

The Tale of the Rose Coloured Spoonbill Comprehension Questions

The land was once dotted with these pink beasts, a mix of both the beautiful and bizarre. Still, in their own family of six spoonbill species dotted across the globe, Roseate spoonbills were the only pink one. It was a golden time for spoonbill populations, however now they are affected by water quality and quantity issues in the Everglades.

Directions: Learn more about the unique and fashionable Roseate spoonbill by reading The Tale of the Rose Colored Spoonbill ([attached below](#)), and answering the reading comprehension questions ([attached below](#)).

Everglades Literacy Lesson Connections:

Grade 3 Lesson 1: Classifying Everglades Animals and their Habitats

<https://www.evergladesliteracy.org/third-grade>

-Students will learn that animals can be classified into six major animal groups and become familiar with representative Everglades animals from all the major groups and with five different habitats of the Everglades where these animals live



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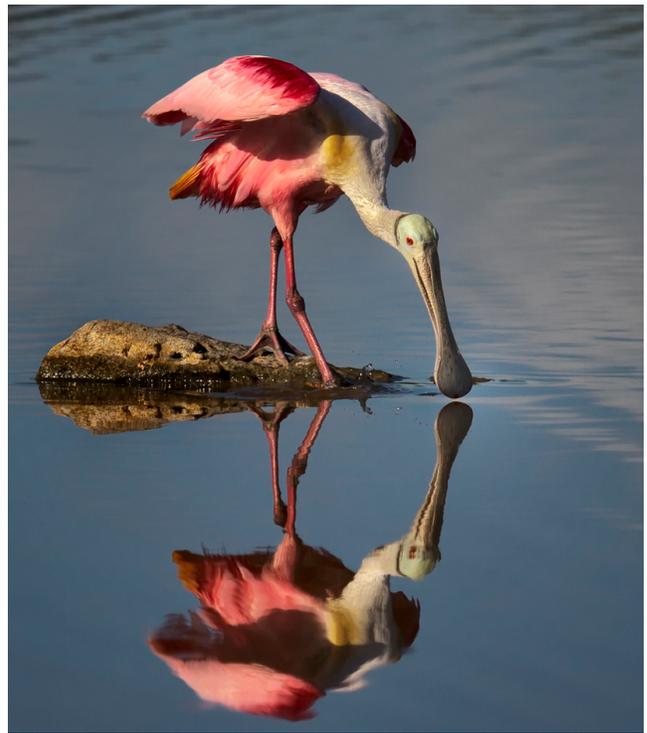
ROSE COLOURED SPOONBILL

Let's start at the very beginning... the land was once dotted with these pink beasts, a mix of both the beautiful and bizarre. Flocks of these peculiar birds were once abundant, their domain stretching from the far-flung reaches of South America to the sandy shores of the southeastern United States.

FASHIONABLE FEATHERS

Rose coloured curlews, or in modern times, Roseate spoonbills, were adorned in shades of pastel to magenta pink. To maintain those pretty pink coats, they ate pigment-containing prey like shrimp, fish, small crustaceans, and insects. The only wading birds to rival their rosy flamboyance were the American flamingos. Next to the long necks, curving bills, and black-tipped wings of the elegant flamingos, the spatula-billed, stouter spoonbills were akin to an unsophisticated stepchild. Still, in their own family of six spoonbill species dotted across the globe, they were the only pink one, cause for some pride at least. It was a golden time for spoonbill populations, but like any good things, it came to an end.

By the late 1800s, the winds of fate had shifted and women, envious of spoonbills' beauty, tried to claim it for their own. At this time, the infamous plume trade was



in full swing, fueled by the vogue of decorating women's hats with feathers. Hunters capitalized on this new avian fount of incredible wealth by killing millions of birds each year.

Mercilessly they targeted wading bird rookeries, leaving all the newly orphaned chicks to starve or be killed by predators. Spoonbills dwindled to only 15 pairs in Florida, and nearly vanished entirely from our state, while their rivals, the flamingos, disappeared completely. Thankfully, a group of conscientious citizens came to the rescue of these hapless birds, and encouraged women to boycott feathers. Their efforts gained traction, and eventually, the sordid practice was banned once and for all with the passing of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918.

After the storm of fashionable feathers passed, spoonbills reappeared in the tranquil, blue waters of our state. They raised their families in Florida Bay, amid bustling colonies of wading birds. Their numbers steadily climbed until 1979, when something mysterious happened.



The boisterous flocks filling Florida Bay started to wane again, and some nesting colonies vanished entirely. Were these spoonbills doomed to follow the same fate as their ancestors at the turn of the century?

In an unexpected twist, spoonbills popped up in Georgia instead. Well not all at once, first, a spoonbill colony was spotted in Tampa Bay in 1983. Then, a few years later, they were found nesting even farther north, close to Cape Canaveral. By 2013, spoonbills had swept into the south, settling in Georgia and South Carolina. Even more surprising, their proclivity for coastal real estate had diminished, birds that once nested exclusively in the estuaries had moved to inland areas of Florida too. What was the culprit for this exodus of pink plumed birds? This time it wasn't hunters, but likely a couple of factors. One prominent factor was tied up with their namesake itself, spoonbills. To feed, spoonbills sweep their odd-shaped bills through shallow water and wait for prey to hit their bills before snapping them shut.

Using their sense of touch to hunt makes them extremely reliant on sources of highly concentrated prey, particularly when they're breeding in the dry season. During the dry season, water depths that fall to low levels without rising again will concentrate sources of food in the deeper areas of the landscape. However, if this doesn't happen, it makes it difficult for spoonbills to capture enough food for their rapidly growing chicks. Also, higher water levels can increase predation on the small fish spoonbills like to eat. Spoonbills forage in the mangrove wetlands along the Bay, and, no spoiler here, the picturesque, turquoise water levels of Florida Bay, and in the mangroves surrounding it, are now higher.

What sent this slow-rising deluge over the spoonbill's territory? One reason may be changes in water management in South Florida and the Everglades. Another reason stretches like a steamy blanket across the globe itself, climate change. For starters, warmer temperatures cause sea levels to rise. The sea level in Florida Bay has been inching up for decades,

and since 2000, it has been climbing even faster. These higher water levels then spill over to the mangroves. Finally, even without sea level rise, the hotter temperatures themselves may be helping to spur spoonbills' movements north.

In response to all these changes, spoonbills have been fleeing to areas more suited to their needs, spreading inland and north in a wave of feathered flight. While not listed on a federal level as imperiled, spoonbills are listed by the state of Florida as threatened. So it's crucial that spoonbills find places where the water levels are lower enough to concentrate fish. If not, they can't continue to raise their blushing babies to full-sized spoonbills.



In the end, these rosy, spoon-billed creatures once nearly slipped away from Florida, then came back, and in a fickle turn of events, are on the move again. Turns out, they're now nesting farther north than has ever been recorded. It may be heartbreaking to see them leave, but hopefully, this change of scene will help their populations adapt for the next chapter of their story.



The Tale of the Rose Coloured Spoonbill Comprehension Questions

1. **True/False** (Choose one) - There are 5 different spoonbill species across the world.
2. In the late 1800s, millions of Roseate Spoonbills were hunted in Florida for what reason?

3. What was the name and the year of legislation passed that helped to protect the Roseate Spoonbills from those hunting practices?
 - a. Spoonbill Conservation Act in 1920
 - b. Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918
 - c. Bird Conservation Act in 1920
 - d. Spoonbill Conservation Act in 1918
4. After the Act was put in place, the Roseate Spoonbill population numbers climbed until which year?
 - a. 1960
 - b. 1980
 - c. 1978
 - d. 1979
5. By 2013, which 2 states were the Roseate Spoonbills congregating in instead of their usual Florida home?

6. **True/False** (Choose one) - Roseate Spoonbills get their name from the shape of their bill. They feed by sweeping their bills across shallow water, using their sense of touch to feel for prey. **bre**
7. **True/False** (Choose one) - Roseate Spoonbills breed in the wet season.
8. How can higher water levels affect the food sources of Roseate Spoonbills?

9. What are two possible reasons that water levels in the Everglades rose high enough that it forced the Roseate Spoonbill populations to relocate?

10. **True/False** (Choose one) - Today, Roseate Spoonbills are listed by the state of Florida as endangered.

The Tale of the Rose Coloured Spoonbill Comprehension Questions - Answer Key

1. True/**False** (Choose one) - There are 5 different spoonbill species across the world.
2. In the late 1800s, millions of Roseate Spoonbills were hunted in Florida for what reason?
For fashion trends. During this time, women liked to decorate their hats with real bird feathers to look fashionable.
3. What was the name and the year of legislation passed that helped to protect the Roseate Spoonbills from those hunting practices?
 - a. Spoonbill Conservation Act in 1920
 - b. **Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918**
 - c. Bird Conservation Act in 1920
 - d. Spoonbill Conservation Act in 1918
4. After the Act was put in place, the Roseate Spoonbill population numbers climbed until which year?
 - a. 1960
 - b. 1980
 - c. 1978
 - d. **1979**
5. By 2013, which 2 states were the Roseate Spoonbills congregating in instead of their usual Florida home?
Georgia and South Carolina.
6. **True**/False (Choose one) - Roseate Spoonbills get their name from the shape of their bill. They feed by sweeping their bills across shallow water, using their sense of touch to feel for prey.
7. True/**False** (Choose one) - Roseate Spoonbills breed in the wet season.
8. How can higher water levels affect the food sources of Roseate Spoonbills?
Higher water levels increase predation on the small fish that spoonbills like to eat.
9. What are two possible reasons that water levels in the Everglades rose high enough that it forced the Roseate Spoonbill populations to relocate?
One reason could have been from changes in water management in South Florida and the Everglades. The second reason could be from climate change impacts in South Florida, such as warming temperatures causing sea level rise.
10. True/**False** (Choose one) - Today, Roseate Spoonbills are listed by the state of Florida as endangered.