

ROSEATE SPOONBILL

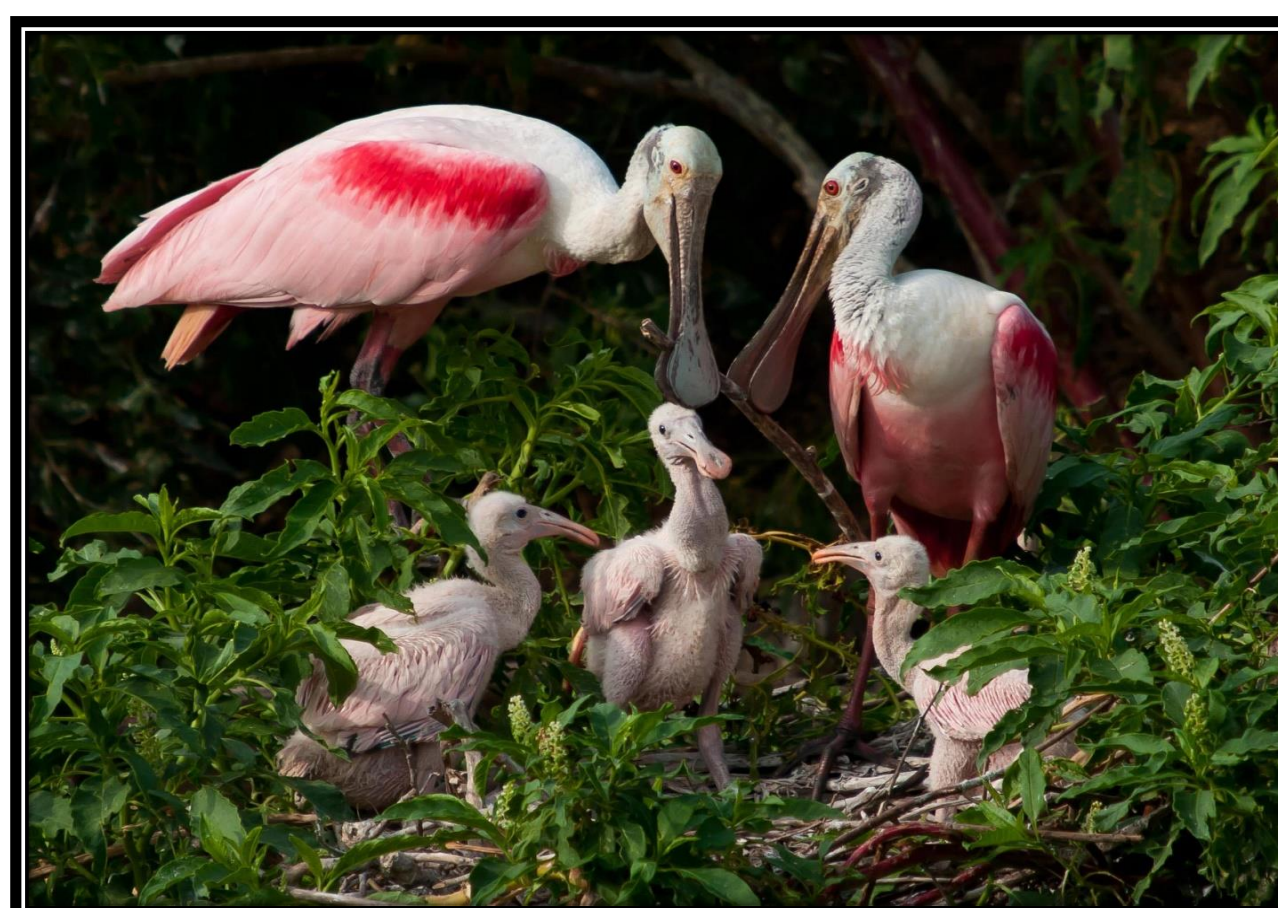
Platalea ajaja



Habitat: The spoonbill is distributed throughout the Gulf Coast, Central America to South America, and the West Indies. They can be found in coastal marshes, lagoons, mangrove forests, and estuaries.

Food Sources: Fish, shrimp, crabs, insects, mollusks, and crawfish.

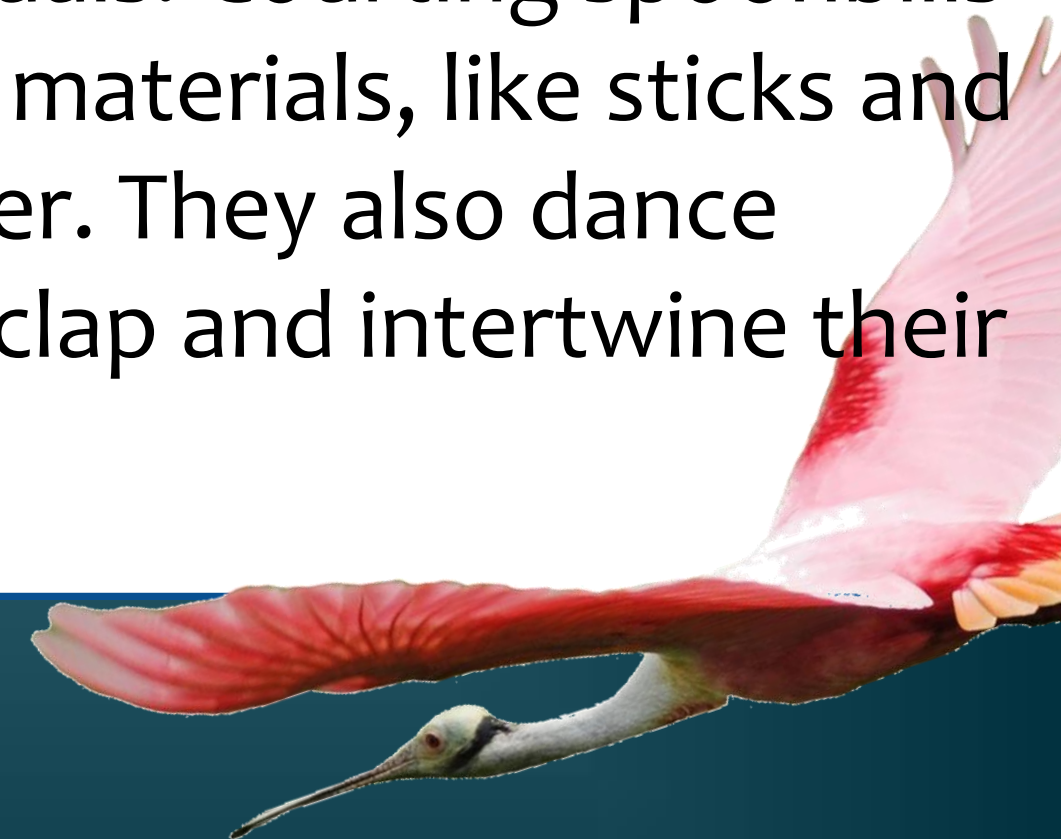
Behavior: Spoonbills are wading birds and will forage through shallow waters. They sway their specialized spoon shaped bills back and forth snatching up prey. Females lay 2 to 5 eggs per breeding season (March-June). Both males and females will take turns incubating the eggs till the eggs hatch. Parents feed their young by regurgitation for up to two months after hatching.



Population Decline: Spoonbills were nearly hunted to extinction during the late 1800's and early 1900's. This was caused by the demand for their exquisite pink feathers to be used in women's hats and fans. Thankfully, the Migratory Bird Act of 1918 was passed. This law prevented the illegal hunting of migratory birds. Populations were then able to rebound to stable numbers.

Pink! Pink! Pink! Ever wonder how these birds get their beautiful pink coloration? It is caused by pigments called carotenoids that are found in algae. Spoonbills eat the shrimp that consume the algae that possess these pigments. Once in the body of the spoonbills the pigments give them that wonderful pink color. This is also how flamingos get their pink color!

Shall we dance? Roseates have a very unique courtship ritual. Courting spoonbills will present nesting materials, like sticks and twigs, to one another. They also dance around each other, clap and intertwine their bills before mating.



References:

National Audubon Society- www.audubon.org
Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries- www.lwf.louisiana.gov
Texas Parks and Wildlife- tpwd.texas.gov
Smithsonian National Zoological Park- nationalzoo.si.edu



Lumcon
8124 Hwy 56, Chauvin, LA 70344
www.lumcon.edu

Photo Credit:

Top Center- alf-img.com
Center/Bottom Center-
National Audubon Society
Top Right- Steven Scott
Top Left- Susan Fleck
Bottom Right- therushforum.com