



Specialised Security Services



MIKE BOLHUIS: **THE FLAMINGO PROJECT** **PART 9**

THE RETURN TO KAMFER DAM!

The official release of 59 Lesser Flamingo-juveniles, took place on Tuesday 28 May 2019.

Mr Mike Bolhuis, who initiated the rescue project on 24 January 2019, was accompanied by Linja Allen from Saam-Staan Kimberley, Dr. Donovan Smith - veterinarian, officials from the Department of Nature Conservation and Environmental Affairs, local and international volunteers, Herbert Booth, who is the owner of the property, and Brian Culver, amateur nature conservationist- and photographer. The historical day will be part of the Bolhuis-series, and the Provoco-filming crew joined the group at the dam.

It was an emotional scene and breath-taking event, when the birds reached the clay border around the dam, spread their wings and took flight for the very first time.

Two smaller releases took place earlier in preparation for the third release of the 28th. As mentioned before, the initial trial release was on 8 May 2019, and the second release was on Monday, 27 May 2019. Some operational issues had to be dealt with according to Dr. Smith, as each release requires an immense amount of work and planning, which results in a few very anxious and distressing weeks.

In total 170 Flamingos have been released, with only two of the youngsters deciding not to venture out in the wild just yet. He continues, that flamingos are very fragile birds which require a lot of care, and for them to integrate without any hesitation and to such an effective level with their wild counterparts, is a major triumph and a success story in its own right.

There are over four hundred Flamingos that need to be released soon

the diet that was created to mimic the nutrients the flamingos need to thrive, is causing a few side effects on their ability to develop and maintain proper plumage. The birds need to be waterproof in order to survive in their natural environment. In addition, Kimberley is entering winter, making it more important than ever to have healthy plumage to regulate body temperature.

Mr Booth, the owner of the property, and the remaining volunteers will continue to monitor the surrounding area and ensure that the birds are safe. It is a relief that the whole project will not end with the release of the birds but will continue through observation, to allow for the study and the preservation of the birds and their habitat. The process will be managed by the Sol Plaatjies University and BCRE, Nelson Mandela University as well as Onderstepoort, as noted in our previous project. This is extremely important whilst the municipal sewerage facility is upgraded to facilitate a sustainable source of water, for the survival of the Flamingos. There are other responsible parties involved too, such as Ekapa-mine, which is part of the long-term project and also responsible for the integrity of the water and the eco-system surrounding the dam.

This rescue and eventual release were possible because of the involvement of many, many volunteers, big corporations, small business', qualified individuals and caring families. We are truly grateful to every single person involved, for their loyalty and commitment.

It is important for me to reiterate that the highest praise must go to our Almighty God. It is only by His grace that we are fortunate enough, to have been part of this amazing journey.

URGENT REQUEST FROM KAMFERS DAM:

Flamingo rescue 2019

I would like to start off by thanking everyone who has been involved with the flamingo rescue over the last 5 months. Remarkable progress has been made with

successfully being released back into the wild. However, many challenges still lie ahead. There are over four hundred remaining flamingos that need to be released soon but are being held due to poor plumage condition. Unfortunately, the diet that was created to mimic the nutrients the flamingos need to thrive, is having negative affects on their ability to develop and maintain proper plumage.

The commercial flamingo diet is supplied in a powder form that is then mixed with water before feeding out. Overtime, the diet has begun to build a waxy coating on the Flamingos' bills. In their attempts to preen, the birds are coating their plumage in the waxy residue and in turn, delaying their ability to become "waterproof". As we all know, if the birds are not waterproof, they simply cannot survive in their natural environment. In addition, Kimberley is entering winter months, making it more important than ever to have healthy plumage to regulate body temperature.

We have spent the last few months attempting to manage this issue with a less invasive approach by changing feeding methods and providing an excess of fresh water for bathing. After seeing a slower improvement than needed, manual bill clearing was implemented as well. These changes have shown a direct impact on plumage condition and in turn, waterproofing. However, with low staffing and an abundance of birds, timing is also now critical, and we will need to speed up the process of preparing the birds for release by mid-June using a more hands in approach. A goal that is set to increase their chances of survival in the wild.

In addition to bill cleanings, we have begun to manually remove the waxy build-up by bathing the birds. This began with the help of American volunteers that had previous experience with oiled birds. We have seen an immediate effect on the plumage of our "clean" birds and are confident this will set them up for a successful release. As mentioned before, the diet they are eating is causing the issue and therefore, the sooner we can bathe birds and provide them with the proper time to build back their natural waterproofing, the better.

As many of you may know, the process of bathing oiled birds is extremely time consuming and requires prior knowledge and experience. We, therefore, once again, call out to volunteers that are able to help in this regard. Experienced individuals will be needed to help supervise and wash the birds, while additional people will be needed to assist to keep the process moving quickly. Please bare in mind that the flamingos needing direct assistance are located in Kimberley, South Africa.

We will also be in need of sponsors for equipment, a gas geyser, as well as travel,

please send an email to donovan.smith@flamingo-project.org or contact 0716 27 027 702 8179 so that we can start gauging interest in this project and then hopefully start coordinating the effort as soon as possible.

Regards from the Flamingo team

Mike Bolhuis (082 447 6116); Linja Allen (072 011 2335) and

Donovan Smith (082 561 4760)

VIDEOS FROM 28 MAY 2019, AT KAMFERS DAM:

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<https://youtu.be/43TyzBcghnE>

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**SEE BELOW THE LINK WITH MORE INFORMATION WITH REGARDS
TO THE FLAMINGO PROJECT:**

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If anyone has any information relating to the above, please contact us. All information will be treated with the utmost privacy and confidentiality.

You may forward this information.

Regards

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