

Name: _____

The Big Ostrich

by Guy Belleranti



The ostrich of Africa is a big animal. Growing as tall as nine feet and sometimes weighing as much as 300 pounds, it is the world's largest living bird.

An ostrich starts out big right from the beginning of its life. It hatches from an egg that weighs up to three pounds and measures about six inches long and five inches wide. The egg is too big for a lion to



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When the egg hatches, the ostrich chick is as big as a full-sized chicken. Six months later the ostrich is already six feet tall. That's quite a growth spurt!

Speaking of big, have you ever noticed an ostrich's eyes? Each eye is two inches across. That's the size of a tennis ball and five times larger than a human's eye.

The ostrich is a rati. A rati is a bird with a reduced keel, or no keel at all, on its breastbone. The keel is what anchors the muscles needed for wing movement. Without a keel, a bird cannot fly. Other *rati*es include the emu, cassowary, kiwi and rhea.

It's the largest eye of any land animal, including the elephant. In fact, an ostrich's eye weighs twice as much as its brain!

Having huge eyes and an impressive height help the ostrich see long distances. If it spots a predator like a cheetah, lion, or leopard, the ostrich



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An ostrich can also stand its ground and defend itself. Its long powerful legs can kick hard. And the sharp toenail on the larger of its two toes can rip an animal open. One thing's for sure, it's not easy to mess with an ostrich!



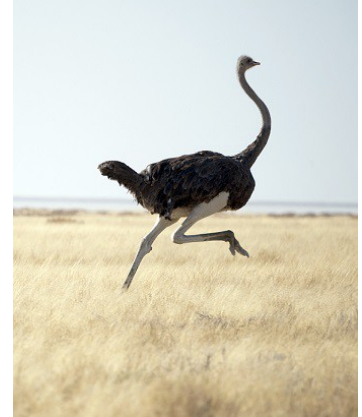
About the Author

Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

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1. According to the article, what makes an ostrich egg so difficult for a predator to destroy? Use a complete sentence.

2. How long does it take for an ostrich chick to reach six feet in height?



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- 3.
- a. An ostrich's eyes are very large, but they can only see short distances.
 - b. An ostrich's eyes are the largest eyes of any animal living today.
 - c. An ostrich's eyes weigh twice as much as a human's eyes.
 - d. An ostrich's eyes are five times as large as a human's eyes.

4. Reread the following sentence from the article.

Some natives even use ostrich eggs as canteens for holding water.

Which is the best definition for the underlined word?

- a. packages
- b. containers
- c. ponds
- d. wells

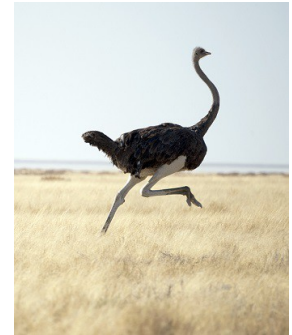
5. What is one thing a *ratite* cannot do that most birds can? _____

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.



_____ 1. impressive

a. unable to fly



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_____ 4. predator

d. deserving admiration

_____ 5. tough

e. made less or smaller in size

_____ 6. noticed

f. the amount of space between two points

_____ 7. reduced

g. an animal that hunts other animals for food

_____ 8. anchors

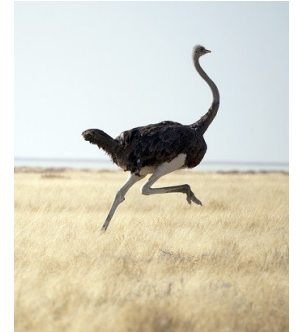
h. observed

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In the article, "The Big Ostrich," you learned about the many advantages ostriches have when they need to protect themselves from predators.



On the lines below, describe three ways the ostrich protects itself from predators. Be sure to use complete sentences.



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ANSWER KEY

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1. According to the article, what makes an ostrich egg so difficult for a predator to destroy? Use a complete sentence.



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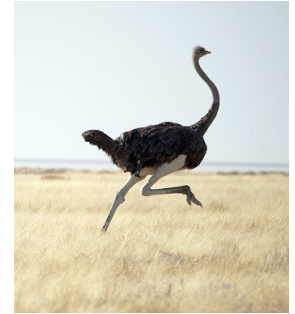
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- a. packages
b. containers
c. bowls
d. wells
5. What is one thing a *ratite* cannot do that most birds can? **fly**

ANSWER KEY

The Big Ostrich

by Guy Belleranti



Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.



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animals for food

c. 8. anchors

h. observed