

ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE GREATER FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopterus ruber*
roseus) ON THE SULTAN MARSHES (TURKEY).

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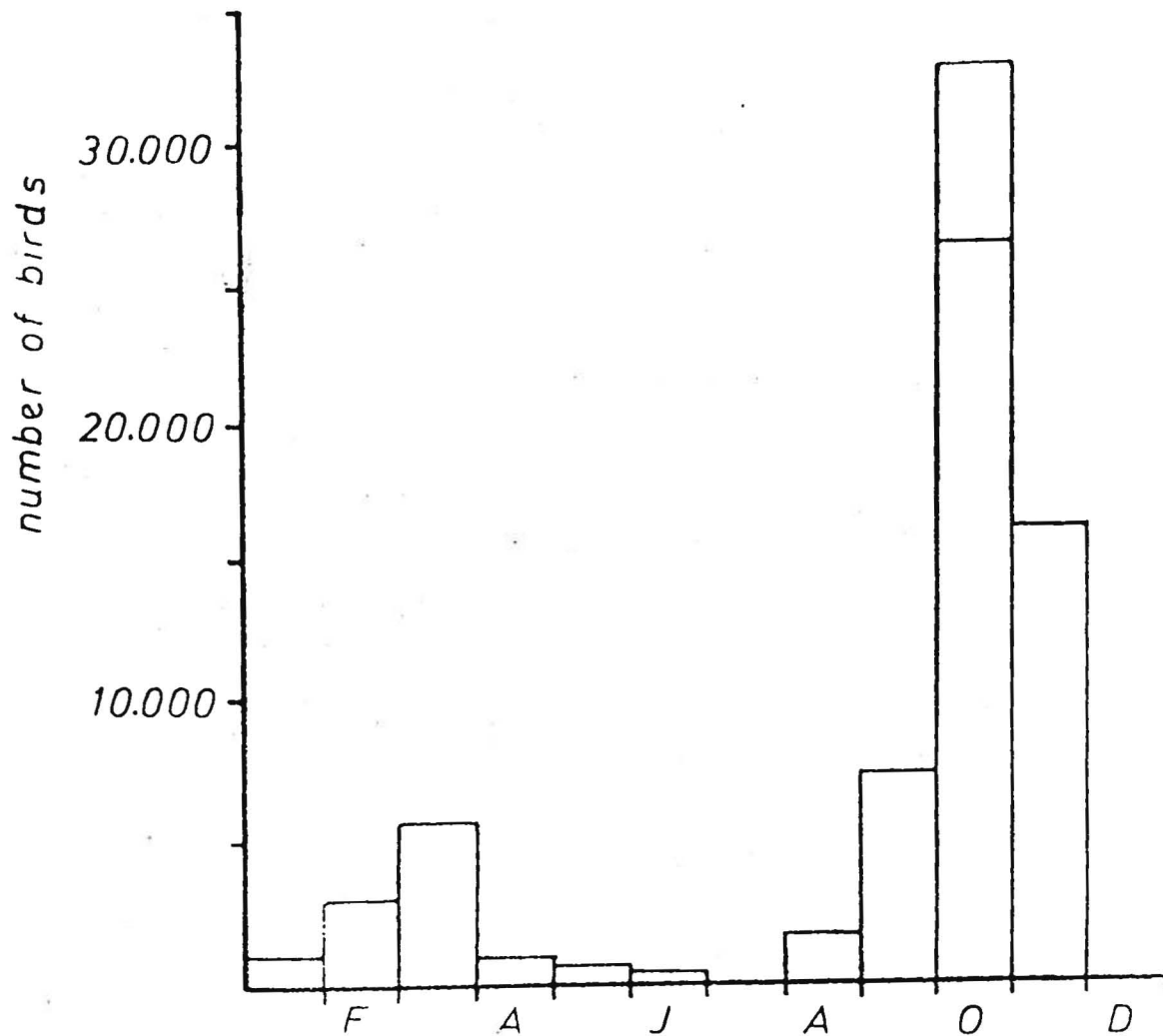
The Greater Flamingo was first discovered breeding by K. Warncke on the Sultan Marshes, Central Anatolia, in spring 1970. The number of breeding pairs was estimated as 1500 (Warncke, 1971). In October of the same year two Turkish ornithologists, I. Ozer and N. Turan, unaware of Warncke's observation, also discovered the colony which they then estimated to contain about 2,000 nests (Turan, 1971). These were spread over three islands in Yay Gölü.

The richness of the bird life of the Sultan Marshes (often wrongly referred to as Kurbaga Gölü) was first brought to international attention in 1968 by the late I. Ozer. Since then, many bird-watchers have visited the area each year (Kasperek, in prep.) but none have made any mention of flamingos breeding there. In view of this, it seems clear that the colony established in 1970 was the only breeding attempt to take place at this site in the past 16 years.

The explanation for this isolated breeding attempt is not really apparent. It was first thought that because of unsuitable water levels at Tuz Gölü (T. Gulpinar, pers. com.) the only site in Turkey where flamingos are known to breed fairly regularly, birds may have switched from there to the Sultan Marshes. However, as breeding also took place at Tuz in 1970 (Warncke, 1971) this seems unlikely.

In the course of a study of the birds of the Sultan Marshes (Kasperek, in prep.) a total of 96 records of flamingos have been collected from birdwatchers. The mean monthly values are given in Fig.1. There are no December records but relatively few visits have been made in this month. In spring, numbers peak in March and there is a striking increase in autumn with maximum numbers in October.

The maximum number recorded was by V. van den Berk and colleagues on 6-7.10.1980. These observers counted 60-80,000 but the authors themselves suggest that this may be an overestimate. However, two years later, on October 1st and 3rd 1982, the same team made a more careful count of 52,000 birds including 1,200 juvs. (V. & N. van den Berk, R. Bijlsma, F. Roder).



Figure_1.

Numbers of Greater Flamingos observed in the Sultan Marshes. Values are given as the monthly means of a total of 68 separate records from 1968-1982. Those from the breeding year, 1970, are not included. The October mean is expressed as a minimum and maximum, with and without the count of 60-80,000 of V. van den Berk et al..

Prior to these observations another very high figure (42,000) was obtained by T. Gürpınar in October 1975 (Gürpınar, 1978). All other records are below 23,000. Although these maximum counts may contain some errors, it is clear that the total population of Turkey, hitherto estimated as 25,000 birds (Kahl, 1975), is on occasion of the order of 40-60,000 birds. In this context, it is important to note that in winter the population may be augmented by birds of Iranian origin. A number of recoveries of ringed birds confirm that such movements do occur (Bull. Orn. Soc. Turkey, 1974, 11: 8).

During summer (May, June), the proportion of immature birds is very high, on occasion almost 100%. In the post-breeding season, juveniles of the year can frequently be seen. This was so in September 1979 and September 1982. These birds may come from the breeding grounds at Tuz Gölü.

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