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14.SPECIAL : PINK FLAMINGO DAY 2025

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ON THE COVER



The flamingo is iconic with tropical climates and for its characteristic pink or orange-pink color. The graceful S curve of the neck of a relaxed flamingo is a sight to behold whether in the wild or at a zoo!



We live in the 2020s, not the 1920s! Wherever there is a web link like below, click it to go to the webpage it references! (Click it now!)

www.destolfe.com



COMMENTS BY RG

Pink Flamingo Day!

In recent years, I have liked the shape and color of flamingos. Having originally lived in South Florida, you would think I would have seen them all the time! But, no, not really. They are an iconic theme of tropical Florida, as most people would think, along with palm trees, beaches, and neon. But I think the only place I recall seeing them was at the zoo, and even then, I don't recall. I thought I would put together this short, fun special issue dedicated to the pink flamingo!

Enjoy!

RG



Photo by Robert A. de Stoffe

MORE ABOUT FLAMINGOS

A flamboyance of flamingos is actually a white bird, not pink. The *phoenicopterus ruber* birds get their iconic pinkish or orangish hue from the carotenoids in the algae and brine shrimp they eat. Carotenoids is what gives carrots and tomatoes their respective colors. If a flamingo is rather pale, meaning that it is not very pink, it can be a sign of malnourishment. Four species are found throughout the Americas and islands, while two species are native to the Afro Eurasia region.

“Pink Flamingo Day”, specifically the plastic lawn variety, is today, Monday, June 23, 2025. But real flamingos are much more interesting! International Flamingo Day was on Saturday, April 26, 2025. Flamingos are an icon of warm summers, especially in tropical climates like South Florida (think Miami Vice).



Read more from the National Zoo: <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/news/why-are-flamingos-pink-and-other-flamingo-facts>

TYPES OF FLAMINGOS

Real Animals



TYPES OF FLAMINGOS

House & Garden Ornaments (Especially in Florida!)



TYPES OF FLAMINGOS

Pool & Beach Floaties



TYPES OF FLAMINGOS

Casino Hotel



Photos from April 2023, RG de Stolfe



TYPES OF FLAMINGOS

Casino Hotel



Photo from 1999, RG de Stolfe

1960S BUSCH GARDENS

Mom and Dad visited Busch Gardens, I think in the middle 1960s before they were married. They had flamingos in their zoo area, which I think they still have in their zoo area today. Here are a few color

slides of the flamingos Dad took during that visit. There are quite a few flamingos! You can see other photos of the Busch Gardens visit in the June 2024 issue of the de Stolfe Journal.



1960S BUSCH GARDENS



MIAMI METRO ZOO & ANDREW

Scrambling Ahead of A Category 5 Hurricane!

When Hurricane Andrew was headed straight for south Florida in August 1992, the entire southern half of the state was mobilized to either clear out or hunker down! What ultimately became a Category 5 hurricane, the state was bracing for how destructive the hurricane would be!

Seeing a direction that appeared like it would directly hit Dade County, everyone was scrambling! I had already moved away from Miami in early 1989, but Dad was still living in South Florida, at the Tropicaire Drive-In Theatre. (I recently created a special issue about the theatre.)

Another entity scrambling ahead of landfall was a very specific attraction, the Miami Metro Zoo, a place I had visited in the early 1980s and had included old photos of a few issues back.

The Miami Metro Zoo, as it was previously called, specialized in

creating natural habitat environments for the animals rather than using cages or secured pens.

Following is a brief description of what the zoo did specifically with their flamingos. I have included clips of several sources here.

The Story About A Famous Photo of Flamingos in A Bathroom

There exists a famous photo of a bunch of pink flamingos huddled inside a bathroom. While some might think the photo is fake or created, it is a true photo verified by the original, authentic source! The setting is the Miami Metro Zoo in South Florida at the time of Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Ron Magill, who was the assistant curator at the time, and is currently the Zoo Miami Communications Director, took the photo, or more specifically several photos of the now famous scene. Here is what he said about preparing for the storm.

Magill... had been working [at the zoo] for

12 years, and all the past hurricane threats—Alberto, Bob, Floyd—had come to nothing. When Andrew suddenly loomed, “I’m thinking to myself, my gosh, this is garbage”... he and his team ran around doing what they could, making sure all of their furry, feathery and scaly charges were securely housed and fed. [3]

One recently finished feature of the zoo was called Wings of Asia. Unfortunately, despite due preparation and hurricane designed features, the aviary was slaughtered by Hurricane Andrew.

“Although the netting for that aviary was

tested for 150 mph winds,” Magill says, “it was not tested to be able to withstand the impact of a mobile home that was picked up in those winds and launched into the aviary like a torpedo.” Wings of Asia was where [Miami Metro Zoo] took its greatest losses during Hurricane Andrew, which killed nearly 100 birds. Throughout the rest of the zoo, Magill says, only five animals died. [2]

The flamingos were in a different place, an open area by a lake. However, that was obviously not a good place for them to be during a category 5 hurricane in excess of

150 mile per hour winds!

As soon as they were sure Andrew would make landfall, Magill and the other keepers looked for somewhere else to put them. The bathroom was the obvious choice—no windows, a tile floor for easy cleanup, and plenty of room for an improvised bed, made out of hay hastily dumped all over the floor. Most importantly, Magill adds, “it had a ready-made supply of fresh water.” He and his coworkers opened up all the stalls, made sure the toilets were full, and set out for the flamingo exhibit to grab the new tenants. [3]

MIAMI METRO ZOO & ANDREW

“This was part of a hurricane protocol that required us to round up all of the flamingos in the front lake of the zoo and place them in the ... public restroom, which was used as a bunker, whenever a hurricane warning was issued,” said Magill. [4]

The birds were not very cooperative. “These flamingos are flapping everywhere, we’re grabbing them, we’re getting full of flamingo water and stuff,” [3]



These are two photos of the flamingos in the bathrooms that Magill took. (Ron Magill/Zoo Miami)



Photo by Ron Magill

MIAMI METRO ZOO & ANDREW

“After catching the flamingos and putting the last ones into the bathroom for the evening [Magill recalls there being about 38 of them], I was struck by how strange it looked to see the birds huddled together in the ... bathroom, so I took out a ... camera and took a couple of frames. Little did I know at the time how destructive and historic that storm would be or how much exposure that image would get afterwards!” [4]



“Wings of Asia” bird exhibit before Hurricane Andrew. (Ron Magill/Zoo Miami)

“...at the end of the day, it did save [the flamingos’] lives.” [1]

As for the flamingos, the whole flock survived their two-day bathroom ordeal. After a short stint at nearby Busch Gardens [in Tampa, Florida], they eventually made it back to a rebuilt exhibit, with no strange mirrors, and much larger, unflushable ponds. [3]



“Wings of Asia” bird exhibit after Hurricane Andrew. (Ron Magill/Zoo Miami)

The zoo built a new storm-proof habitat. Construction on the new exhibit began in 2013, and it’s now home to more than 40 flamingos... “This is the aviary that replaced the one originally built for \$3 million. And this one cost us \$13 million...” The new flamingo exhibit was designed to include a building near the lake... “The flamingos can be ... herded right into that building. So we don’t have to go through the stress of catching them out here anymore,” Magill said. “They’re locked in there, and they’ll be safe, hopefully, during a future storm.” [1]



The new flamingo exhibit with the permanent structure for hurricane safety. (Fox Weather)

MIAMI METRO ZOO & ANDREW

READ MORE

- [1] <https://www.foxweather.com/weather-news/zoo-miami-workers-wrangled-flamingos-into-a-bathroom-after-hurricane-andrew-destroyed-their-habitat>
- [2] <https://www.npr.org/2017/09/07/548981618/flamingos-in-the-men-s-room-how-zoos-and-aquariums-handle-hurricanes>
- [3] <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-story-behind-the-most-famous-photo-from-hurricane-andrew>
- [4] <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/flamingos-zoo-bathroom-in-hurricane/>
- <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/news/why-are-flamingos-pink-and-other-flamingo-facts>



Zoo Miami's communications director, Ron Magill, captures one of the zoo's flamingos for temporary relocation on the zoo's grounds in Miami on Thursday, April 17, 2014. The zoo plans a new entrance that will include a state-of-the-art home for the birds. (Patric Farrell/Miami Herald/Tribune News Service via Getty Images)

[Obviously, this photo was from over 11 years ago, and thus the "new" exhibit has long been finished.]

FINAL THOUGHT

Flamingo Facts

According to the Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute, here are several facts about flamingos

1. Flamingo nests are made of mud
2. Flamingos get their pink color from their food
3. Flamingos are filter feeders and turn their heads "upside down" to eat
4. A group of flamingos is called a flamboyance
5. There are six flamingo species
6. A flamingo's knees don't bend backward
7. Some flamingos live in extreme environments
8. Flamingo parents feed their chicks a liquid they secrete, called crop milk
9. Flamingos can fly
10. Flamingos can sleep standing on one leg

Read more about these facts here:

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/news/why-are-flamingos-pink-and-other-flamingo-facts>



Fuzzy flamingo chick



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