

GREATER FLAMINGO

Phoenicopterus roseus

- **Range:** Africa, western Asia, and southern Europe.
- **Habitat:** Breeds in shallow wetlands that are either saline or alkaline, such as salt lakes, coastal lagoons, intertidal mudflats, and saltworks. While wintering, it can be found in the same habitat types, but also in coastal areas, estuaries, deltas, marshes, rice fields, aquaculture ponds, and reservoirs.
- **Nutrition:** Crustaceans, molluscs, aquatic insects, annelids, microalgae, and plant seeds. Chicks are fed exclusively from secretions produced by their parents for three months until they are able to feed themselves.
- **Reproduction:** 1 – 2 eggs. Incubation 27 – 36 days.
- **Social structure:** Groups of 10 – 12 to several hundred birds, usually in equal proportions of males and females.
- **Weight:** 2 – 4 kg.
- **Dimensions:** Height 1.20 – 1.25 m. Wingspan 1.40 – 1.87 m.
- **Estimated population in the wild:** Global population 150,000 – 205,000 individuals. The European population is estimated at 45,000 – 62,400 pairs, which equates to 89,900 – 125,000 mature individuals.
- **Lifespan:** More than 40 years.
- **Threats:** Low reproductive success due to human disturbance at breeding colonies or due to lowering of water levels which results in predation from ground predators. Habitat loss and degradation, lead poisoning, collisions with fences and powerlines, diseases and hunting.
- **IUCN Status:** LC (least concern).

Did you know?

- The greater flamingo is the heaviest and tallest flamingo species.
- Greater flamingo is a highly social species and uses several vocalizations. An important vocalization is the contact call, which allows the parents to individually identify their chicks in crèches. The contact call is also used in courtship or when flying in flocks. Other vocalizations are flight calls, threat calls, and warning calls. The chicks use a number of calls to communicate with their parents.
- The begging calls of chicks may stimulate the secretion of crop milk by adults.
- Parent flamingos feed their chicks with a secretion, and the feedings may last more than 20 min.
- While the fluid flows from adult to chick, a harsh, low-pitched sound is produced, which may be heard up to 200 m away.
- They are seasonally monogamous. Mate choice seems to be based on the complexity of sexual displays. Couples divorce at the end of the breeding season or earlier if there was a breeding failure during incubation.