

# FLAMINGOS









**flamingos** - фламинго

[flamingos]



**greater flamingo** -  
большой фламинго

['greɪtə flə'mɪŋəʊ]



**lesser flamingo** -  
малый фламинго

['lesə flə'mɪŋəʊ]



**Chilean flamingo** -  
Чилийский фламинго

[ˈtʃɪliən fləˈmɪŋəʊ]



**James's flamingo** -  
фламинго Джеймса

[dʒeɪmz'es fləˈmɪŋəʊ]



**Andean flamingo** -  
Андский фламинго

[ænˈdiːən fləˈmɪŋəʊ]



**American flamingo** -  
Американский  
фламинго

[ə'merɪkən flə'mɪŋəʊ]





# Flamingos



**Flamingos** or **flamingoes** are a type of wading bird in the family Phoenicopteridae, the only bird family in the order Phoenicopteriformes. Four flamingo species are distributed throughout the Americas, including the Caribbean, and two species are native to Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Flamingos usually stand on one leg, with the other being tucked beneath the body. The reason for this behaviour is not fully understood. One theory is that standing on one leg allows the birds to conserve more body heat, given that they spend a significant amount of time wading in cold water. However, the behaviour also takes place in warm water and is also observed in birds that do not typically stand in water. An alternative theory is that standing on one leg reduces the energy expenditure for producing muscular effort to stand and balance on one leg. A study on cadavers showed that the one-legged pose could be held without any muscle activity, while living flamingos demonstrate substantially less body sway in a one-legged posture. As well as standing in the water, flamingos may stamp their webbed feet in the mud to stir up food from the bottom.

Flamingos are capable flyers, and flamingos in captivity often require wing clipping to prevent escape. A pair of African flamingos which had not yet had their wings clipped escaped from the Wichita, Kansas zoo in 2005. One was spotted in Texas 14 years later. It had been seen previously by birders in Texas, Wisconsin and Louisiana.

Young flamingos hatch with grayish-red plumage, but adults range from light pink to bright red due to aqueous bacteria and beta-carotene obtained from their food supply. A well-fed, healthy flamingo is more vibrantly colored, thus a more desirable mate; a white or pale flamingo, however, is usually unhealthy or malnourished. Captive flamingos are a notable exception; they may turn a pale pink if they are not fed carotene at levels comparable to the wild.

The greater flamingo is the tallest of the six different species of flamingos, standing at 3.9 to 4.7 feet with a weight up to 7.7 pounds, and the shortest flamingo species (the lesser) has a height of 2.6 feet and weighs 5.5 pounds. Flamingos can have a wingspan as small as 37 inches to as big as 59 inches.

Flamingoes can open their bills by raising the upper jaw as well as by dropping the lower.

Flamingos filter-feed on brine shrimp and blue-green algae as well as insect larvae, small insects, mollusks and crustaceans making them omnivores. Their bills are specially adapted to separate mud and silt from the food they eat, and are uniquely used upside-down. The filtering of food items is assisted by hairy structures called lamellae, which line the mandibles, and the large, rough-surfaced tongue. The pink or reddish color of flamingos comes from carotenoids in their diet of animal and plant plankton.



American flamingos are a brighter red color because of the beta carotene availability in their food while the lesser flamingos are a paler pink due to ingesting a smaller amount of this pigment. These carotenoids are broken down into pigments by liver enzymes. The source of this varies by species, and affects the color saturation. Flamingos whose sole diet is blue-green algae are darker than those that get it second-hand by eating animals that have digested blue-green algae).

Flamingos are very social birds; they live in colonies whose population can number in the thousands. These large colonies are believed to serve three purposes for the flamingos: avoiding predators, maximizing food intake, and using scarcely suitable nesting sites more efficiently. Before breeding, flamingo colonies split into breeding groups of about 15 to 50 birds. Both males and females in these groups perform synchronized ritual displays. The members of a group stand together and display to each other by stretching their necks upwards, then uttering calls while head-flagging, and then flapping their wings. The displays do not seem directed towards an individual, but occur randomly. These displays stimulate "synchronous nesting" (see below) and help pair up those birds that do not already have mates.

## Greater flamingo



The **greater flamingo** is the most widespread and largest species of the flamingo family. It is found in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and in southern Europe.

The greater flamingo is the largest living species of flamingo, averaging 110–150 cm tall and weighing 2–4 kg. The largest male flamingos have been recorded at up to 187 cm tall and 4.5 kg.

Most of the plumage is pinkish-white, but the wing coverts are red and the primary and secondary flight feathers are black. The bill is pink with a restricted black tip, and the legs are entirely pink. The call is a goose-like honking.

Chicks are covered in gray fluffy down. Subadult flamingos are paler with dark legs. Adults feeding chicks also become paler, but retain the bright pink legs. The coloration comes from the carotenoid pigments in the organisms that live in their feeding grounds. Secretions of the uropygial gland also contain carotenoids. During the breeding season, greater flamingos increase the frequency of their spreading uropygial secretions over their feathers and thereby enhance their color. This cosmetic use of uropygial secretions has been described as applying "make-up".



## Lesser flamingo



The **lesser flamingo** is a species of flamingo occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and northwestern India. Birds are occasionally reported from further north, but these are generally considered vagrants.

The lesser flamingo is the smallest species of flamingo, though it is a tall and large bird by most standards. The species can weigh from 1.2 to 2.7 kg. The standing height is around 80 to 90 cm. The total length (from beak to tail) and wingspan are in the same range of measurements, from 90 to 105 cm. Most of the plumage is pinkish white. The clearest difference between this species and the greater flamingo, the only other Old World species of flamingo, is the much more extensive black on the bill. Size is less helpful unless the species are together, since the sexes of each species also differ in height.

The lesser flamingo may be the most numerous species of flamingo, with a population that (at its peak) probably numbered up to two million individual birds. This species feeds primarily on Spirulina, algae which grow only in very alkaline lakes. Presence of flamingo groups near water bodies is indication of sodic alkaline water which is not suitable for irrigation use. Although blue-green in colour, the algae contain the photosynthetic pigments that give the birds their pink colour. Their deep bill is specialised for filtering tiny food items.

## Chilean flamingo





The **Chilean flamingo** is a species of large flamingo at 110–130 cm closely related to American flamingo and greater flamingo, with which it was sometimes considered conspecific. The species is listed as near threatened by the IUCN.

It breeds in South America from Ecuador and Peru to Chile and Argentina and east to Brazil; it has been introduced into the Netherlands. Like all flamingos, it lays a single chalky-white egg on a mud mound.

These flamingos are mainly restricted to salt lagoons and soda lakes but these areas are vulnerable to habitat loss and water pollution.

The plumage is pinker than the slightly larger greater flamingo, but less so than the Caribbean flamingo. It can be differentiated from these species by its grayish legs with pink joints (tibiotarsal articulation), and also by the larger amount of black on the bill (more than half). Young chicks may have no sign of pink coloring whatsoever, but instead remain gray.

The Chilean flamingo's bill is equipped with comb-like structures that enable it to filter food—mainly algae and plankton—from the water of the coastal mudflats, estuaries, lagoons, and salt lakes where it lives.

## James's flamingo



**James's flamingo**, also known as the **puna flamingo**, is a species of flamingo that populates the high altitudes of Andean plateaus of Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and northwest Argentina.

It is named for Harry Berkeley James, a British naturalist who studied the bird. James's flamingo is closely related to the Andean flamingo, and the two make up the genus *Phoenicoparrus*. The Chilean flamingo, Andean flamingo, and James's flamingo are all sympatric, and all live in colonies (including shared nesting areas). James's flamingo was thought to have been extinct until a remote population was discovered in 1956.

James's flamingo is smaller than the Andean flamingo, and is about the same size as the Old World species, the lesser flamingo. A specimen of the bird was first collected by Charles Rahmer, who was on a collecting expedition sponsored by Harry Berkeley James, after whom the bird was named. It typically measures about 90–92 cm long and weighs about 2 kg. James's flamingos have a very long neck made up of 19 long cervical vertebrae, allowing for of movement and rotation of the head. Their long, thin legs also characterize them.



The knee is not visible externally, but is located at the top of the leg. The joint at the middle of the leg, which most assume to be the knee joint, is actually the ankle joint. Its plumage is very pale pink, with bright carmine streaks around the neck and on the back. When perched, a small amount of black can be seen in the wings; these are the flight feathers. Bright red skin occurs around the eyes, which are yellow in adults. The legs are brick red and the bill is bright yellow with a black tip. James's flamingo is similar to other South American flamingos, but the Chilean flamingo is pinker, with a longer bill without yellow, and the Andean flamingo is larger with more black in the wings and bill, and yellow legs. The easiest method to distinguish James's flamingos is by the lighter feathers and the bright yellow on the bill. A good method to distinguish *Phoenicoparrus* from the other species is to look at the feet. In the other three species of flamingos, the feet consist of three forward-facing toes and a hallux. The two species of *Phoenicoparrus* have the three toes, but do not have a hallux.

## Andean flamingo



The **Andean flamingo** is a species of flamingo native to the Andes mountains of South America. Until 2014, it was classified in genus *Phoenicopterus*. It is closely related to James's flamingo, and the two make up the genus *Phoenicoparrus*. The Chilean flamingo, Andean flamingo, and James' flamingo are all sympatric, and all live in colonies (including shared nesting areas).

It is distinguished from other flamingos by its deeper lower mandible and the very long filtering filaments on the maxilla. It is the largest flamingo in the Andes.

The flamingo has a pale pink body with brighter upperparts, deep vinaceous-pink lower neck, breast, and wing coverts. It is the only flamingo species with yellow legs and three-toed feet. Its bill is pale yellow near the skull, but black for the majority of its length, and curves downward. Its lower mandible is less apparent than those of the genus *Phoenicopterus*.

Juveniles present an uniformly pale gray plumage. It is often dusker on the head and neck. Coverts and scapulars can have darker brown centers. Meanwhile, adults are overall pale pink, with the feathers on the lower neck and chest being much brighter pink; coverts may be similarly bright pink. Head and upper neck may be a brighter pink than the rest of the body, which can appear almost white with only a pale pink wash, but head and upper neck never as bright as the lower neck and breast. Primaries and secondaries black, which when wings are folded, appear as bold black triangle that is not obscured by other feathers.



## American flamingo



The **American flamingo** is a large species of flamingo closely related to the greater flamingo and Chilean flamingo. It was formerly considered conspecific with the greater flamingo, but that treatment is now widely viewed (e.g. by the American and British Ornithologists' Unions) as incorrect due to a lack of evidence. It is also known as the Caribbean flamingo, although it is also present in the Galápagos Islands. It is the only flamingo that naturally inhabits North America.

The American flamingo is a large wading bird with reddish-pink plumage. Like all flamingos, it lays a single chalky-white egg on a mud mound, between May and August; incubation until hatching takes from 28 to 32 days; both parents brood the young for a period up to 6 years when they reach sexual maturity. Their life expectancy of 40 years is one of the longest in birds.

Adult American flamingos are smaller on average than greater flamingos, but are the largest flamingos in the Americas. They measure from 120 to 145 cm tall. The males weigh an average of 2.8 kg, while females average 2.2 kg. Most of its plumage is pink, giving rise to its earlier name of rosy flamingo and differentiating adults from the much paler greater flamingo. The wing coverts are red, and the primary and secondary flight feathers are black. The bill is pink and white with an extensive black tip. The legs are entirely pink. The call is a goose-like honking.