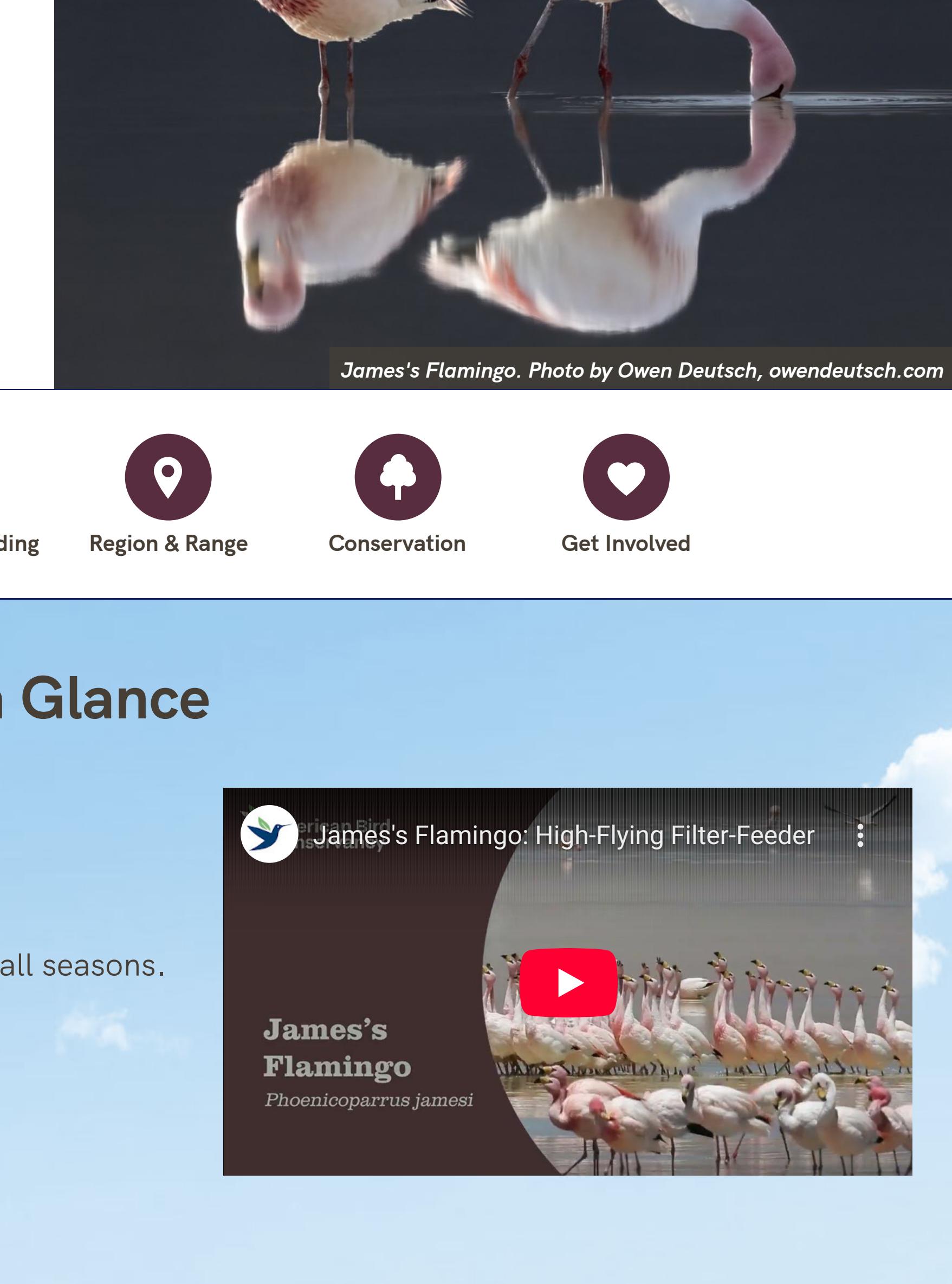


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## James's Flamingo

**"High-Flying Filter-Feeder"**

James's Flamingo. Photo by Owen Deutsch, owendeutsch.com



About



Songs &amp; Sounds



Breeding &amp; Feeding



Region &amp; Range



Conservation



Get Involved

### At a Glance

**Scientific Name:** *Phoenicoparrus jamesi***Population:** 106,000**Trend:** ● Stable**Habitat:** Frequents shallow saline lakes and wetlands in all seasons.

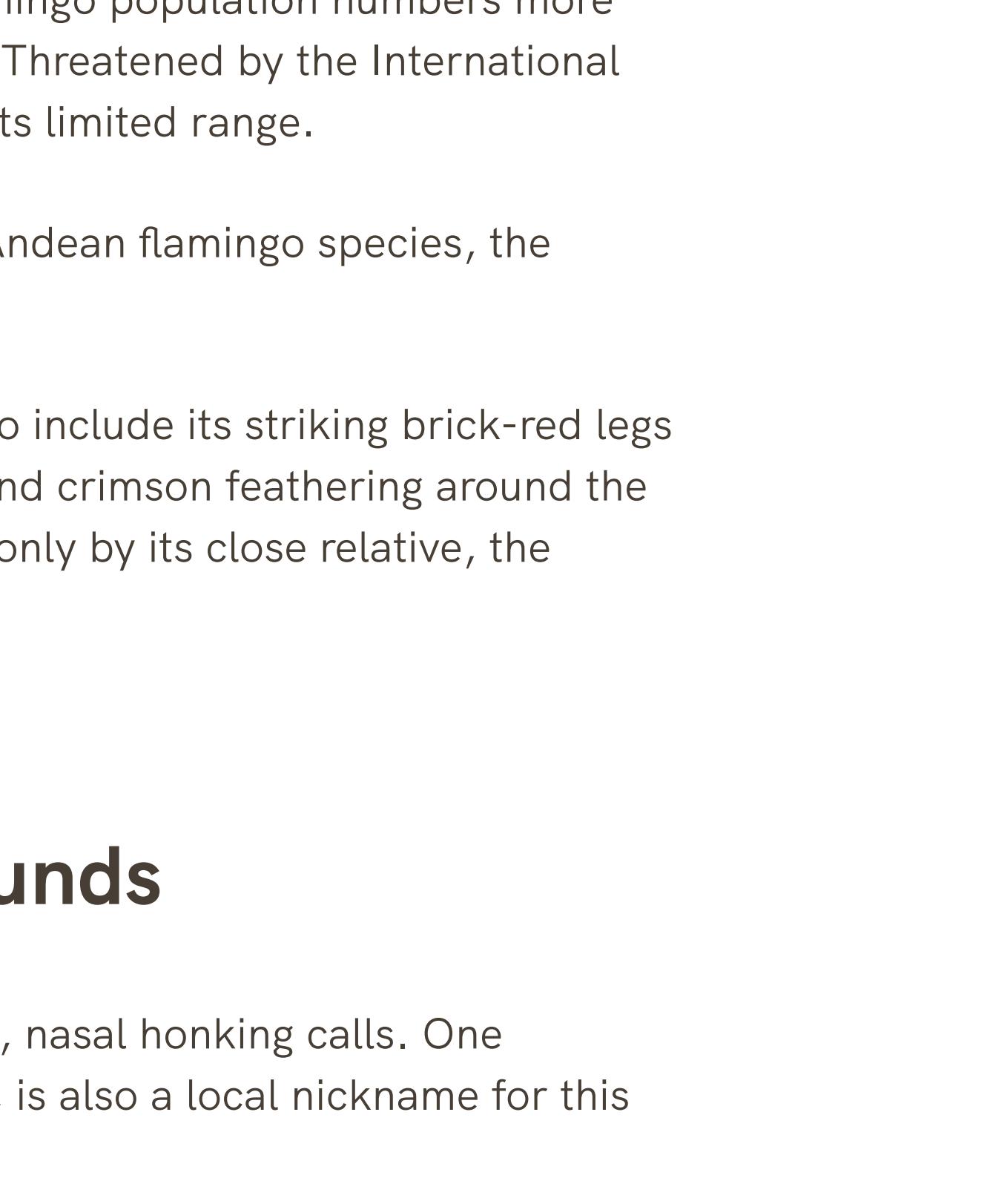
James's Flamingo



James's Flamingos



James's Flamingo flight



### About the James's Flamingo

A flock of pink flamingos atop a mountain sounds like some sort of dream ... After all, don't these long-legged wading birds live in low-lying wetlands, like the [American Flamingo](#)?

Incredibly, there are three flamingo species that make their homes high in the Andes Mountains of South America: the Andean, Chilean, and James's Flamingos. The James's Flamingo is the smallest and rarest of these, and was first described to science from Chile in 1886. Also known as the Puna Flamingo in recognition of its high-altitude habitat, the James's Flamingo was thought to be extinct for several decades, with no observations by ornithologists after 1924 until 1957, when the species was found breeding at a site in Bolivia. Though the James's Flamingo population numbers more than 100,000 individuals today, it is considered Near Threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) because of its limited range.

As well as being the smallest and rarest of the three Andean flamingo species, the James's Flamingo has other features that set it apart.

Unique identification features of the James's Flamingo include its striking brick-red legs and feet, the short, bright yellow, black-tipped bill, and crimson feathering around the eye. Its feet lack a hind toe (hallux), a feature shared only by its close relative, the Andean Flamingo.



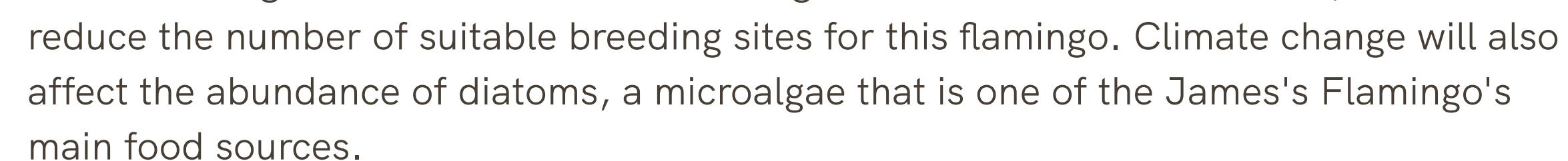
### Songs and Sounds

The James's Flamingo gives a variety of high-pitched, nasal honking calls. One vocalization, described as *chu-ru-ru* or *choo-roo-roo*, is also a local nickname for this bird.

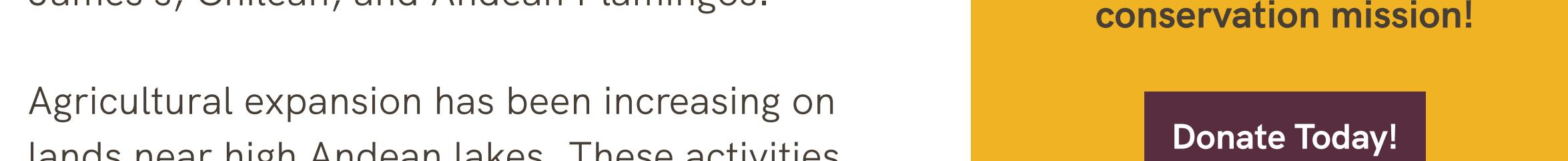
Calls:



Calls:



Flock (mostly juvenile) calls:



### Breeding and Feeding

The James's Flamingo begins to breed in the austral spring (November) with the nesting season extending through February. Its breeding success is directly affected by suitable rainfall and water levels. It nests in large colonies, often mixed with Andean and Chilean Flamingos.

The oddly-shaped beak of the James's Flamingo is specialized for filter feeding, lined with tiny, hair-like ridges known as lamellae that strain out food items from the water and mud. This bird forages by walking slowly through the shallows, submerging its bill upside-down into the water to stir up bottom sediment and filter out diatoms, phytoplankton, and blue-green algae, its main foods.

James's Flamingos are monogamous and form long-term pair bonds, initiated within their breeding colonies during group displays known as wedding or marching dances. During these noisy, complex displays, large groups of males march and turn as one, while head-flagging (simultaneously stretching their necks upward and turning their heads back and forth) and wing-saluting (flapping their wings). These displays also include beak chattering and other vocalizations to attract the attention of female groups, who may respond with their own displays.



James's Flamingos by Juan Carlos Munoz, Shutterstock

Both members of a James's Flamingo pair use their bills to build a cone-shaped mud nest, mixing in small rocks and plant material if available. The nest has a shallow depression on top for their single egg. The pair may continue to build after their egg is laid in order to raise the height of the nest.

The female James's Flamingo lays a single white egg, which she and her partner take turns incubating for roughly a month. Their chick hatches covered in whitish down and develops a second coat of dark gray down on the upperparts. Its bill is initially straight, only developing into the characteristic flamingo shape after several months.

The parent flamingos take turns brooding their chick and feeding it with regurgitated "crop milk," a high-fat, nutritious red liquid produced in the adults' crops. A few other bird families, including pigeons and doves such as the [Mourning Dove](#), feed their chicks in this way.

The young flamingo leaves the nest about 30 to 50 days after hatching and joins other flamingo chicks in a large group known as a crèche. Parents continue to feed their chick, locating it by voice within the crèche, until its bill grows into its final downcurved shape, meaning that the juvenile bird can finally feed itself.



### Region and Range

The James's Flamingo has a restricted distribution. It breeds in the Andean altiplano (high plateau) within the central Andean dry Puna ecoregion, a habitat characterized by salt flats, dry grasslands and shrublands, and extremely cold temperatures.

In the nonbreeding season, when lakes freeze up, this flamingo migrates to shallow wetlands at lower altitudes.

Due to its small size, the James's Flamingo prefers shallower water than other Andean flamingos, up to 16,000 feet above sea level.

James's Flamingo range map by ABC

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### Conservation

The biggest threat to the James's Flamingo is habitat loss caused by mining operations, which use large amounts of water. Road construction to access these mines also enables increased development around once-pristine lakes and wetlands.

Climate change can affect water levels in high-altitude lakes and wetlands, which could reduce the number of suitable breeding sites for this flamingo. Climate change will also affect the abundance of diatoms and microalgae that is a vital food source for this flamingo.

ABC has partnered with fellow nonprofit Aves Argentinas to [create and expand a national park](#) that protects the Laguna Mar Chiquita — a large salt lake in northern Argentina used by James's, Chilean, and Andean Flamingos.

Agricultural expansion has been increasing on lands near high Andean lakes. These activities expose the James's Flamingo and other highland flamingo species to toxic runoff from chemicals and other pollutants. ABC continues to advocate against the widespread use of systemic, water-soluble insecticides and other wildlife poisons.

James's Flamingos risk fatal collision or electrocution with powerlines near their nesting or stopover sites. This species has also perished in collisions with fences. ABC provides online resources to learn more about how bird lovers, tower operators, and engineers can create a safer environment for birds by [reducing communication tower collisions](#) and fatalities.

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### Get Involved

You can learn more about these birds and the threats they face by [signing up for ABC's Bird of the Week email series](#), which frequently highlights these fascinating birds.

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