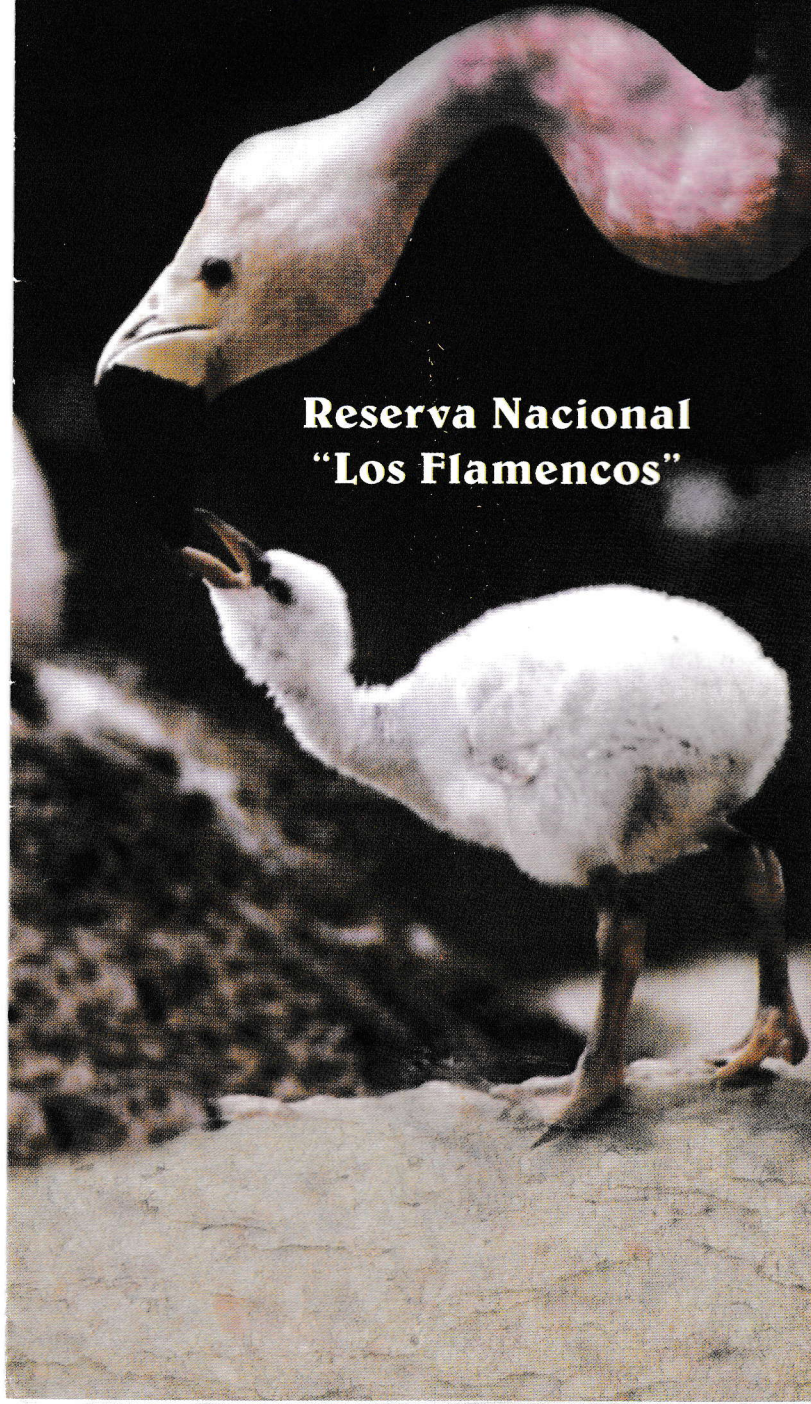


Laguna de Chaxa
(Chaxa Lake)
Sector Soncor

Reserva Nacional
"Los Flamencos"



SONCOR SECTOR

Soncor, is a lake and damp terrain system, located to the eastern sector of Atacama Salt Lake, at a distance of approximately 62 km from San Pedro de Atacama and 24 km from Toconao town. It has a surface of 5016,7 hect . It is protected by the National Reserve Los Flamencos.

The Atacama Salt Lake is located at an elevation of 2.300 meters over sea level and has a surface of aprox. 320.000 hect. In its surface salt crusts are visible, these are caused by the constant accumulation of crystals produced by the underground water evaporation of heavy saline load. This process of evaporation creates different morphologies: chloride crusts form a great toughness with flowers of up to 70 cm high, transition crust of chloride produce polygonal structures and sulphate crusts give birth to plane and dry surfaces.

Water appears from the Andes in the Salt Lake surfaces, this originates hydric systems made up by a group of lacustrine bodies of low depth, joined by natural channels. In Soncor, two lacustrine systems that could meet in winter are distinguished: Puilar which is closer to the mountain chains, formed by lakes of big size and a system that give name to Soncor, which joins the Lakes Burro Muerto, Chaxas and Barros Negros.

These systems have a scarce depth and the muddy state makes the life of many microscopic shapes of unicelular algae and microinvertebrate possible. This constitutes the food of the flamingoes and other fauna of the sector.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The dryness of the sector allow only the presence of a very scarce and localized vegetation in the east side of the salt lake. Subsurface water, allows the presence of salt gama, cachiuyos and other minors herbaceous species to appear there. However the same adverse conditions of these enviroment, have carried out a mechanism of an efficient natural selection, spreading a very valuable fauna bird, whether it is in aspects of diversity or of abundance. In this way it is possible to see the Caiti, the Gaviota Andina, the Chorlo Puna, the Aguilucho and the Playero from Baird. Another kind of fauna in this sector is the Zorro Culpeo, Ratón Tuco - Tuco, Ratón Oliváceo and two other kinds of endemic reptiles of the Atacama Salt Lake. Three types of flamingoes are found in Soncor, Whose beauty and funny movements contrast with the wildness of the sector, giving to the visitor a unique and highly exclusive world class show.

ANDEAN FLAMINGO

Its population in the Puna doesn't exceed 40.000 specimens. The main place of reproduction is the Barros Negros Lake, in Soncor, ever though they have tried to reproduce themselves in the Pujsa Salt Lake. In the last year, the greatest abundances in the Atacama Salt Lake were recorded in summer, reaching the amount of 1788 specimens.

CHILEAN FLAMINGO

In the Puna the population surpasses 100.000 specimens. They build their nests in small colonies in the Atacama Salt Lake and Pujsa Salt Lake. The main reproductive place is the Poopo Salt Lake in Bolivia. In the Atacama Salt Lake the greatest abundance was recorded in winter reaching 1.060 speciemens.

James Flamingo

In the Puna its population is around 60.000 specimens. They mainly build their nests in the Bolivia Colorada Lake, although colonies of minor size have been recorded in the Pujsa Salt Lake .

These specimens are present in the Atacama Salt Lake during the winter when the lake, over the 4000 m.o.s.i. Is frozen. The greatest abundance in the Atacama Salt Lake was recorded in winter, reaching 1705 specimens.

OUR TOCONAO COMUNITY " Hidden Valley "

Toconao, is located 138 km from Calama, at an elevation of 2485 m.o.s.l.

Its first inhabitants are from the year 11000 B.C. Its current population is of 700 villagers whose practice ancient tradition and customs, as well as, own activities which they carry out with the conviction of feeling joined to the enviroment that surrounds them: animals, vegetation, water, earth, sun and mountain.

Toconao is characterized for being a town built entirely by Liparita stone of volcanic origin which has been taken out from the quarry. Its turist attractionis a Bell Tower built in 1750. It is formed by thee bodies of stone and mud wich gives the town square, a great aesthetic and architectural value.

The fruitgrowing and handicrafts, are work from the villagers, wich are currently supplemented with mining activity.

Our Community thank your for you attention and invite you to enjoy and visit our land and its atractive touristic places.

Jere Valley
Bell and Church
Vilaco and Campana sector
Chaxas and Soncor Lake

In our town, besides from the handicrafts, you can also find fruits from the zone, lodging, ancestral native food and the traditional home made wine.



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