

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

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

Reporting observer and city/state address

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Other observer(s) with: Becky Lloyd, John Nelson, Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, Joan Garvey, Cathy DiSalvo, Willie Matthews, Jennifer and Thomas Coulson, Aimee Thomas, Liz Sigler, Dinah Maygarden, Jody Shugart, Katherine Pyatt, Ann Walters and others arriving as we left.

Original Observers: Michael Calamari

This sighting: About 1000-1030 h. Lat/Long: 30.089074, -89.776030. In a borrow pond on the south side of Chef Menteur Highway (US 90) in the vicinity of Lake Catherine, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, 2.25 miles east of Chef Menteur Pass on U.S. Hwy 90.

The borrow pond was presumably excavated to provide fill for Hwy 90 when a shortcut was constructed. The southside is forested and is the old highway. The northside is the new highway. Vegetation is typical brackish marsh and ridge. The banks are muddy and/or shell fill, with a lot of debris, and occasional marshy vegetation.

Details: See <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151011485> See photos below.

American Flamingo is distinguished from other (escaped) flamingos by leg joint color, bill and face pattern, overall size and color tone. This flamingo stood about four feet tall, with about a five-foot wingspan and a very long neck. Neck and legs were fully extended in flight. Overall plumage was various shades of pink. Upper wing coverts were a more intense pink. Primaries and secondaries were black. The legs were mostly pink except that the joints were more intensely pink. The bent bill was off-white with a dark tip.



Photos by DPM.

Media: Swarovski NL Pure 12x40. Swarovski HD Telescope w/ 20-60 zoom. Canon EOS R6, w 100-500 F4-7.1 L IS USM lens.

Discussion: After Hurricane Idalia made landfall in the Big Bend of Florida on August 30, 2023, observers in Florida, and thereafter up the east coast, in a broad arc across the Midwest, and eventually throughout the southeast to Texas, began documenting an absolutely unprecedented number of American Flamingo sightings. Since storms routinely pass through the range of AMFL and then make landfall in the

southeastern U.S. without stranding AMFL, something different happened here. There is no evidence that birds on land are ever swept up in hurricanes and carried forward, therefore, it is virtually certain flocks, or one large flock, of AMFL were caught in flight over water. The course of the storm would suggest that AMFL migrating or dispersing from Cuba to Florida were the likely source.

This was, I believe the third or fourth sighting post-Idalia, preceded by a report with photos near Chauvin in Terrebonne Par., another with photos in West Bay near the mouth of the Mississippi River in Plaquemines Par., and a sight record in Lafourche Par. Near Fourchon. Subsequent to the New Orleans sighting there were additional reports from St. Tammany and Cameron parishes.

My only previous experience with AMFL was distant looks at birds near Progreso in the Yucatan, and birds in captivity.

Date of report: 12/11/2023

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

David P. Muth