

**The third international workshop on Greater Flamingos in the Mediterranean region
and North-west Africa : summary of main outputs.**

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Résumé

Le 3^{ième} atelier international sur les Flamants de Méditerranée et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest s'est tenu à Djerba, Tunisie le 26 novembre 2004. Trente trois participants provenant de 10 pays ont assisté à cet atelier organisé par Arnaud Béchet de la Tour du Valat. Douze interventions ont permis de faire le point sur les travaux du réseau Flamant dans le nord de la Méditerranée (France, Espagne et Italie) et en Mauritanie ainsi que de passer en revue le statut des Flamants de la Tunisie au Maroc. Il est apparu urgent de développer le réseau d'étude et de conservation des Flamants vers l'Afrique du Nord où malgré l'importance des populations hivernantes, et les soupçons de reproduction, les lectures de bagues restent peu nombreuses et les dénombrements rares et souvent peu fiables. L'accent a été mis sur le besoin de trouver des financements pour monter des projets conjoints avec le sud de la Méditerranée afin d'augmenter les compétences et les moyens logistiques nécessaires pour y développer des activités de suivi, de recherche et de conservation.

The third international workshop on Greater Flamingos in the Mediterranean region and North-west Africa was held in Djerba, Tunisia, on 26 November 2004, coinciding with the 11th

Pan African Ornithological Congress held the previous days. The workshop was organised by Arnaud Béchet of the Tour du Valat (Camargue, S. France) and attended by 33 participants from 10 countries. Twelve talks were given on a variety of aspects relating to conservation, monitoring and research on flamingos. The aim of the meeting was, however, above all to maintain and develop the capture-resightings programmes of chicks, banded in France, Spain, Italy including Sardinia, and Turkey, begun in 1977, for which a strong network of governmental and non-governmental organizations in these countries is now well established. The Greater Flamingo is one of the 15 species of conservation concern to the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Area (Barcelona Convention, 1976) because of the limited number of breeding places. In spite of this the number of breeding pairs and of sites occupied in the Mediterranean region have both increased in recent years.

Arnaud Béchet presented the research and conservation issues addressed by the multi-site approach. In brief, observations of banded birds in the Mediterranean suggested that important exchanges of juveniles and breeders occur among colonies. Sound conservation planning should thus rely on improved understanding of dispersal strategies used by flamingos within the appropriate geographic range. Arnaud Béchet then explained that it was time to improve the network to North Africa where conservation issues for Flamingos are highest.

Özge Balkız, presented the preliminary results of the multi-site analysis she has been carrying out of dispersal rates between the different breeding locations in the Western Mediterranean (displayed as a poster at the congress). The paper by herself and colleagues used capture-recapture life histories of flamingos born in France and Spain and observed breeding either in France, Spain or Sardinia. Her results suggest different dispersal flyways for birds breeding in France and those breeding in Spain. She also presented the first dispersal data for the 447 flamingos banded in 2003-04 in Turkey showing resightings as far as Israel and Spain.

Nicola Baccetti gave a paper in collaboration with Paolo Dall'Antonia on winter site fidelity and range expansion and examined the distribution of the different age classes of

flamingos within Italy/Sardinia. Resightings show that new wintering sites are at first visited by relatively young birds which develop site attachment and fidelity, explaining why the mean age subsequently increases with time. Different sites, therefore, host birds whose mean age depends on the year of first settlement.

Flamingos have not escaped the use of satellite telemetry for tracking some of their movements which Juan Amat and colleagues have done in Andalucia (also a poster at the congress). One of seven individuals marked after the 2000 breeding season at Fuente de Piedra moved to Mauritania in two flights separated by only a short rest, while another bird moving between Andalucia and Tunisia rested several hours on the open sea (20kms from the coast). This work highlights the importance of taking into consideration small waterbodies in conservation planning as they are frequently used by flamingos during dispersal movements.

Christophe Germain has over the past 2-3 years completely redesigned the Flamingo banding-resighting database at the Tour du Valat which has been improved to group all data from countries operating flamingo banding schemes in the Mediterranean. Christophe also presented a trial version of a Greater Flamingo interactive web site whereby many of the parameters related to breeding biology and monitoring could be stored, regularly up-dated by regional coordinators and available to a large public.

Data on wintering numbers, resightings and conservation issues were presented by participants from the Maghreb countries, Mike Smart for Tunisia, Boudjema Samraoui for Algeria (where the species is widely hunted) and Abdeljebbar Qninba for Morocco. Even though breeding has been suspected in Algeria for the first time, no firm proof of the successful breeding of Flamingos was presented and the last breeding recorded in North Africa were at lake Iriki in Morocco in 1978 and at Sidi Mansour in Tunisia in 1991. However, it was noted that breeding could have been overlooked in Algeria especially in large salt depressions which can only really be surveyed by plane.

Yelli Diawara showed the first evidence of flamingos born in Spain and France breeding in the Parc National of the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania. This implies that the West

African and the Mediterranean populations of Flamingos have to be considered together to understand the whole dynamics.

Finally, but not least of all, several funding opportunities to elaborate joint projects with North-Africa were explored mainly through the idea of using flamingos as a flagship species to promote waterbirds monitoring, environmental education and wetland conservation projects. The meeting was also the occasion for Alan Johnson, outgoing coordinator of the Flamingo Specialist Group (Wetlands International, SSC), to introduce his successor, Brooks Childress. Alan Johnson opened the meeting by recalling the importance of Tunisia for Flamingo. As a final message he urged the importance of maintaining the high quality of band reading and that those working on flamingos, or aware of publications relating to flamingos, share their knowledge through the FSG Newsletter that can be download from <http://www.wetlands.org/networks/Flamingo/Flamingo.htm>.

For more information on the Greater Flamingo Network in the Mediterranean and West Africa, please consult www.tourduvalat.org (>Greater Flamingos>The network).