

GREATER FLAMINGO

pink socialite

IDENTITY CARD

- **SCIENTIFIC NAME :** *Phoenicopterus roseus*
- **ORDER:** Phoenicopteriformes
- **FAMILY:** Phoenicopteridae
- **CLASS:** Birds
- **DIET:** It eats invertebrates, worms and aquatic insects, plants and microscopic algae.
- **BREEDING:** The female lays a single egg on a raised nest to protect it from predators. The incubation lasts 28 to 31 days, the parents taking turns to brood the egg. The chick then leaves the nest after 10 days and fends for himself within a month. They are capable of flight after 70 days.
- **MEASUREMENTS:** They are 1.25 m to 1.80 m tall and weigh around 3 or 4 kg.

Very large, with long, "coat hanger" neck, big kinked bill, and very long pinkish legs. Plumage at rest whitish with pale pink blush and some deep pink often visible on closed wings. Flies with long neck and legs extended. If there is a species that doesn't like solitude, it's the Flamingo. It breeds in colonies of several hundred to several thousand individuals because they need others to be stimulated. Even their prenuptial breeding dance stimulates others around and they all follow each other and open and close their wings in unison flashing that broad pink wing band to all observers. Ten days after hatching, the chick goes to join all the other newborns and group together in a creche. Flamingos love being part of a community. The parents feed them in the evening and recognise their young among hundreds of others by its cry.



PINK SHRIMPS

This funny creature is a tiny shrimp named *Artemia Salina*. It's not pink but feeds on algae (*Dunaliella*) which produces a red pigment (astaxanthin) to protect them against UV. These shrimps eat the algae and the flamingos eat the shrimps which give them their beautiful colour.

WEBBED FEET

Without webbed feet, there's no doubt that the long legs would sink into the mud. Flamingos are wading birds and spend most of the time with their head in the water. They feed on tiny organisms, that they disturb with those pink legs trudging through the thick sludge.

FILTRATION SYSTEM LIKE A WHALE

To feed a flamingo sucks up water and silt from lagoons and brackish ponds. It filters that sludge via slats inside its imposing beak. The comb system works like whale baleen. It sieves the mud until all that is left are the bits of animals and microscopic plants that it feeds on.

HARDY CHICKS

Practically from birth, the chick is mobile and regularly exits its nest (fashioned out of mud, clay or sand, mixed with feathers and twigs) to stretch its growing legs. Although during the first days of its existence, it remains near or in it protected and shaded from the sun by one of its parents.

INFO +

- **IN FRANCE**, the Greater Flamingo is a protected species, with an IUCN classification of Not Threatened (NT).
- They can be found in small numbers in the Villepey Wetlands near Frejus.
- In **HYÈRES**, the population is around 1,800 in winter, they are present at both the Salins des Pesquiers and Vieux Salins. They leave at the end March-early April to breed on the islet of Fangassier in the Camargue, the sole breeding site on the French Mainland. Flamingos of the Mediterranean do not migrate, but scatter to sites around the Mediterranean rim where twenty colonies are identified.

