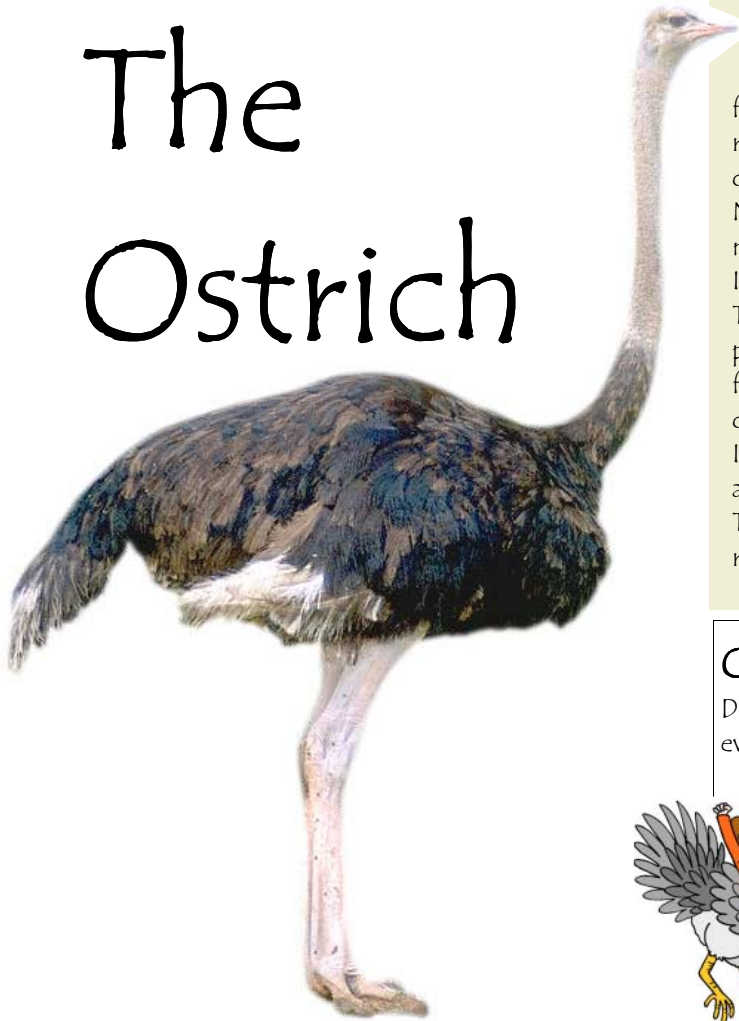


The Ostrich



The ostrich is the largest bird in the world. It cannot fly, as it is too heavy. Its wings are used for courtship display and also to help balance when running. An ostrich can run very fast, reaching speeds of up to 70 km per hour.

Native to Africa, the ostrich in the wild can be found mostly in eastern and southern parts of the continent. It is however, farmed in other parts of the world.

The ostrich has a long bare neck, a small head, long powerful legs and a huge body covered in feathers. It has excellent eyesight and is the only bird to have two toes.

In captivity, the ostrich has a lifespan of about 40 years.

The ostrich's nearest relations include the emu, rhea and kiwi.



Ostrich Racing!

Did you know there are even ostrich races, with human riders?



Riding an ostrich is a dangerous sport and considerable skill is needed to stay on!

Does an ostrich burying its heads in the sand?

It is often said that an ostrich buries its heads in the sand when it is frightened. This is actually not true. When frightened it either runs away or lies on the ground with its head and neck flat out in front. Its sandy coloured head often seems to blend in with the sand, giving the impression that its head is buried.



Farming Ostrich



Ostrich is farmed for a number of reasons. Ostrich meat is considered a 'red meat' and looks and tastes similar to beef, but contains less fat. It can occasionally be found in supermarkets or in fancy restaurants!

Ostrich skin can be turned into leather to make bags and belts.

Its feathers can be used to make feather dusters and the large tail feathers and those on the end of the wings, make attractive feathers for ladies' hats and as trim for clothing.

Fact File

Plumage Colour: Black and white plumages in males; grey or brown in females.

Height: 2.1 – 2.8 m

Diet: Mostly plants, but sometimes insects and lizards. (Occasionally they eat stones to help with digestion!)

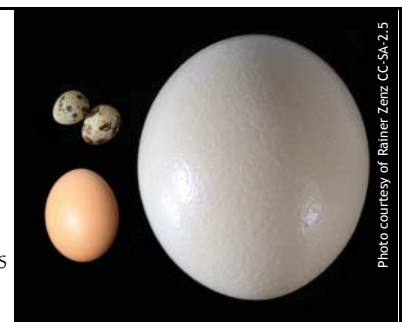
Habitat: Dry savannahs of Africa.

No. of eggs: 40–100 per year.

Egg-stra-ordinary!!!

The ostrich lays huge eggs. One ostrich egg weighs the same as 24 chicken eggs. Imagine how many omelettes you could make with that! Several female ostriches lay their eggs in a single nest or hallow in the sand. Sometime a hallow will contain as many as 30 eggs, with the females taking turns to look after them during the day and the males taking their turn at night.

Usually the males will look after the chicks once they have hatched.



The ostrich egg (right) with a normal hen egg (bottom left) and quail eggs (top left).

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