

Many bird species mate for life, but flamingos are not among them. Call them fickle, flirtatious or friendly, wild flamingos are known to be serially monogamous – meaning they are faithful for a season, but not forever.

A FRUITFUL FLAMBOYANCE!

Rosamond Gifford Zoo volunteers help increase our flamingo flock in hopes of hatching future chicks

For flamingos, the bigger the flock, the better the chance for chicks. A large flock allows breeding birds to feel safe and seeing other pairs engaging in courtship displays encourages stronger pair bonds, said Rosamond Gifford Zoo Bird Manager April Zimpel.

This helps explain why the Rosamond Gifford Zoo has had Chilean flamingos since 1996, but has never hatched a chick. Our flock of seven is small enough that all they breed is familiarity.

That's about to change! Thanks to a fabulous fundraiser led by zoo volunteers, the zoo is doubling its flamingo flock -- known as a flamboyance -- in hopes of increasing our chances for flamingo chicks in the foreseeable future.

The Fund for Flamingo Flamboyance – as the campaign was called – began when our zoo learned that a fellow Association of Zoos & Aquariums-accredited zoo, the Fort Worth Zoo, was seeking to rehome 29 Chilean flamingos. Our bird experts saw a chance to potentially jumpstart flamingo breeding here. April hoped for seven new birds to double our flamboyance and “even out” the genders.



The catch was the cost. Acquiring the birds and transporting them to Syracuse from Texas and purchasing supplies to care for them amounted to over \$2,000 per bird. We would need \$18,000 to opt in, and the October 31 deadline to commit was only a month away.

Zoo Director Ted Fox recalled that zoo volunteers had helped us acquire our first flamingo flock in the 1990s. Perhaps our current volunteers would like to assist this effort. Due to the COVID crisis, many had been assigned to pandemic-related duties such as informing guests about new restrictions and monitoring for mask-wearing and social distancing. A flamingo fundraiser would be more fun!

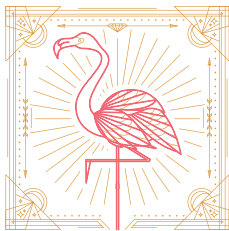
When Director of Development Heidi Strong proposed the idea, over two dozen volunteers responded. They brainstormed several

facets of the flamingo fundraiser that Heidi named the Fund for Flamingo Flamboyance:

- An online donation site they could share with friends to help with the cause
- A silent auction of mostly flamingo-themed items including gift baskets donated by our volunteers and original art created by our current flamingos
- A sale of flamingo-themed “Flock Star” T-shirts designed by our marketing team, which were pre-ordered so none went unsold.

The Fund was a fantastic success, raising over \$11,000 in donations and \$2,700 from the silent auction. Overall, more than \$14,000 was raised, allowing the zoo to welcome at least six new flamingos!

Thanks to our wonderful volunteers and all the flamingo fans who donated to the fund, bid on silent auction items or bought a T-shirt in support. You’re all Flock Stars to us!



RECOGNIZING OUR FLOCK STARS!

\$1000+

In Memory of Gene Ridall

\$750-\$999

Ms. Margaret Wicks

\$500-\$749

Ellenrose Galgano
Maria Kane
Linda M. Payne

\$250-\$499

Christine Kochan-Serburn
Mr. John Piston
Mr. and Mrs. Howard Preston
Mrs. Constance Tuttle and Mr. Earl Tuttle

\$100-\$249

Deborah Holihan
Dr. Peter and Mary Huntington
Ms. Judy Kilpatrick
Ms. Joanne Marshall
Ms. Donna Muscarella and Mr. Stephen Bloom
Margaret Napoleon
Ms. Fredrike Purkert

Mr. and Mrs. Lee Redhead
Elizabeth Spence
Cheryl & Jack Young

\$10-\$99

Mr. and Mrs. George Angeloro
Marishka and Drucilla Biela
Ms. Diana Biro and Mr. Eric Rogers
Lisa M. Canale
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Carey
Peter & Elizabeth Costello
Mr. John Cross
Mrs. Paula Cutrone
Deborah DeLorenzo
Ms. Denise Dowdall and Mr. Michael Yeager
Ms. Lynne Deuschle
Mrs. Janet Erardi
Ms. Maggie Field
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Fitzgerald
Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery Glose
Deb Groff
Jean and Jay Guss
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hippius
Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Kinne

Fred Kromm
Carrie Large and Stacey Portzline
Carol S. Lebieczinski
Ms. Emily Mallar and Mr. Phillip Aubin
Mr. and Mrs. John Mauro
John, Diane, and Haylee McClure
Mr. Daniel Miller
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Miller
Mr. and Mrs. David Miranda
Mr. and Mrs. Philip Monteleone
Ms. Nancy Morey
Mr. and Mrs. Derek Norcross
Ms. Jeanne Wagner-Pratt and Mr. Dale Pratt
Ms. Ashley Redhead
Ms. Margaret Smyth
Cindy Sparrow
Mrs. Catherine Stolz
Barbara Stratton
Ms. Cynthia Taylor
Donna and Mike Thomas
Ms. Christina Tucci
Amy Tuttle
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Wilbur
Diana Wolpert

A Note on Chilean Flamingos

There are six species of flamingo. The one most familiar to North Americans is the American flamingo or Caribbean flamingo, which is larger, has a deep salmon color and resides in the Caribbean Islands, Galapagos, Venezuela and Colombia as well as Florida and the U.S. Gulf Coast. Its cousin the Chilean flamingo is smaller, a paler pink and is native to a more temperate climate in South America. Chilean flamingos are adapted to much colder climates, which allows our zoo visitors to occasionally enjoy the sight of pink flamingos against white snow.



In her seven years as a bird keeper at the Houston Zoo and two as bird manager at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, April Zimpel has transported many birds. But her recent trip to drive a half-dozen flamingos 1,543 miles from Fort Worth, TX, to Syracuse was her longest yet.

April recruited her dad, Greg Zimpel of Chesapeake, VA, to help her bring six young Chilean flamingos from the Fort Worth Zoo to their new home at our zoo. The Zimpels managed to fly to Texas, acquire a van, construct a flamingo enclosure in back and then drive 30 hours through seven states with their fragile feathered freight.

The mission went smoothly thanks to weeks of planning. Fort Worth Zoo did pre-ship exams to ensure the birds were good to travel and sent reports to our veterinary team for approval. April picked the brains of Fort Worth's bird team to figure out logistics, timing and a plan.

"We decided a corral-style enclosure would be the most comfortable and least stressful for the birds," April said. "We considered individual crates, but flamingos are a flocking species, so they are used to huddling together for protection."

On January 4, April and Greg flew separately to Charlotte, NC, and together to Fort Worth, fetched the van and went to meet Fort Worth Zoo Bird Curator Brad Hazleton for a tour. Then they picked up plastic sheeting from Home Depot, bought mesh netting at Tractor Supply and built a flamingo enclosure in the van in their hotel parking lot.

"We got some strange looks," April said. "People definitely thought we were up to something."

The enclosure was made of two curved sheets of plastic tall enough for flamingos to stand up, a mesh roof and bedding on the floor. They attached a five-gallon pail with five inches of water to the inside for drinking and feeding.

The next day, they picked up the birds and hit the road by 7:30 a.m. "The birds were a little nervous at first, vocalizing and bickering, which is normal," April said. "But within 30 minutes they actually laid down and tucked their heads."

April and Greg took turns driving for six-hour stretches, staying within the speed limit and away from other vehicles to avoid quick braking or acceleration – "for the safety of the birds and because I didn't want to have to explain to a police officer why I had flamingos in the back of a van," April said. The birds mostly slept until they reached Syracuse at noon on January 6.

April's bird team had a quarantine area prepped to shelter the new birds for at least 30 days before they can meet our flamingos. "They started eating within the first 20 minutes here, which is a good sign that they are comfortable and relaxed," said General Curator Dan Meates.

By then, April and Greg were on the way to April's to spend the next two days dismantling the corral, cleaning the van and getting some much-needed sleep.

About our Current Flock:

- Four Chilean flamingos – one male and three females – came to us in 1996. All were wild-caught as adults, so they are at least 24 years old.
- Three more Chilean flamingos – all males – came to us in 2000. Two are at least 28 years old and the third is at least 19 years old.
- The wild genetics of our birds make them very important for breeding as they contribute genetic diversity to the population of Chilean flamingos in human care.

About our New Birds:

- Three male Chilean flamingos and three females, all under age 2, arrived from the Fort Worth Zoo on January 6 and are now in quarantine.
- All were hatched at the Fort Worth Zoo and all but one female were hand-reared.

