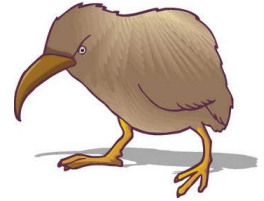


Name: _____

Feathered, But Not Ready for Takeoff

by Guy Belleranti



A kiwi is flightless a bird from New Zealand. It is about the size of a chicken and has hair-like feathers covering its body.

When you hear the word bird I bet one of the first things you think of is flying. But did you know there are almost 40 different birds that can't fly?

Most scientists believe flightless birds had ancestors that did fly. However, over time they developed alternatives to flying. Penguins, with wings more like flippers, are fast swimmers. And long-legged ostriches, are fast runners.



Some birds live on islands or of New Zealand, for example. Six of them are home to the heaviest penguin in the world, the endangered kakapo.



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Penguins are part of the same family as ourselves.

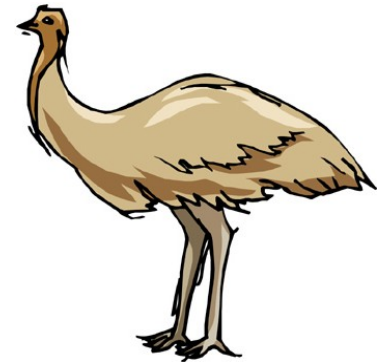
Near New Zealand is Australia, a country that has two other famous flightless birds. These are the large and fast running emus and cassowaries.

What is the largest living flightless bird? If you said ostrich, you're right. In fact, the ostrich is the largest living bird, flightless or not. Some even weigh over 300 pounds. But ostriches live in Africa, where lions, leopards, cheetahs and hyenas live, so how do they survive? Well, ostriches can run over 40 miles an hour, faster than any other bird and most other animals, as well. They also have long, sharp claws on feet that kick with tremendous strength.



If you were to enter a foot race against an ostrich, you wouldn't win. An ostrich can sprint over 43 miles per hour!

Ostriches are ratites. Ratites are birds with a reduced keel or no keel at all on their breastbone. The keel part of the breastbone is what anchors the muscles needed for wing movement. No keel means no flying. Other large ratites include emus, cassowaries and the rheas of South America. All of them have sharp claws and run at fast speeds. And like many other flightless birds they have solid bones, instead of the lightweight hollow bones of flying birds.



They don't grow quite as large as an ostrich, but the emu is the second largest bird species in the world.

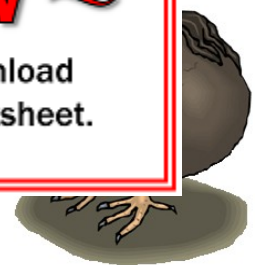
Perhaps one of the more unusual-looking flightless birds was the Dodo bird. The dodo lived on the island of Mauritius, off the coast of Africa. It was discovered in the year 1602. Early settlers found that the Dodo was not afraid of humans, which made it easy to hunt. It wasn't long before all the dodos on the island had been killed. The largest flightless bird was gone.

The largest flightless elephant bird and weighed as much as three large ostriches. This bird has been extinct since the year 1700.

Even though they cannot fly, all flightless birds do have feathers. In fact, some have feathers all over their body. While other birds soar through the air, flightless birds thrive by walking, running, and even swimming.



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The extinct dodo bird could not fly. It searched for seeds and fruits on the forest floor.

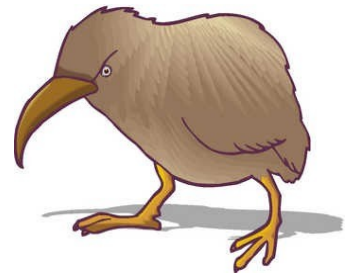
About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona.

Name: _____

Feathered, But Not Ready for Takeoff

by Guy Belleranti



1. Where do emus and cassowaries live?

- a. New Zealand
- b. Africa
- b. Austria
- d. Australia

2. How are an emu's bones different from a seagull's bones?

3. Acc



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4. About how much would a full-grown elephant bird weigh?

- a. 100 pounds
- b. 300 pounds
- b. 900 pounds
- d. 1,200 pounds

5. How do penguins use their wings?

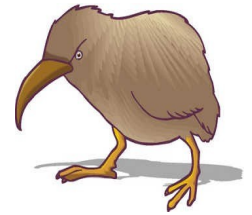
6. About how long ago did the dodo bird become extinct?

- a. 90 years ago
- b. 130 years ago
- b. 230 years ago
- d. 330 years ago

Name: _____

Feathered, But Not Ready for Takeoff

Vocabulary Activity



Fill in the missing letters to create a word from the article.
Then, write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. ___ ___ n ___ u ___ ___

clue: Antarctic bird

1. _____

2. ___ ___ d ___ ___ ___ ___ e d

clue: in danger of becoming extinct

2. _____

3. ___ ___

clue:

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4. ___ l

clue: not able to fly

5. ___ ___ s ___ ___ ___ ___ e d

clue: found for the first time

5. _____

6. ___ i ___

clue: help

6. _____

7. ___ o ___ ___ o ___

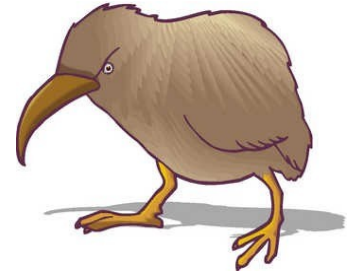
clue: unfilled, not solid inside

7. _____

ANSWER KEY

Feathered, But Not Ready for Takeoff

by Guy Belleranti



1. Where do emus and cassowaries live? **d**

- a. New Zealand
- b. Africa
- b. Austria
- d. **Australia**

2. How are an emu's bones different from a seagull's bones?

A seagull's bones are hollow, but an emu's are not.

3. According to the article, what are two ways an ostrich can protect itself?

It can run fast and kick with tremendous strength.

4. About



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5. How do penguins use their wings?

They use their wings as flippers to steer themselves underwater.

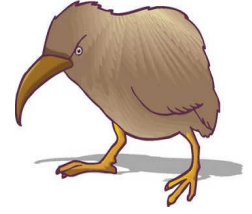
6. About how long ago did the dodo bird become extinct?

- a. 90 years ago
- b. 230 years ago
- b. 130 years ago
- d. **330 years ago**

ANSWER KEY

Feathered, But Not Ready for Takeoff

Vocabulary Activity



Fill in the missing letters to create a word from the article.
Then, write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. penguins

clue: Antarctic bird

1. penguins

2. endangered

clue: in danger of becoming extinct

2. endangered

3. flip

clue:

4. flig

clue: not able to fly



5. discovered

clue: found for the first time

5. discovered

6. aid

clue: help

6. aid

7. hollow

clue: unfilled, not solid inside

7. hollow