Greater flamingos sighted at Veeranam lake – a rare inland sighting of a coastal wetland bird

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News

Eighteen greater flamingos (Phoenicopterus roseus) were sighted at Veeranam lake, Cuddalore district, on 25 Oct 2026, recorded by bird researcher Prof. J. Pandiyan of A.V.C. College, Mayiladuthurai, with research scholars Saravanakumar and Veerasamy. The species usually lives in coastal wetlands; Veeranam is a freshwater lake about 50 km inland. Researchers linked the visit to a weak southwest monsoon, low Cauvery flows, dried coastal mudflats with less food, and a 'Super El Niño'. The receding lake has left shallow feeding grounds.

Key facts

Event	25 Oct 2026 – 18 greater flamingos, Veeranam lake, Cuddalore district
Recorded by	Prof. J. Pandiyan, A.V.C. College, Mayiladuthurai
Species	Phoenicopterus roseus – IUCN: Least Concern
Veeranam lake	10th century; Rajaditya Chola (son of Parantaka I); near Kattumannarkoil
Water source	Vadavar from the Kollidam; Sengal stream; capacity about 1,465 mcft
Chennai water	New Veeranam Project – conceived 1967; completed 2004
Biodiversity	Key Biodiversity Area (KBA); 20,000+ waterbirds

Background

- History: Veeranam (Veeranarayanan) lake was dug in the 10th century by Rajaditya, son of Parantaka I Chola. Rajaditya was killed on his elephant at the Battle of Takkolam (949 CE) against the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III. Kalki's novel 'Ponniyin Selvan' opens with Vandiyathevan on the banks of the Veeranarayana lake.
- Geography: the lake lies in the lower Cauvery basin and is fed from the Kollidam (Lower Anicut at Anaikarai) through the Vadavar channel. It irrigates the delta and is a key drinking-water source for Chennai.
- Science: flamingos feed head-down, filtering algae, small crustaceans and invertebrates with their bills; carotenoid pigments in the diet give the pink colour. The greater flamingo is the largest and most widespread flamingo; in India it breeds in large numbers in the Great Rann of Kutch ('Flamingo City'). It is Gujarat's State bird.
- Climate: El Niño is the abnormal warming of the eastern Pacific Ocean; it tends to weaken India's southwest monsoon.

Tamil Nadu link: flamingos normally gather at coastal wetlands – Kodiakkarai/Point Calimere (Nagapattinam), Pulicat (Tiruvallur) and Dhanushkodi (Ramanathapuram). Cuddalore district also has the Pichavaram mangroves. The sighting at Veeranam, about 235 km south of Chennai, shows birds shifting habitat as monsoon patterns change.

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