

Name: _____

Feathered, But Not Ready for Takeoff

By Guy Belleranti

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



They can't fly, but penguins are perhaps the best swimmers of the bird family. They use their wings as flippers to steer



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kinds of penguins. New Zealand also is home to the small kiwi, two kinds of non-flying ducks and the heaviest parrot in the world, the endangered kakapo.

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



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

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.

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,



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



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had been killed by hunters. Unfortunately, by the year 1680 this bird was gone from the world forever.

The largest and heaviest bird of all time is also extinct. The flightless elephant bird of Madagascar. It stood nearly 10 feet tall 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.

is the Cassowary. They live in the deep rainforest and although they are shy, they use their sharp clawed feet and powerful legs as weapons.



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

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1. Where do emus and cassowaries live?
 - a. New Zealand
 - b. Austria
 - c. Africa
 - d. Australia

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



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4. About how much would a full-grown elephant bird weigh?
 - a. 100 pounds
 - b. 300 pounds
 - c. 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. 140 years ago
 - c. 240 years ago
 - d. 340 years ago

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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. _____



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4. ___ l ___ g ___ l ___

clue: not able to fly

4. _____

5. ___ s ___ e d

clue: found for the first time

5. _____

6. ___ c h ___ r s

clue: holds down; secures

6. _____

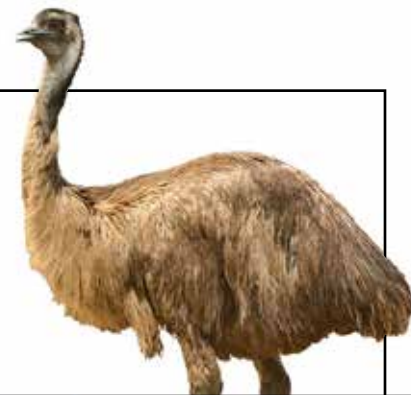
7. ___ o ___ o ___

clue: unfilled, not solid inside

7. _____

ANSWER KEY

Feathered, But Not Ready for Takeoff



Preview

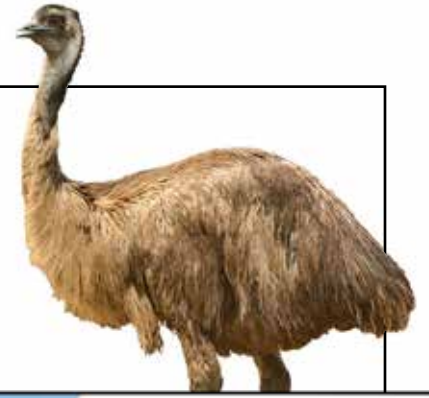
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clue: holds down; secures

7. h o l l o w

clue: unfilled, not solid inside

7. hollow