

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Phoenicopteriformes
Scientific Name: *Phoeniconaias minor*

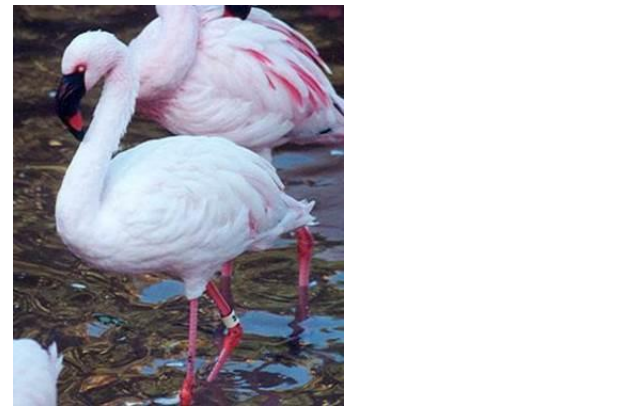
Family: Phoenicopteridae
Common Name: Lesser Flamingo

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None

Photo (Male):



Photo (Female):



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other Inland saline and alkaline lakes

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other To 32 degrees F

Heat Tolerance: To 30° F To 50° F To 70° F To 90° F
 To 110° F Other Lesser flamingos exhibit breeding behaviors at warmer temperatures. This species is better suited to warm climates than cold, wet climates.

Diet: Frugivore Carnivore Piscivore Insectivore
 Nectivore Omnivore Folivore Other (Add Below)

Captive Dietary Needs:

Commercial grain-based diet containing 20-40% protein, developed using nutrient requirements of poultry and ducks, have proven successful for maintenance, growth, and reproduction of flamingos in captivity and should be provided as the staple diet. Most important is providing a particle size

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optimized for the filtration mechanisms of the particular species (< 1 mm for the smaller species). Reflecting the size range of the flamingos (1.8 kg *Phoeniconaias minor*), energy estimates 160 kcal (660 kjoule) daily per individual to between 230 kcal (960 kjoule), respectively, depending also on activity level. Energy needs would be supplied by 2-4% of body mass in dry food containing 3 to 3.5 kcal/g daily. If diets are presented as slurry (up to 75% water) this may represent 10% of body mass. In the absence of naturally occurring organisms, possible enrichment items could include a range of small whole prey such as krill, copepods, and aquatic insect larvae to duckweed (*Lemna* sp.), chopped greens, and algae species. (Flamingo Husbandry Manual, p. 109)

Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: 40 plus years Females: 40 plus years

Life Expectancy in Captivity: Males: 30 plus years Females: 30 plus years

BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity: Males: 3 - 4 Females: 3 - 4

Courtship Displays: Group displays are an important part of flamingo breeding. The primary purpose of group displays is thought to be the synchronization of reproduction. Ritualistic behavior during group displays may include wing salute, inverted wing salute, twist-preen, wing-leg stretch, and head flagging. Marching is also common during the onset of breeding attempts – flamingos walking closely together with an erect posture in a synchronized quick-step.

Nest Site Description: In the wild, the most commonly used nesting sites are muddy islands with very little or no vegetation. In captive settings, the mud island theme is generally held to. Most often a secluded area is prepared by adding dirt, water and sometimes mulch for the flamingos to build their nests. Because Lesser Flamingos build mounds in densely packed areas in the wild, zoos with the most successful breeding often close their breeding Lesser flamingos together in small areas during breeding season. If you have a large enough flock (~100 birds), moving or confining birds to a smaller space for breeding is not necessary. The nest is typically constructed of mud (with debris worked in) built into a cone shape that has a shallow depression on the top for the egg to sit in. It is important to keep the nest area wet and the dirt turned so that the flamingos can easily manipulate the mud. Nest building is carried out by both males and females. Once the egg is laid, the parents often continue building the mound until an optimal height is reached.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: Usually lay one chalky white egg that weighs approximately 115g. Two eggs may be laid, but only occurs rarely.

Incubation Period: 28 days

Fledgling Period: 70 – 75 days

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Parental Care: During hatching, parents will sit tightly on the nest, never leaving it unattended. When the parents stand, they do so on the outer parts of the nest so that the chick is not injured by stepping on it. They will often touch their bill to the chick or the hatching egg. Both parents will protect the nest by chasing off other flamingos. The chick is especially vulnerable to aggression from other flamingos by being hit or pushed off the nest. Chicks will stay on the nest up to seven days; sometimes leaving as early as three days; most common is 5 days. Once the chick leaves, the parents stay close by the chick, protecting it from other flamingos and brooding it as needed. If you have a large enough flock (~100 birds), moving or confining birds to a smaller space for breeding is not necessary.

Chick Development: Chicks hatch under the parents and the parent's brood tightly for the first few days. The parents will begin to stand up as the chick stands on the mound and with four to five days the chick may climb down the mound and walk around the nest site. As the chick grows, legs should be monitored to make sure there are no developmental abnormalities (bowing or uneven growth). If caught early, legs can be taped and correct easily. Weaning occurs at around 4-6 months, but parents may continue to feed the chick for a year or more. The juvenile's first feathers are grey and then gradually replaced by pink feathers.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Flamingos, being one of the most gregarious of the bird groups, are found in flocks of thousands of birds. The Lesser flamingos are often found in Africa in flocks of over a million birds.

Social Structure in Captivity: The North American population of lesser flamingos has a skewed sex ratio. All male flocks exist at some zoos to reduce skewed colonies at breeding institutions. Excess males may be disruptive to breeding pairs and will attempt to take over mounds and crush eggs or chicks. Some zoos isolate breeding colonies into smaller facilities to influence breeding. Flamingos are much less monogamous than once thought. The occurrence of same sex pairings is common and some have success raising offspring and do not need to be split up.

Minimum Group Size: Minimum size is 20 birds of equal sex ratio. Groups of 30 or more birds seem to breed more successfully.

Maximum Group Size: The more the merrier provided that exhibit space is adequate to support the colony and allow for breeding.

Compatible in Varies **Comments:** Sensitive species, mix with waterfowl; mixing with

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Mixed Species Exhibits:

mammals is not recommended.

Optimal Habitat Size: If possible, provide an area with water deep enough for swimming. It is advantageous to feed in some type of catch pen where birds can be trapped easily if medical issues arise.

Management Challenges: Skewed sex ratio for breeding; SSP focused on increasing breeding through transfers

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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REFERENCES:

Del Hoyo, J., Elliot, A., & Sargatal, J. editors (1992), Handbook of the Birds of the World, Volume 1, Ostrich to Ducks. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

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