

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.



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spurr!

Ratites: Flightless Birds

The ostrich is a *ratite*. A *ratite* 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 ratites include the emu, cassowary, kiwi, and rhea.

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. 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 can run fast on its long legs. How fast? Over 40 miles an hour for a short distance and 30 miles an hour for up to ten miles. A predator must sneak up really close to catch this flightless bird. Otherwise, the ostrich, which is the fastest two-legged runner in the world, will get away.

An ostrich can also stand its ground and defend itself. Its long, powerful legs can kick hard. And the ostrich can dig on the ground with its two toes



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

fly

The Big Ostrich



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8. c anchors

h. observed