

# Animal Facts:

## Ostriches and Emus

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Ratites are big, but flightless birds like the ostrich, emu, cassowary, rhea and kiwi. They are descended from an ancient group of birds, and have lost the ability to fly.



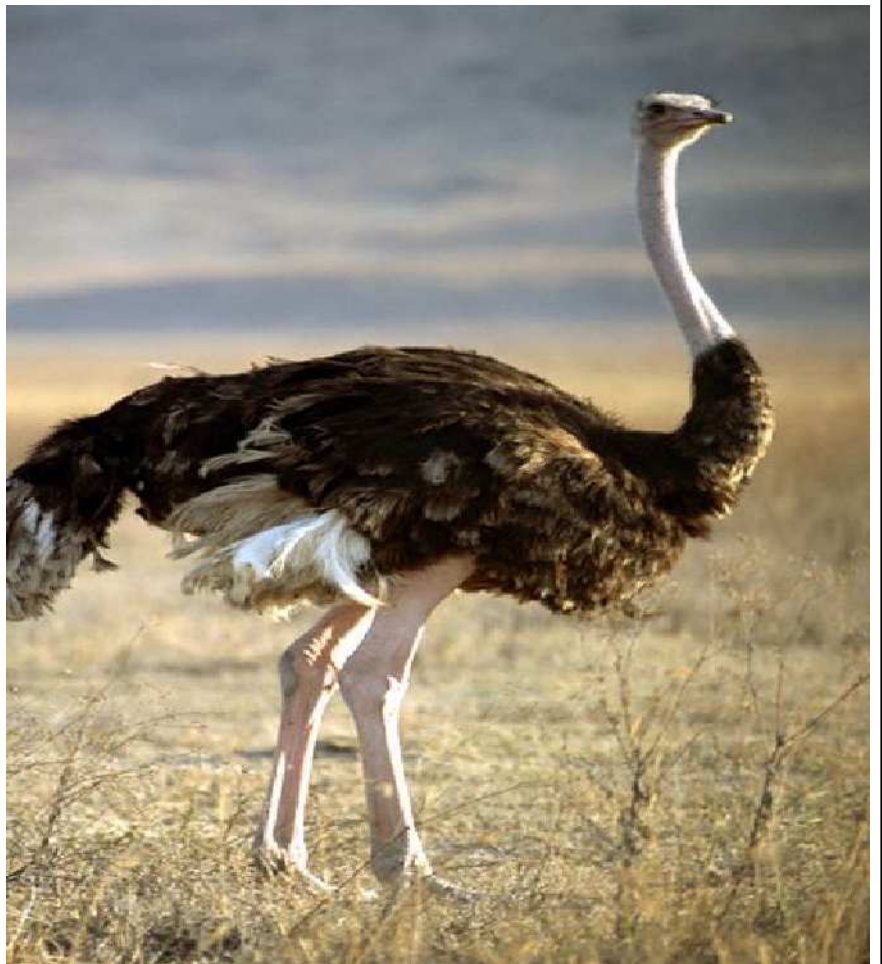
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Ratites  
always walk  
or run, only  
using their  
small wings  
for balance  
and for show



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The ostrich is  
the biggest  
living bird,  
towering up  
to 2.75 m in  
height and  
weighing over  
150 kg.



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To escape a lion, the ostrich can hurtle over the African grasslands, where it lives, at speeds of 60 km/h - faster than a racehorse. Even when the ostrich tires, its strong legs can still deliver a massive kick.



The rhea of South America have three toes on each foot while, ostriches have only two toes on each foot, and lays the largest egg - almost as big as a football.



The kiwi of New Zealand is the smallest ratite, no bigger than a chicken. It has fur like feathers and is the only bird with nostrils at the tip of its bill, which it uses to sniff out worms and grubs.



The rare kakapo parrot of New Zealand could fly once, but lost its power of flight because it had no natural predators - until Europeans introduced dogs and cats to New Zealand.





The dodo was a flightless bird that once lived on islands, such as Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. It was wiped out in the 17th century when its eggs were eaten by pigs and monkeys imported by Europeans.



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The emu of Australia is the best swimmer of any flightless bird. Ostriches can swim well too.



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The biggest bird ever is now extinct - the flightless elephant bird of Madagascar was truly elephantine, growing up to 4.5 m tall (taller than two grown men).

