Flamingos are not true migrants in the accepted sense, but they do move around in search of food and water. The Greater Flamingo (Phoenicopterus ruber) is the largest of the flamingo species and is found in Africa, Asia, and Europe. It moves around according to changing water levels and seasons. Many birds in the Camargue leave around September to fly to North Africa, but some stay. Interestingly, some juveniles from African colonies move north to Southern Europe, arriving before the juveniles fledge in the local colonies. Droughts, such as in Eastern Africa, can also cause movements and it is not always easy to distinguish from the regular migration patterns. The birds usually migrate at night. The populations in the West of Europe and North Africa do not mix with the Eastern ones. The border runs across the Mediterranean. The total population in Africa and Eurasia is estimated at about 500,000 birds. The Western Mediterranean population is estimated at about 80,000 birds.

The Lesser Flamingo (Phoeniconaias minor) is the smallest of the world's five flamingo species. It occurs primarily in the Rift Valley lakes of East Africa with about 4 to 5 million birds estimated, but also in small populations in Namibia/Botswana (40,000), Mauritania/Senegal (15,400), Ethiopia (8,300). The alkaline lakes of the Rift Valley are the primary feeding areas for the East Africa population. During non-breeding periods these lakes often hold about half the entire population. Huge feeding flocks of 1-2 million birds frequently gather on lakes Baringo and Nakuru, creating one of the most stunning wildlife spectacles in the world.

Although it has the most numerous of the five species, the Lesser Flamingo is classified as globally "near threatened" due primarily to its dependence on a limited number of unprotected breeding sites and threats of proposed soda-ash mining and hydro-electric power schemes on the main breeding lakes.

The question of whether there is occasional interchange between the East African and southern African populations has yet to be resolved definitively, but considerable circumstantial evidence has now been gathered to show that the East African and southern African populations are distinct and that some Lesser Flamingos probably do fly between them during periods when the Lake MagadiSaline delta is flooded. Their migration routes, flight range and stopover places (if any) are still unknown. It is, however, known that Lesser Flamingos do fly during the day, at great heights, well above the normal diurnal movement of eagles, their main aerial predator.