

# LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

## REPORT FORM

1. English and Scientific names: American Flamingo, *Phoenicopterus ruber*

2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):

1 individual, sex unknown

Age: I am not able to age this individual with confidence based on photos. The irises were light yellow, suggesting an adult. The plumage was almost entirely different shades of pink, except that the lower thigh feathers appeared to be white. A few feathers on the back may also be white or merely faded. The upper and under wing coverts were noticeably brighter in color, being orangish-pink to reddish-pink, so this may possibly be at least a 3 year old. According to Pyle (2008; Figure 275, p. 381), and judging by the extent of black on the tip of the bill, this individual is at least in its third year and is more likely in its fourth year, but perhaps it could be older?

General plumage: I am not able to determine this individual's plumage based on photographs, but I think it is probably not in Definitive basic plumage, rather it might be in its fourth basic plumage?

Molt: There might be a secondary missing or growing back on each wing based on the photos. The back seems to show several ages of feathers, including some that are fresh and others that are worn.

3. Parish: Orleans

Specific Locality:

Lat, Long in decimal degrees: 30.089074, -89.776030

Pond on the south side of Chef Menteur Highway (LA-90) in the vicinity of Lake Catherine, Louisiana, 8.4 km east (79 degree bearing) of the junction of LA-90 and LA-11.

4. Date(s) when observed:

29 September 2023

5. Time(s) of day when observed:

The morning observation began at 09:40 hours and ended at 11:47 hours CST.

6. Reporting observer and city/state address

Reporting observer: Jennifer O. Coulson
City: Pearl River
State: Louisiana

7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s):

Thomas Coulson, David Muth, Becky Lloyd, Joan Garvey, Cathy DiSalvo, Willie Matthews, Aimee Thomas, John Nelson, Liz Sigler, Dinah Maygarden, Jody Shugart, Katherine Pyatt, Ann Walters, Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion

8. Other observers who *independently identified* the bird(s):

Michael Calamari found the bird at this location earlier on the morning of 29 September 2023.

9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light):

10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition):

binoculars: Swarovski, 12 x 42, new

camera: Nikon CoopPix1000, 125x optical zoom, focal range 24-3000 mm, good

11. Distance to bird(s):

The flamingo moved around and so did we, so the distance during most of the observation period ranged from 135 to 285 meters. When the bird flew by us it was 25 to 30 meters at its nearest. (Distances estimated using Google Earth Pro.)

12. Duration of observation: 1 hour, 37 minutes.

13. Habitat: The flamingo remained on a 24 acre, man-made pond, likely an old borrow pit throughout the observation. The bank and shallows of the pond along Chef Meuteur Hwy had cattails and Roseau cane stands. The southern spoil bank was covered with trees and shrubs: dominant tree species included Chinese tallow and hackberry, and shrubs included wax myrtle. The pond may be fresher than the surrounding marsh, because it collect rainwater and the spoil bank may prevent tidal influx.

This site is surrounded by brackish marsh and open water. It is 1 km SW of Lake Catherine, 5.5 km NW of Lake Borgne, and 8.7 km S of the Rigolets. The area provides some of the richest estuaries in southeastern Louisiana.

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):

For most of the duration of this observation, the flamingo waded in shallow water. At one point it briefly waded into water as deep as its lower abdomen, but then flew parallel to the road, past the observers to the opposite end of the pond and resumed wading. While wading, it actively foraged, preened, and sometimes rested with one foot drawn up. When foraging bill, head, and upper neck were often entirely submerged.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*):

The bird was fully capable of flight (i.e., not pinioned) and was not wearing any patagial tags, USGS bands, color band markers, leg transmitters, or backpack transmitters.

This large flamingo had a five-foot wingspan and overall pinkish-colored plumage. The upper wing coverts were a brighter, more intense salmon pink, and the under wing coverts were an even more intense orangish-to-reddish pink. The primaries and secondaries were black. The fleshy and scaled parts of its legs were mostly pink except for the more intense, salmon-colored flesh over the intertarsal joints or "ankles" and the feet.

16. Voice:

Bird did not vocalize.

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):

Chilean Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*): Distinguished from Chilean in that the American Flamingo had a pinkish base of its bill which extended farther along the bill proximally, with the black tip starting past (below) the angle where the bill curves downward (see attached sketch).

Also distinguished from Chilean in that it had pinkish legs with brighter pink “ankles” rather than gray or blue gray legs with pink ankles.

Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*): Distinguished from Roseate Spoonbill by its much larger size, standing almost 4 feet tall versus the 2.5 foot tall spoonbill, and having much longer and proportionately more slender neck and legs. Also distinguished by the entirely different bill shape: the flamingo having a thick, strongly decurved bill and the spoonbill having a long, straight, spatula-ended bill. The flamingo also had all black primaries and secondaries, seen well in flight, whereas spoonbills have pink flight feathers. The flamingo also had a pink feathered head while adult spoonbills have bare heads with greenish-gray skin.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?):  
Photographs by Jennifer O. Coulson attached.

19. Previous experience with this species:

This was my first observation of American Flamingo in the wild. I had seen Chilean Flamingos at a substantial distance in Ecuador in August of 2023, and I have seen captive American Flamingo exhibited in zoos.

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation:

Merlin app

b. after observation:

Birds of the World (Cornell Lab of Ornithology), eBird website, *The Sibley Guide to Birds* (2000), *Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part II* by P. Pyle (2008).

21. This description is written from:

<input type="checkbox"/>	notes made during the observation.	Are notes attached?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	notes made after the observation.	At what date?	09/29/2023
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	memory		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	study of images		

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151003668>

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain:

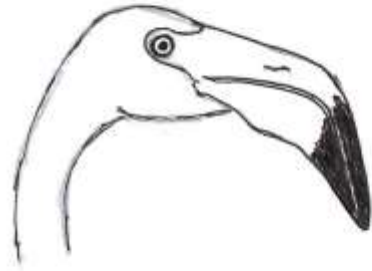
Yes.

23. Date: 19 October 2023

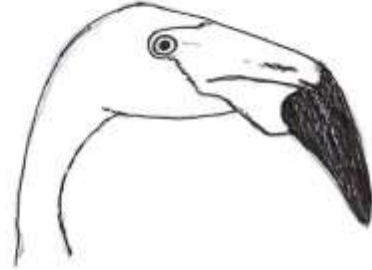
Time: 8:26 p.m.

24. May the LBRC have permission to display in whole or in part this report and accompanying photos on the LOS-LBRC website and LBRC Facebook page? \_\_\_\_yes\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, may we include your name with the report? \_\_\_\_yes\_\_\_\_\_



American Flamingo



Chilean Flamingo















