

## SARDINIA

In: Janet Kear & Nicole Duplaix-Hall (Edited), Flamingos T & AD Poyser, Berkhamsted, 1975: 26-27

Writing at the end of the last century, E. H. Giglioli stated that the Greater Flamingo was accidental and rare in peninsular Italy and Sicily, but occurred in good numbers in the salty lagoons of Sardinia during many months of the year. In the spring, mature birds migrated abroad to nest, while some young and non-breeding birds remained. This state of affairs has not materially changed. Notwithstanding the use of pesticides, especially DDT, spread largely from aircraft to fight malaria, and the great environmental changes to which the island has been subjected, the Sardinian flamingo population has held up better since the end of World War II than might have been expected. Some decrease has, however, been noted recently by Comolli and Gentili.

Flamingos in Sardinia frequent four principal groups of salty, shallow coastal pool (see the map), surrounded by meagre vegetation, on the southern and southwestern coasts of the island: 1 Oristano and Riola Sardo; 2 San Giovanni Suergiu; 3 Cagliari and 4 Villasimius.

Rarely and accidentally flamingos stop on the northern and eastern coasts. Statistical data for the past decade are incomplete, but figures for three pools give high counts from December to March, followed by a considerable fallin f off:

Molentargius pool (Cagliari): 2000 birds from mid-December to late February and 200 in April and May,  
Santa Gilla pool (Cagliari): 400, December. February; 300 March-May,  
Sale Porcus and Is Benas pool (Riola Sardo): 1000-1200, December-February; 1-200, March-May.

As the foregoing figures suggest, numbers of flamingos in Sardinia vary according to season, high in late autumn and winter and declining drastically with the approach of the breeding season. The maximum winter population seems to be about 4500 birds but populations vary considerably from year to year and in some years few or no birds are present. The nesting ground of Sardinian flamingos is not known, but recoveries of ringed birds indicate that some at least come from the Camargue.

The flamingo has, theoretically, been protected in Italy since passage of the game law of 1939. Accidental losses and poaching do not seem seriously to affect the Sardinian populations. More serious than direct human predation, however, are the indirect effects of environmental

change. In recent years many of the pools visited by flamingos have been increasingly threatened by industrial development, urbanisation or drainage. Especially to protect flamingos, the Molentargius pool has been designated a Bird Sanctuary. It needs, however, to be patrolled and improved in order to fulfil its protective functions properly. Other pools, such as Mistras, should also become sanctuaries and preserved from environmental change and pollution. The Sardinian wetland areas and their conservation are now being examined by both central and provincial authorities, who should consider them in relation to new planning and management of the territory.

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**Sardinia showing the main situations used by  
Greater Flamingos**