

Flamingos

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Bonaire workshop

On 5 and 6 of November 2002, the fourth regional workshop on the Southern population of the Caribbean Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber ruber*) was held on Bonaire. A group of conservation administrators and field biologists from several range countries of the Caribbean Flamingo in the southern Caribbean, met to discuss their observations and research and future collaborative work for the conservation of this species.

The largest contingent came from Venezuela (7), but there were also participants from other Caribbean Flamingo range countries: the Netherlands Antilles (6), Cuba (1), Mexico (1) and Suriname (1). Other participants came from the Netherlands (1), USA (1) and Spain (1), who provided information and insight on other Flamingo (sub) species.

There was a lively discussion on the distribution of the Flamingos, their migrating patterns and their habitat and resource needs. It was obvious that a lot is still unknown about these migrations, which could be a constraint for good protection. As far as the southern population is concerned, two breeding areas are known: Bonaire and Los Olivitos at the entrance of Lake Maracaibo, the last one being a recent addition. But to what extent would these animals mix in the future? And what is the extent of migration between the southern population and the northern population in Cuba, Yucatan and Bahamas. Information from banded birds in the Mediterranean shows that they could easily cover the distance, but would they? Would those groups of Flamingos observed in the Guyanas mainly consist of sub-adults?



As far as the monitoring of the number of Flamingos is concerned, it was agreed that, this would be synchronized within a few days, monthly for the core areas in Venezuela and Bonaire and bimonthly for the other areas in the southern Caribbean. Preparations will be made for a one-time synchronized count of all

Flamingos in the Caribbean.

A consistent system will be used for banding Flamingos in the Caribbean, using white plastic bands with a four character code. The additional use of metal bands will be optional for each country.

Further collaboration on both field work and conservation efforts, will go on. For this purpose a email list will be used.

The workshop was closed by the Netherlands Antilles minister of Public Health and Environment, who emphasized the commitment of the Netherlands Antilles to the Flamingos and the preservation of their habitat.

The workshop was funded by the Dutch ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries.

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