



with





The roseate spoonbill is a wading bird who lives on the far southern coasts of North America and in South America. In the U. S. The spoonbill can be found in the swamps and marshes of southern Florida, Texas, and Louisiana. The word roseate means rose-colored. Spoonbills are sociable birds who feed in both fresh and saltwater wetlands and travel in flocks.

The average roseate spoonbill is 2-3 feet tall and weighs 2-3 pounds. They have a wingspan (the length of the wings from tip to tip) of 4-5 feet, and a unique, spatula-shaped bill called a spatulate bill. Its plumage is similar to a flamingo's, but the adult's head is bare and covered in a greenish skin. The eyes are large and red, as are the upper wings. The tail-feathers are orange-pink, and the neck, chest, and upper back are white. The rest of the feathers are pale pink. Like the flamingo, its color comes from the food it eats: the spoonbill eats crustaceans, or water creatures that have a shell, and some of those crustaceans feed on an algae which turns the spoonbill's feathers that rosy pink color.



Spoonbills also eat small fish, amphibians, aquatic invertebrates, and some plant material. They feed in early morning and evening hours from tidal ponds, coastal lagoons, and inland marshes. The spoonbill wades through shallow, muddy water with its bill partially submerged, swinging its head back and forth as it walks. When the bird feels prey, it snaps its bill closed, pulls the prey from the water, and swallows it.

Spoonbills inhabit coastal marshes, lagoons, mudflats, and mangrove keys. They nest in colonies, mainly in red mangroves, willows, or in low scrub on coastal islands, including mesquite and salt cedar. Mating rituals include exchanging nest material, dancing, and a clapping of the bill. The female builds a nest of sticks and twigs brought to her by the male. Though on average a spoonbill will lay 2-3 eggs per brood, they have been known to lay as many as 5. The eggs are cream-colored spotted with brown.

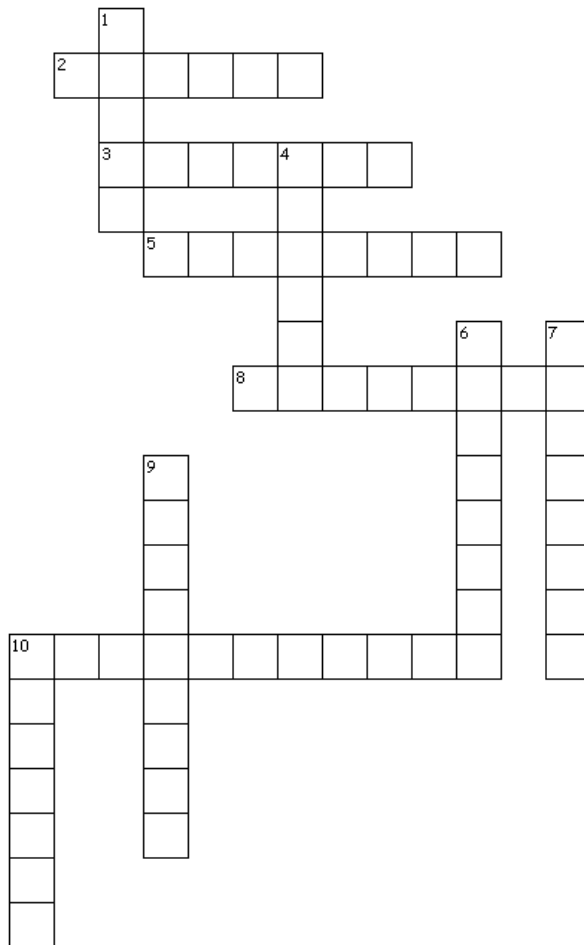


Both the mother and father incubate, or sit on, the eggs for 22-24 days. Both parents also feed the young once they've hatched. The newly hatched chick has pink skin with a white down covering and orange legs, feet, and bill. Both parents feed the chicks by regurgitating material into their upturned bills. That means they bring swallowed food back up to their mouths and spit it into the mouths of their young. At a month old, the chick is partially covered in feathers and begins to climb around the branches and foliage surrounding the nest. At six weeks the chicks fledge, or develop wing feathers large enough for flight. They are capable

of strong flight at 7-8 weeks.

The spoonbill's feathers were highly prized for decorating ladies' hats at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The U.S. population of spoonbills was practically decimated by plume hunters. By the 1930s Florida's spoonbill population had dropped to an all-time low of 30-40 breeding pairs. Devastation of habitat also contributed to a dwindling spoonbill population. They were made a protected species in the 1940s, and have since recovered their population into the thousands.

# Roseate Spoonbill Crossword



## Across

2. develop strong wing feathers
3. a stretch of muddy land uncovered by low tide
5. length of wings from tip to tip
8. sit on an egg until it hatches
10. bring swallowed food back up to the mouth

## Down

1. feather worn by a person for ornament
4. stretch of saltwater separated from the sea by a low sandbank or coral reef
6. a tree of the swamp with large, tangled, above-ground roots
7. kill, destroy, or remove a large part of
9. shaped like a spatula
10. rose-colored

# Roseate Spoonbill Word Search

X C R X E X E U T N U J R N M  
E F T N I T T W A K R R A U U  
T P R C M F A E I T D E L S D  
A X Q S H E T M P N C M N D F  
E D O L W M I H I A G O H X L  
S F F L E D G E T C O S Z Y A  
O U Z O P V R S F G E Y P M T  
R J S P A T U L A T E D A A S  
B D N U L R G L E D H N I O N  
Z X E I C E E P I L G I A D V  
T F L T S N R M L R A Z L R W  
E T A B U C N I O U L O A X F  
N L Z L A Q L V C E M C L D C  
J Y A R N G E C R Z R E T E M  
N J Y J H W L E B E W G H G H

CRUSTACEAN  
INCUBATE  
MUDFLATS  
ROSEATE

DECIMATE  
LAGOONS  
PLUME  
SPATULATE

FLEDGE  
MANGROVE  
REGURGITATE  
WINGSPAN

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