

Roseate Spoonbill

Platalea ajaja



Class: *Aves*

Order: *Pelecaniformes*

Family: *Threskiornithidae*

Characteristics: The roseate spoonbill is easily identified by their bright pink coloration and unique, spatulate bill. Its wings, abdomen, and tail feathers are bright pink and it has ruby colored legs. This spoonbill is considered a medium-sized bird with very long legs for wading in water. ([Saint Louis Zoo](#)) This spoonbill has a long neck and a wingspan of over 3 feet. Its bald head is a pale green color with the neck, chest and back being white. The spoon shaped bill is 7 inches long and gray in color. The bird can reach up to 32 inches in height ([Arkive](#)).

Behavior: This spoonbill species is known to be [gregarious](#) and live in large flocks of birds. The flocks can be comprised of the same or of different species of birds. The roseate spoonbill [feeds](#) by wading in shallow water and swinging the tip of the bill, slightly open, back and forth. This is a filter feeding method and is also the method for the spoonbill to find food. The bill is very sensitive and can sense movement in the water and if anything touches the bill. The roseate spoonbill [nests in trees](#). They sleep while standing on one leg with the head tucked under the back feathers. If alarmed, the entire flock will take [flight](#) at the same time then land again ([Cornell](#)).

Reproduction: Roseate spoonbills mate in monogamous pairs. They have ritualized courtship displays that include dancing, bill clapping, bill crossing, and exchanging nest material. ([National Zoo](#)) Females usually build the nest while the males deliver the materials. Females lay 2-3 eggs that are cream color with brown spots. The incubation period is 22-24 days, and both male and female will incubate the eggs. The [young](#) are all white with pink skin. They will leave the nest after 5-6 weeks and can fly around 7-8 weeks after hatching. The spoonbill young will reach sexual maturity in the third year ([Audubon](#)).

Diet: Wild: small fish, amphibians, aquatic invertebrates, and some plant material ([National Zoo](#))

Zoo: Feline meat, flamingo pellet, and fish

Conservation: According to the [IUCN Redlist](#), the roseate spoonbill is of least concern. This bird has an extremely large range and the population trend appears to be stable at the current time. The population is even increasing in North America. They are still threatened by development of coastal habitats, climate change, and pollution.

FYI: Zoo guests often confuse the roseate spoonbill for a juvenile flamingo due to their similar coloration and shared exhibit.



Range & Habitat:

Found in a wide variety of marine, brackish, and freshwater habitats, it requires shallow water to feed using its long bill. Their range includes the Southern United States, West Indies, Central America, and South America.



Lifespan: up to 15 years in captivity, 10 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: The spoon shaped bill has sensitive nerve endings, which allows it to detect when it comes into contact with prey and snap shut.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

