

Combined communique from GDARD and PAAZA to DENC

To: DENC

14 August 2019

From: GDARD
PAAZA

Copy: DEA; NZG/SANBI; DENC; GDARD

Re: *ex-situ* Lesser Flamingos in Pan-African Association of Zoos and Aquaria (PAAZA) Accredited facilities under Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD)

With entering into the long-term care phase of the Lesser Flamingo event and all *ex-situ* birds being held under the GDARD jurisdiction area in PAAZA Accredited facilities, a discussion session on the future of the flock was required. In order to facilitate the attendance of all relevant authorities, the wildlife Veterinary team, and the *ex-situ* holders, the discussion session was convened on 26th July 2019.

The discussions were held in the interest of the species, in cognisance of the original Repatriation Plan and the knowledge gained during the recovery phase. A number of actions and recommendations emanated from the discussions which are noted below:

Status Quo

- 1) All birds are held between three PAAZA facilities with serious medical cases being transferred to Onderstepoort when required.
- 2) Since the discussions revolved around 'Long Term' and 'Next Season', this needed to be defined. The following was stated as the clarification:
 - a) October/November 2019 - this is pre-courtship period
What was also noted for the October/November period was the availability of suitable food in the wild
 - b) March/April 2020 - this is post-fledgling period
- 3) **Possible release:** Depending upon the successful health examinations by the wildlife Veterinary team prior to the above proposed release periods, the following estimates as at 26th July 2019 were noted:

October/November 2019 – 42/43 birds
March/April 2020 – 32/33 birds
- 4) **Non-Releasable:** Physical constraints – 22/25; Pox – 95 birds
- 5) **Carcasses:** It was noted that there are still a number of frozen carcasses at Mike Bolhuis and SANCCOB. These need to be accounted for and the wildlife Veterinary team is to decide what tests/samples need to be undertaken before incineration.

Actions to be implemented

- 1) Due to the research value of the Pox infected birds, a research project will be registered with GDARD. Lory Park Zoo and Owl Sanctuary will be the site for the research project which will be led by the wildlife Veterinary team. All necessary applications need to be submitted to GDARD. In addition, a full awareness and education programme will be developed along with signage for the three facilities. A version of the programme will be added to the existing dedicated web site for broader information sharing.

- 2) A full Disease Risk Analysis will be undertaken by the wildlife Veterinary team from Onderstepoort and NZG in conjunction with the State Veterinarian.
- 3) A full nutritional analysis will be undertaken on the available and required food. In addition, the entire feeding method will be analysed, researched and improved procedures established and documented. This project will be based at Montecasino Bird Gardens.
- 4) A studbook has been established and is managed through the PAAZA/NZG Population Management Centre. The non-releasable birds will form part of an assurance population which falls under the NZG mandate as the National body. A full husbandry manual will be developed as part of the species management process.
- 5) Given the complications experienced in quarantine and the subsequent fatalities that have occurred as a result of the metal rings, a formal recommendation against the use of metal rings will be published. It was noted that there was very strong representation to not fitting metal rings at the first meeting of stakeholders and noted in the Repatriation Plan.
- 6) The long-term monitoring has already yielded important results and previously unknown information. What has emerged is the very wide dispersal of the juveniles (even out of South Africa) along with adults away from the Kimberley breeding site. This wide dispersal means that the birds are Res Nulis. Research into alternative flock sites will be undertaken by PAAZA in conjunction with GDARD Scientific authority.
- 7) Although back-pack mounted GPS tracking devices were used (being the proven method), alternative methods will be evaluated within the *ex-situ* flock. The research project already underway will be registered with GDARD.
- 8) All datasets are held jointly by Dr Doug Harebottle, Sol Plaatje University, and Mr John Werth, BCRE/Nelson Mandela University. These datasets form the basis of the joint long-term research project.
- 9) A manuscript of lessons learnt based on Conservation Medicine will be drafted by Dr Robert Campbell, NZG. This will feed into a National Disaster Management Plan as requested by DEA at the inception of the recovery event which will be drafted by Dr Robert Campbell in conjunction with Onderstepoort and PAAZA. The framework will be based on Avian species for a National disaster but will include species specific addendums.

Accountability and Communication

Since all three holding facilities are within Gauteng, GDARD are the responsible provincial authority. All three holding facilities are also PAAZA Accredited; PAAZA Executive office will be the central point of contact. All official communication will be done through GDARD and where applicable, will be shared on both GDARD and PAAZA media sites. In order to maximise the knowledge gained, cross pollination between all research projects is a necessity. This should be facilitated through the Population Management Centre based at NZG.

Kind Regards,

John Werth

Executive Director - PAAZA