



Your Guide to the 2025 Early Bird Season

For Communities, Troops, Volunteers, and Parents

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Meet Our 2024-2025 Early Bird Mascot, Rosie the Roseate Spoonbill!

Classification

Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*)

Description

Roseate spoonbills grow to a height of 32 inches with an average wingspan of 50 inches. Their distinguishing characteristics include their pink body and legs, white neck and breast, pale green bald head, spoon-shaped bill, and bright red shoulder patch.

Life History

Roseate spoonbills eat primarily small fish and crustaceans. Spoonbills reach maturity at about 16 weeks. In Texas, their mating season lasts from March through June. Nests are built in thick vegetation above water, well-built, and deeply cupped. Females typically lay two to five brown-speckled white eggs, which hatch after about 24 days. In about eight weeks, the young roseate spoonbills are ready to fly. Their life span is up to 10 years.

Unlike most birds, roseate spoonbills are silent and often solitary when they feed. They swish their spoon-shaped bills back and forth in the water to find small invertebrates, fish, and crustaceans. During breeding season, the male uses gifts of nesting material to attract the female. Once mated, the pair remains monogamous. Both male and female take turns sitting on the eggs and feeding the young.

Spoonbills eat shrimp, shrimp eat algae, and the algae make their own red and yellow pigments, called carotenoids. Some scientists believe that the pink coloration that roseate spoonbills acquire as they mature is due to their diet of carotenoid-rich organisms like shrimp. The more they eat, the pinker they get.

Habitat

From March through October, roseate spoonbills prefer the bays, marshes, and estuaries along the Gulf Coast. Occasionally, they will travel inland through the eastern third of Texas. In winter, most roseate spoonbills migrate to Central and South America.

Distribution

The roseate spoonbill is found throughout the entire Gulf of Mexico coastline, south to Central America, South America, the West Indies and have been spotted in Galveston, Texas!

Other

Like many other bird species with beautiful plumage, roseate spoonbills were nearly hunted to extinction during the 1800s. Their striking pink feathers were popular on women's hats, and hunters from all over the United States competed for spoonbill plumes. In the early 1900s, roseate spoonbills began to recolonize areas along the Gulf Coast and slowly increased in number. Today, the threat to roseate spoonbill populations is a result of habitat loss.

Learn more about Rosie the Roseate Spoonbill via the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department website!

Source: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/spoonbill/>



Earn this 2024 Early Bird Patch!



ROSEATE SPOONBILL

Coloring Page

Roseate Spoonbills are light pink and red with a white head and long bill that is the shape of a spoon. They are found in the southeastern region of North America. They are an uncommon bird as their population was almost eliminated from the United States. These birds make their homes in coastal marshes, mudflats, and lagoons. Roseate Spoonbills eat small fish, crabs, cray-fish, and shrimp. The food they eat gives them their distinct coloring. They detect their food by moving their bill back and forth in the water. Roseate Spoon-bills build their nests in trees and usually in groups. They also can be found hanging out with Wood Storks. Roseate Spoonbills are permanent residents of coastal Texas with the others migrating to Mexico for the winter.



BirdWatchingAcademy.com

Why Early Bird?

What is Early Bird renewal, and why do we do it?

Early Bird renewal is a fantastic way to renew your troop members early in the year, and it helps you, your Community, and your council plan for the upcoming year. When girls renew early, troop leaders can know whether girls will be back when school resumes and if there are openings in their troop. Plus, when girls participate in early renewal, it secures their troop spot— and they can even earn some perks for doing so!

We encourage Early Bird renewal because it:

- Helps troop leaders prepare for the next Girl Scout year before back-to-school recruitment when there's a new influx of girls who want to join troops.
- Helps the Community plan and budget for the upcoming year.
- Gives parents peace of mind knowing their daughter will be in the same troop next year.
- Enables parents to mark one more thing off their back-to-school to-do list!



When Is Early Bird?

When does Early Bird renewal for membership year 2024-2025 start?

- Early Bird renewal is April 1 – June 28. Mark your calendar!
- When you renew from April 1 – 8, you can take advantage of a \$5 discount on your 2024 – 2025 Girl Scout membership. Just use the discount code **GSSJCEB24**.
- If you register for a lifetime membership, you'll receive a \$20 discount from April 1 – June 28. Just use the discount code **EBLIFETIME24**.
- Do you know of any NEW members interested in joining early? If so, invite them to register for an extended year membership (April 1, 2024 – Sept. 30, 2025) for \$35 beginning April 1!

How To Renew

Parents

How do I prepare for Early Bird renewal?

1. Before April 1, decide as a family if you are renewing with your current troop, joining another troop, or participating as an Individually Registered Girl (Juliette).
2. Decide with your troop if they want to use troop funds for renewal or if they want adults to purchase their own adult/girl memberships.
 - Remember, troop funds belong to girls, and what better way for girls to benefit from all their hard work than to reinvest in themselves by using their own money to renew for another fantastic Girl Scout experience!

How do I renew my household memberships?

Beginning April 1, all current girl and adult members will show a status of **Time to Renew** and a membership expiration date of 9/30/2024 in their membership account. To renew your troop or household, just follow the steps below.

NOTE: Troop leaders cannot request financial assistance on behalf of girls. Only parents can do so via the My Household tab.

Steps to Renew for Households

1. Log in to **MYGS** at <https://mygs.girlscouts.org/>
2. Click **My Account**.
3. In the left-hand menu, click **My Household**.
4. Click the **Select All** check box under both Girls and Adults.
5. Deselect any girls or roles (for adults) that you will not be renewing.
6. Click the green **Renew** button.
7. Follow the prompts on the screen to update any membership details and select payment method and **Review Cart Details**.
8. Accept the Promise & Law.
9. Proceed to payment screen and enter card details.
10. **Early Bird discount week note:** Be sure to enter any applicable discount codes prior to submitting payment. We will not be able to reverse the transaction if you miss entering the discount code.
11. Download a copy of your receipt. A receipt will also be emailed to you.

PRO TIP: Remember to check the box to renew both the membership and the troop participation (volunteer role for adults). Lifetime members will only need to renew their role(s) each year.

For a detailed guide on how to renew your troop or household, please check out the MY25 Renewal Guide.

Troop Leaders

How do I prepare for Early Bird renewal?

1. Before April 1, ask your troop parents if they are renewing with their current troop, joining another troop, or will become an Individually Registered Girl (Juliette).
2. Ask your troop if they want you to use troop funds for renewal or if they want adults to purchase their own adult/girl memberships.
 - Remember, troop funds belong to girls, and what better way for girls to benefit from all their hard work than to reinvest in themselves by using their own money to renew for another fantastic Girl Scout experience!
3. Check your troop roster in MYGS at <https://mygs.girlscouts.org/>
 - Do all the adult volunteers have positions? Who is helping the girls at meetings and outings throughout the year?
 - Check to make certain you have the correct girls listed as active. A correct roster helps with girl retention, Fall Product sales, fall recruitment, and cookie season.
4. Update your troop details! Changing meeting locations or day/time? Let us know by updating those details under the My Troops tab in MyAccount.

How do I renew my troop's membership?

Beginning April 1, all current girl and adult members will show a status of **Time to Renew** and a membership expiration date of 9/30/2024 in their membership account. To renew your troop, just follow the steps below.

NOTE: Troop leaders cannot request financial assistance on behalf of girls. Only parents can do so via the My Household tab.

Steps to Renew for Troop Leaders

1. Log in to **MYGS** at <https://mygs.girlscouts.org/>
2. Click **My Account**.
3. In the left-hand menu, click **My Troop**.
4. Select troop number.
5. Click the **Select All** check box for both Girls and Adults.
6. Deselect any girls or roles (for adults) that you will not be renewing.
7. Click the green **Renew** button.
8. Follow the prompts on the screen to update any membership details and select payment method and **Review Cart Details**.
9. Accept the Promise & Law.
10. Proceed to payment screen, enter card details, and submit payment.
11. **Early Bird discount week note:** Be sure to enter any applicable discount codes prior to submitting payment. We will not be able to reverse the transaction if you miss entering the discount code.
12. Download a copy of your receipt. A receipt will also be emailed to you.

Council-Sponsored Perks and Incentives

As the adage goes, “The early bird gets the worm!” Girl Scouts of San Jacinto is excited to offer all our girls, volunteers, and troops the following rewards for renewing early. Additional incentives for renewing early may be provided by your Girl Scout Community or troop.

	DATES	INDIVIDUAL MEMBER INCENTIVES	TROOP INCENTIVES
	Eligibility	All renewing members are eligible for incentives below.	Troops that renew 50%+ (or more) of registered girls and two unrelated, registered troop leaders in good standing by the dates below.
GOLD	April 1 – 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5 annual membership discount with code GSSJCEB24. \$20 lifetime membership discount with code EBLIFETIME24. FREE Early Bird patch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$25 shop discount (max. 300). Two FREE Membership Kickoff 2024 tickets (max. 100). One drawing entry for a FREE troop weekend at Galveston Bay House.
SILVER	April 9 – May 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$20 lifetime membership discount with code EBLIFETIME24. FREE Early Bird patch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$10 shop discount (max. 300). One FREE Membership Kickoff 2024 ticket (max. 50). One drawing entry for \$50 GSSJC camp reservation discount.
BRONZE	June 1 – June 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$20 lifetime membership discount with code EBLIFETIME24. FREE Early Bird patch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5 shop discount (max. 150). One drawing entry for \$25 GSSJC camp reservation discount.

How Do I Receive My Incentives?

All individual and troop incentives will be announced and distributed no later than July 31, 2024, and will expire Sept. 30, 2025. Incentives are non-transferable to another troop, community, or membership year.

Here’s how you claim Early Bird patches – Pick up from any Girl Scout Shop beginning May 1, 2024 through Sept. 30, 2025. Patches are available for girls and adults. No proof of renewal required to pick up patches. **Discuss with your troop leader if parents will pick up the patches or the troop leader will.**

Here’s how to claim Council-Sponsored incentives:

- **Shop Discount** – Redeemable in store for a one-time single purchase while supplies last. Gift cards will be live loaded in person at the time of purchase. A maximum of 300 troops that register between April 1 – May 31, 2024, will receive this incentive. A maximum of 150 troops that register between June 1 – June 28, 2024 will receive this incentive.
- **Membership Kickoff 2024 Tickets** – Processed internally by Customer Service. Troop leaders of winning troops will be contacted via email for the names of adults who will receive the tickets. For April 1 – 8 there are 100 tickets available. April 9 – May 31 there are 50 tickets available.
- **Galveston Bay House Weekend** – Troop(s) will be selected for a troop weekend getaway **July 19 – 21, 2025**. *Selected troop(s) will need to provide proof of required camp certification, first-aid certification. In addition, all registered adults will need to have completed YPT 1 & 2. Winners will be notified via email.*
- **Troop Camp Discount Drawings** – Troops will reserve camp units as normal and attach the Early Bird camp reservation discount coupon. *Reminder: Troops will need to provide proof of required camp certification and first-aid certification. In addition, all registered adults will need to have completed YPT 1 and 2. Winners will be notified via email.*

Troop-Sponsored Incentive Ideas:

Even troops can encourage their parents to participate in Early Bird renewal! Troops can make Early Bird fun for their girls with rewards like an Early Bird exclusive troop trip or a roseate spoonbill plush.

Here are a few ways some of our troops have rewarded their Early Birds in the past:

- Hosted a fun troop event with girls to get them excited about returning for another membership year.
- Reimbursed parents for the cost of renewing girls or adults.
- Girls earned a special prize for renewing early.



Community Involvement in Early Bird

How Does My Community Prepare for Early Bird Renewal?

1. Review how well your incentives worked last year.
2. Set a budget in your Plan of Action meeting.
3. Poll your Community and ask your girls/troop leaders what rewards they would like to receive for renewing early.
4. Review your goals with your Volunteer Experience Manager (VEM).
5. Discuss a communication plan with your VEM.
6. Recruit a Renewal Specialist to your Community Service Team.

Community-Sponsored Incentives Ideas:

Communities can support Early Bird too! From an Early Bird exclusive event to a Community campout discount, the possibilities are endless!

Here are a few ways some of our Communities have rewarded Early Bird participants in the past:

- Community Early Bird events
 - Skate party
 - Bowling party
 - Color War Bash (colored cornstarch)
 - Swim party
 - Foam party
 - Themed picnic
- Discount/free registration to Community campout/event
- GSSJC Shop gift cards
- Camp gear
- Custom Community logo T-shirt


Tips for Deciding on a Community-Sponsored Incentive

- Make sure that information and deadlines are shared as soon as possible and frequently with community members.
- Get excited about Early Bird season so that others will follow suit!
- Maximize positivity and minimize negativity about renewing early. Give shoutouts to your troops that have renewed and are ready for another year of fun and adventure!
- Have Community incentives that troop leaders and girls are interested in earning. Poll your communities at the end of the year to determine what they like best!
- **Avoid using a drawing as your only Community incentive.**
- Make sure that the early bird information reaches all your members, not just the troop leaders.
- Keep the community updated on the Early Bird progress, let them know how close they are to achieving your Community incentives.
- If possible, set up Community renewal stations to assist members without internet/computer access with renewing their memberships. These are especially beneficial in rural areas where access to reliable internet is an issue. **NOTE:** Any Girl Scout membership can be purchased in person via cash or card at any GSSJC Shop (expect a seven to 10 business day delay in processing).

Council-Sponsored Perks and Incentives

As the adage goes, “The early bird gets the worm!” Girl Scouts of San Jacinto is excited to offer all our Communities the following rewards for renewing early. Additional incentives for renewing early may be provided by your Girl Scout Community or troop.

Council-Sponsored Incentives for Communities

Eligibility	Communities that meet Early Bird goal and offer a Community-sponsored incentive by Oct. 31, 2024. Must provide proof of incentive offered to Volunteer Experience Manager.
April 1-June 28	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$100 + 25 cents per renewed girl. • One drawing entry for the winter Golden Link scrapbook Community highlight. • Exclusive GSSJC Early Bird pin for officially appointed CLTs/CSTs.

How Do I Receive Council-Sponsored Incentives For the Community?

All individual and troop incentives will be announced and distributed no later than July 31, 2024, and will expire Sept. 30, 2025. Community incentives will be paid out no later than Oct. 31, 2024, with proof of community incentive being awarded. Incentives are non-transferable to another troop, community, or membership year.

Here’s how you claim your incentives:

- Community Early Bird Bonus – Paid via ACH to Communities no later than Oct. 31, 2024, with proof of Community incentive paid out.
- Community Golden Link Feature – One Community will be selected. CLT of the winning Community will be contacted via email for Community details.
- Community Early Bird Pins (for CLTs/CSTs) – Distributed to active, officially appointed CLTs (Community Leadership Team) and Renewal Specialists at Membership Kickoff 2024 or by Volunteer Experience Manager.

We Have Renewed! What's Next?

- **Prepare to bridge!**
 - If your troop is in the last year of their program level, it's time to bridge! Moving on to new adventures like bridging is an important transition in a Girl Scout's life. It's a defining moment when a Girl Scout becomes aware of her achievements and is ready for new adventures and responsibilities. Celebrating this change should be fun, personalized, and memorable for everyone involved. And most of all, it should be designed by the girls in true partnership with adults. Learn more about bridging in the Girl Scout Bridging Guide.
- **Start planning for fall!**
 - The greatest part of having returning members renew early is you can begin planning fall meetings, activities, trips and more! Discuss with your girls what things they would like to see happen in their next year of adventure. This is also a suitable time to discuss how many openings you will have in your troop.
 - Prepare to Fill Your Troop beginning Aug. 1! Every year our council adds troops with fewer than 12 girl members to the online troop opportunity list for new girls to join them. If your troop is planning to welcome new girls in the new membership year, your troop will be open so they can join! If your troop has fewer than 12 girls and you do not wish to make open spots available, please be sure to submit the Opt Out of Online Opportunity List **no earlier than July 1**.
 - Update your Troop Details – It is important to regularly update your troop's details as things change throughout the year. Feel free to complete this by logging in to your MyGS Account, click My Troop, and Edit Troop Details or by completing the Troop Meeting Update Form.
- **Enjoy your summer!**

Some troops choose to take a break from meetings for the summer or meet once a month for troop outings or activities. Take a trip to a museum, plan a water park adventure or a picnic in the park. Summer is also an exciting time to camp! Visit our summer camp webpage for more camp information.



Young Alumni Lifetime Memberships

Purchasing a lifetime membership is a fantastic way for alums to pay it forward. Your one-time membership fee ensures ALL Girl Scouts can unapologetically be themselves. Plus, you'll be signing up for a lifetime of watching them discover their strengths and rise to meet new challenges.

Alums under 30 or volunteers with 10 or more years of service can purchase a lifetime membership for \$200. Your lifetime membership donation is tax-deductible. When you join as a lifetime member, \$25 of your membership fee will fund a year of Girl Scouting for a member in your local community. Over the past few years, lifetime members have helped provide more than 30,000 memberships to Girl Scouts across the country whose families otherwise would not have been able to afford it. Any individual who accepts the principles and beliefs of the Girl Scout Movement and is at least 18 years old can purchase a lifetime membership.

Join the GSSJC Alumnae Network!

Girl Scouting isn't something you do—it's a piece of who you are. Whether you participated for a year, earned the Gold Award, or are a donor, you're a Girl Scout supporter. Join the Girl Scout network to become a part of a community of advocates—both alums and supporters from across the country—who are passionate about championing Girl Scouts and each other. GSSJC is forming a brand-new alumnae network! Stay connected with your Girl Scout friends and community after graduation and beyond! We will offer volunteer and mentor opportunities, networking and leadership development, virtual programming, and fun social events where you can connect and engage with your fellow GSSJC alums.

To get involved and stay in touch, please fill out this short GSSJC Alumnae Survey. Let us know how to contact you for upcoming events and what you would like to gain from the program. We can't wait to start this new chapter with you! For any questions or suggestions, please reach out to Katie Gordon at kgordon@sjgs.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. How do I renew my membership?** The quickest way to renew your membership is online via your MyGS Account. If you are unable to renew online, you may renew in person via cash/credit card at any GSSJC Shop (please expect a 7 to 10 business day delay for processing).
- 2. What is the cost of the membership renewal?** The annual membership for next year (Oct. 1, 2024-Sept. 30, 2025) is \$25 for both girls and adults. There are three lifetime memberships available to adults.
 - Young Alumnae Lifetime Membership - \$200
 - Ten Years of Service Lifetime Membership - \$200
 - Standard Lifetime Membership - \$400*Your lifetime membership purchase is tax-deductible as allowed by law.*
- 3. How do I request financial assistance for my membership?** On the Payment screen, select Financial Assistance from the drop down of payment options. No additional information is required to request assistance. Financial assistance requests are typically approved in three to five business days. **Note:** Only parents can request financial assistance for their families' membership renewals.
- 4. I would like to renew my membership with a different troop. How do I do this?** We recommend you renew in the current troop, then request a transfer by clicking on Change My Participation in your MyAccount. If the troop is available online, you will be able to search for it and join. If it is not or you need additional assistance, please email customerservice@sjgs.org and we will assist you in changing troops/roles.
- 5. I would like to renew or have renewed but need help finding a different troop for next membership year. Who can help me?** Your Placement Specialist can assist you with finding a troop to transfer to for the next membership year. Schedule a call to speak with one of our expert specialists.
- 6. Is it permitted to use troop funds to renew my troop?** Absolutely! Remember, troop funds belong to girls and what better way for girls to benefit from all their hard work than to reinvest in themselves by using their own money to renew for another fantastic Girl Scout experience!
- 7. My girl is graduating. How do I renew her membership as an adult?** All girls in 12th grade will show a membership status of Renew as Adult. To renew these girls as adults, simply check the box next to their name and participation to add them to the cart. If you would like to purchase a Young Alumni Lifetime Membership, be sure to choose that option for each member. If their participation needs to change, please contact customerservice@sjgs.org.
- 8. My troop is disbanding/graduating. Who do I contact to close out my troop?** If your troop has reached the end of its Girl Scout journey, there are important steps the Troop Leadership Team will need to take to properly close out the troop. Disbanding troops should follow the steps below to notify the council immediately. Graduating troops have until the end of the current membership year (Sept.30, 2024) to complete the following items:
 - Complete the Disbanded Troop Form.
 - Spend or donate any remaining troop funds.
 - See Volunteer Essentials, Pages 30-31 for appropriate use of remaining troop funds.
 - Often troops gift Young Alumnae Lifetime Memberships to their graduates.
 - Submit the signed and completed Disbanded Troop Form, your final bank statement, and final Troop Financial Report (F-31) to your Volunteer Experience Manager.
- 9. How do I purchase a lifetime membership?** Current members can upgrade their membership to a lifetime membership at any time by logging in to MyGS, clicking MyAccount > My Household or My Troop > then Purchase a Lifetime Membership on any adult profile in your household or troop. We recommend lifetime memberships be purchased in a separate transaction from annual memberships for clean personal financial records. Be sure to save your receipt as these purchases are tax deductible.
- 10. What happens if I don't renew during Early Bird season?** If you missed renewing during Early Bird, you may still renew your membership at any time by logging in to your MyGS account.

More Information/Contact Us

Having trouble renewing your membership? There are several ways you can contact us for help!

- Schedule a call with one of our Placement Specialists.
- Contact your Volunteer Experience Manager.
- Call Customer Service at 713-292-0300.
- Send us an email at customerservice@sjgs.org.
- Visit our website and complete the Contact Us form.



For all Early Bird information go to www.gssjc.org/earlybird.