

A NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE OF A FLAMINGO AT THE LITTLE SALT POND, YALLAHS, ST. THOMAS JAMAICA

By Gillian Young,¹ David C. Smith² and David Jenoure
(photographs by David C. Smith)

On 10 February 2003, at about midday, a single flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* sp. was sighted in the salt flat on the westernmost border of the Little Salt Pond, Yallahs. The bird was observed for about half an hour, wading in about 0.4m of water. Salinity of the water was 70 ppt (sea water is 35.5 ppt). Observers were Gillian Young, David Jenoure and Barrington Henry of the Scientific Research Council. Later that day, at about 5:00pm, the flamingo was again observed in the same location. At that time the observers were Gillian Young, David C. Smith and Gregory A. Henry. The flamingo was observed for about one hour and photographs were taken using a digital camera.

The bird appeared to be about 1.5m. tall and had a black border on the rear edge of the wings which was visible during flight. During the second observation, the bird waded back and forth over short distances, submerging its beak often. When startled by clapping noise, the bird took flight with a "honking" noise and skimmed the surface of the pond for about 50m before landing in another submerged part of the salt flat. On the morning of February 11th, the flamingo was observed in its original location, still carrying out the same behaviour as before.

P. ruber is divided into two subspecies, *P. r. ruber* the Caribbean Flamingo and *P. r. roseus* the Greater Flamingo. Both species occur in the Caribbean and their ranges overlap. A single flamingo was last observed in Yallahs by John Fletcher some twenty years ago (Herlitz Davis personal communication). Contact made with the curator of the Hope Zoo, Orlando Robinson, indicated that it was very unlikely that the bird was from their collection, since they have their flight feathers permanently removed.

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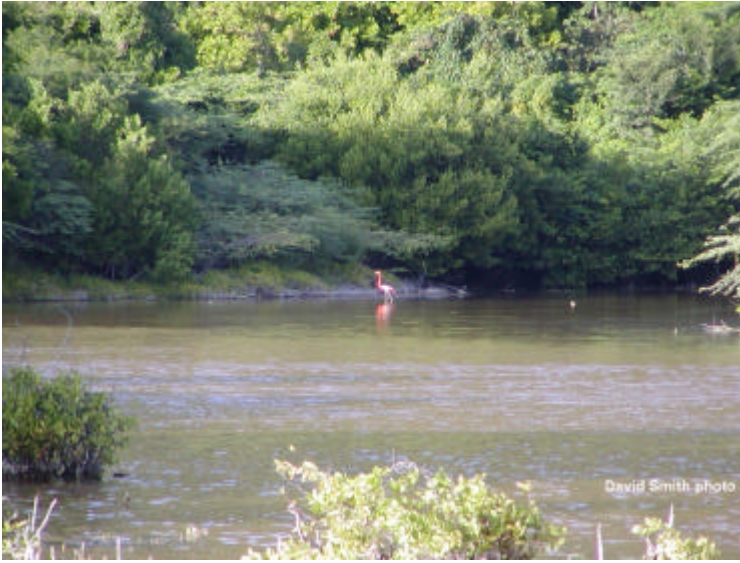


Figure 1 The salt flat east of the little salt pond



Figure 2 Flamingo in flight



Figure 3 Flamingo wading



Figure 4 Flamingo moving to new wading area