

ANDEAN FLAMINGO

Phoenicoparrus andinus

- **Range:** High Andes of west central South America, in Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina.
- **Habitat:** High mountain alkaline and salt-lakes, at 2,300 – 4,500 m.
- **Nutrition:** Diatoms, insects, and small crustacean larvae.
- **Reproduction:** 1 egg. Incubation 28 days.
- **Social structure:** Large flocks of tens of thousands of birds, often with other flamingo species.
- **Weight:** 1.5 – 4.1 kg.
- **Dimensions:** Height 1 – 1.4 m. Wingspan 1 – 1.6 m.
- **Estimated population in the wild:** More than 40,000 individuals.
- **Lifespan:** 20 – 30 years.
- **Threats:** During the mid-20th century and early 1980s, egg collection for consumption was widespread, with thousands being harvested each year. Factors such as unfavourable water levels, caused by both natural weather patterns and human intervention, along with erosion of nesting areas and human disturbance, may also negatively impact reproductive success. In recent years, the threat from mining activities in Andean wetlands has been on the rise. Beyond gold, salt, and silica sand extraction, the region known as the "lithium triangle" – which contains substantial lithium brine reserves – overlaps with key breeding habitats for the species. Mining operations can result in reduced surface water availability, pollution of wetland ecosystems, and increased industrial development in vital breeding areas. Additionally, outside of protected zones in Bolivia, there is limited hunting – primarily targeting immature and juvenile individuals – for purposes such as food, oil, and feathers.
- **IUCN Status:** VU (vulnerable).

Did you know?

- Andean flamingo overlaps in distribution with two other species of flamingo: Chilean flamingo (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*) and James's flamingo (*Phoenicoparrus jamesi*).
- Andean flamingo is the largest of the three South American species.
- During the breeding period they stay in elevations of 3,000 – 4,000m. The rest of the year some of the birds may remain in high altitudes while others move to lower elevation wetlands and lakes.
- Andean flamingos are colonial nesters. Within one colony, pairs nested very close to each other, with the average distance between nests being only 6 – 8 cm.
- Andean flamingo is among the rarest species of flamingos.