

# Birds put a new spin on reality television

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SANDI KWON HOO  
STAFF REPORTER

**B**IRDWATCHERS can get up close and personal with the antics of the 20 000 lesser flamingos at Kamfers Dam from the comfort of their desks, thanks to a state-of-the-art webcam recently installed on the famous pink breeding island.

The images are broadcast on the worldwide web through pan, tilt, zoom and close-up images of chicks hatching out of eggs, parents feeding their chicks, and previously unseen breeding behaviour.

Infrared lights allow for 24-hour per day viewing, and a microphone allows one to hear the hustle and bustle of life in the flamingo colony.

Both live-streaming and static images are refreshed every 10 seconds on [www.africam.com](http://www.africam.com).

Executive Director of BirdLife South Africa, Mark Anderson, said Kamfers Dam is the only breeding locality for lesser flamingos in South Africa, and one of only four breeding localities in Africa.

"This globally near-threatened species needs active conservation management, as the population is declining and there are very few breeding sites," he said.

"As lesser flamingos only breed at vast, open pans and lakes, there has until now been no opportunity to view the breeding close-up and also to study the birds' biology."

As Africam's site was visited by 4.5 million viewers from 202 coun-



**BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING:** Flamingo watchers can now see exactly what is happening on Kamfers Dam's lesser flamingo breeding island. A state-of-the-art webcam was recently installed and the images are broadcast to the world on [www.africam.com](http://www.africam.com).

Picture: [www.africam.com](http://www.africam.com)

tries during 2008, the webcam offers many opportunities to create awareness about these interesting birds.

Anderson said ornithologists could use the camera to obtain much-needed scientific information about flamingos' breeding biology.

The lesser flamingos produced 5 000 chicks last year and a massive breeding event is currently under way and more chicks are expected this year. Breeding events are irregular at other sites and, for example,

only successful every 12 years at Etosha Pan in Namibia. The annual breeding of lesser flamingos at Kamfers Dam will contribute to the conservation of these flamingos.

The Kamfers Dam lesser flamingo breeding island has received both national and international awards.

The webcam equipment was sponsored by Nedbank Capital, Ekapa Mining and Nugon, with Herbert and Brenda Booth, Kam-

fers Dam's landowners, providing assistance and logistic support.

The project was co-ordinated by the Save the Flamingo Association, a group of concerned people, businesses and organisations, who are committed to ensuring the conservation of Kamfers Dam and its flamingos and other water birds.

The artificial breeding island, the first such structure for lesser flamingos in the world, was funded and constructed by Ekapa Mining.