



PRESS RELEASE

Do not disturb the Flamingos

Nicosia, 18 January 2016

Hundreds of Cypriot citizens and tourists have been flocking to Larnaka Salt Lake the past few weeks to admire the amazing Flamingos that have arrived in Cyprus in their thousands in search of food and shelter.

According to the most recent bird count that took place last weekend, 12,500 Flamingos have settled at Larnaka Salt Lake and 2,500 more at Akrotiri Salt Lake.

These birds are a protected species and constitute a globally significant number and Larnaka Salt Lake has been declared as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar) due to the number of Flamingos it hosts in the winter.

These birds however are very sensitive to disturbance. A lot of people were reported to be seen entering the Salt Lake wearing galoshes or even barefoot in an effort to get closer to the Flamingos and get a better look at them. This reckless behaviour is a great problem in itself and causes considerable disturbance to this species. Some people have even taken it a step too far by flying Drones over the birds so that they can get footage.

With constant disturbance around, the birds are unable to rest or find food in peace, which is what brought them to our island in the first place. Not being able to properly rest during the winter months has negative effects on the breeding success of certain species during breeding season in spring. Therefore, it is very likely that this sort of disturbances will not allow the birds to gather the strength needed for breeding season. Moreover, apart from the Flamingos, both Salt Lakes host many other protected bird species which are also sensitive to disturbance.

BirdLife Cyprus is calling upon all conscientious citizens:

- To enjoy the Flamingos from a distance and avoid trying to get close to them.
- To avoid entering the Salt Lake with galoshes or barefoot in order to get close to them. Flamingos are wild birds that can get easily disturbed and scared away. People can enjoy them either from the Larnaka Salt Lake Birdwatching Hide or at the Akrotiri Environmental Education Center where entrance is free.
- To avoid flying Drones or other aerial vehicles above the Flamingos.

BirdLife Cyprus will try and be at Larnaka Salt Lake every weekend with telescopes so that nature lovers can enjoy these magnificent birds from a safe distance.

For more information please visit BirdLife Cyprus' website on www.birdlifecyprus.org

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Notes to the Editors:

1. **BirdLife Cyprus** is a registered, non-governmental, not for profit organisation (NGO) that dedicates itself to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in Cyprus. It was formed in 2003 through the merge of the two Cyprus Ornithological Societies and now has offices in Strakka, Nicosia comprised by professional staff. <http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/>