels, Corncrakes and Turtle Doves.

For more information about Pensthorpe please visit pensthorpe.com.

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Editors Notes

About Greater Flamingos

Lifespan: 20-30 years

Length: 120-140cm

Weight: 1.5-4kg

Location: They are found in the Mediterranean, West Africa, South-West and South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. They prefer shallow eutrophic waters where they can nest and roost on sandbanks and mudflats.

Behaviour: Flamingos spend most of their days feeding, nesting, bathing and preening (they preen to distribute oil from a gland at the base of the tail to all their feathers, making them waterproof!)

Posture: A resting flamingo stands on one leg. It is thought that this unusual posture is adopted as a way to conserve body heat and energy.

Flamingo Chicks: When hatched, flamingo chicks are grey and won't reach their full mature distinctive colouration until three years of age.

About Pensthorpe Natural Park

Pensthorpe Natural Park is on the A1067, one mile from Fakenham and just over 20 miles from the city of Norwich. Open all year (closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day):-

1st January – 28th February, 10am – 4pm

1st March – 24th July, 10am – 5pm

25th July – 5th September, 10am – 6pm

6th September – 31st December, 10am – 5pm

Entry prices: Adults £11.95, Seniors £10.95, Children £10.95, Under 3's free. Annual Members are free. Parking is free.

Online booking discount of £1 per person applies to tickets booked in advance.

For more information, images or press passes please contact Rachael Shakespeare on rachael@rs-pr.co.uk or 07833 940 000.