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# Why Are Flamingos Pink?



Flamingos look awesome! They have a big bill, a long neck, and beautiful pink feathers. But look at the babies! They are not pink! What happened to them?

## Think? & Talk

- Are flamingos born with pink feathers?
- Why do flamingos have pink feathers?

## Build Vocabulary



Track 02

### feather

*n.* one of the light, soft things that cover a bird's body

### turn

*v.* to change or cause to change in nature, state, or color; to make or become

### swamp

*n.* an area of very wet land

### diet

*n.* the food that a person or animal eats each day

### algae

*n. (plural)* a type of plant with no stems or leaves that grows in water

### pigment

*n.* a thing that gives something a color

### pale

*adj.* very light in color, almost white

### wild

*n.* a natural area, a state of nature

**VISUALIZE** | Look and match to complete the sentences.



- The green **algae** is
  - mainly bamboo.
- A panda's **diet** is
  - covering the river.
- Pigments** are used
  - to make paints and inks.

**APPLY** | Fill in the blanks to complete the sentences.



swamp   turn   wild   pale   feathers

- Baby birds have short and soft \_\_\_\_\_.
- The tiger will be taken from the zoo and returned to the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Be careful not to fall into the deep \_\_\_\_\_.
- Mason is wearing a \_\_\_\_\_ pink shirt.
- After a few hours, apple slices \_\_\_\_\_ brown.





# Why Are Flamingos Pink?

What's your favorite bird? For some people, it could be parrots. Others might like eagles. But some people like flamingos for their beautiful pink **feathers**. That's because they look great in photos and in real life! But do they always look like this? Surprisingly, the answer is no. In fact, baby flamingos are born with light gray feathers.

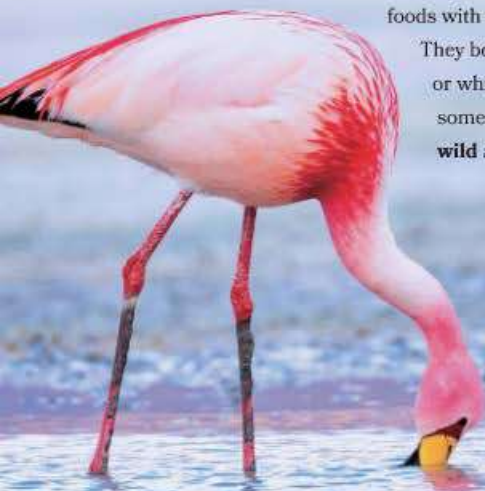
Why do their feathers **turn** pink? It's caused by the food they eat. Flamingos live near lakes and **swamps**. That means their **diet** is mostly **algae** and tiny shrimp. These algae and shrimp have **pigments** called "carotenoids" that turn flamingos pink. When flamingos eat algae and shrimp, the carotenoids give them a beautiful, rosy color. In fact, carotenoids are the same pigments that we see in **boiled** shrimp. The pigments change the shrimp's color from gray to pink when it's cooked! So what happens when flamingos don't eat these

foods with carotenoids?

They become **pale** pink or white. We can see some of them in the **wild** and also in zoos.



Lobsters, crabs, and shrimp have carotenoids in their shells. When they're cooked, the pigments turn them pink.



Algae



Shrimp

**WORD CHECK** ✓ ✓

What is the closest meaning for the word "boiled"?

- ☐ cooked ☐ dried

Humans also eat food with carotenoids, such as carrots and pumpkins. Some might ask—will people change color if they eat a lot of these foods? The answer is "maybe." If they eat a large amount of carrots, they can turn yellow or orange. But don't worry; just one cup of carrot juice won't turn you orange overnight!



Pumpkins, carrots, and oranges are high in carotenoids.

**READING CHECK** ✓ ✓

Which paragraph describes why flamingos turn pink?

- ☐ 1st ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd



## Read a Chart

### The Growth of a Flamingo

A flamingo mom lays a single egg on top of a mud mound. A baby flamingo's feathers change from light gray to pink as it grows up.



**VISUAL CHECK** ✓ ✓

What do flamingo chicks look like?

- ☐ They have pink feathers.  
☐ They have light gray feathers.



## Comprehend It!

Choose the correct answers. ✓ ↺

- What is the passage mainly about?
  - various feather colors of birds
  - food pigments that make flamingos' feathers pink
  - life of flamingos in the wild and in zoos
- Flamingos live on a diet of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - algae, pumpkins
  - carrot juice, boiled shrimp
  - algae, shrimp
- What is NOT true about carotenoids?
  - Carotenoids are pigments.
  - Algae and shrimp have carotenoids.
  - Boiled shrimp are gray because of carotenoids.
- The feather color of flamingos turns pale pink or white when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - they live in the wild
  - they don't eat enough carotenoids
  - they eat a large amount of shrimp
- What can be inferred from the passage?
  - Most flamingos in zoos have white feathers.
  - Vegetables that are orange might have carotenoids.
  - A bowl of pumpkin soup can turn us yellow.

## Write It!

turn ... (orange) ✓ ↺

- Number the underlined words in the correct order.

One cup of carrot juice won't orange turn you.

( ) (1) ( )

- Unscramble and complete the sentence.

The cold weather \_\_\_\_\_.

red and yellow   the leaves   turns



## Summarize It!

Complete the summary. ✓ ↺

Paragraph 1	Some people like flamingos for their pink feathers. But their feathers aren't always pink. Baby flamingos are _____.
Paragraph 2	Flamingos mostly eat algae and tiny shrimp _____. The food contains _____ that give flamingos their rosy colors. If flamingos don't eat food with carotenoids, they will become pale pink.
Paragraph 3	Other foods also have carotenoids. If people eat a large amount of these foods, _____.

pigments called carotenoids  
the color of their skin can change

born with light gray feathers  
near lakes and swamps

## Focus on Skills

Cause & Effect



Why are flamingos pink? Complete the chart.

**Cause**

Flamingos eat \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that have pigments called carotenoids.

**Effect**

The \_\_\_\_\_ turn the flamingos' white feathers a \_\_\_\_\_.

shrimp   pink color   algae   pigments



If flamingos don't eat food with carotenoids, what will happen to them?