

Name _____
Date _____

Ostriches

Ostriches are the largest and heaviest birds on earth. They can grow to be as tall as 9 feet (2.75 meters) and can weigh as much as 250 pounds (113 kilograms). Even though they have wings, they cannot fly. Instead, ostriches have long, powerful legs that help them to run very fast when they feel threatened. Ostriches use their wings to propel themselves forward and to help them change direction.

Ostriches are native to Africa, where they still live in desert areas and dry, open grasslands called savannahs.

Ostriches can also be found in zoos all over the world. Humans have domesticated ostriches, so now ostriches live on farms in over a dozen countries, including the

United States , China , India , Japan , Brazil and Costa Rica. They are raised for their meat, skin, and feathers.

Ostriches like to live in small groups called herds. The male ostrich is called a rooster; the female, a hen. Baby ostriches are called chicks. The female ostrich lays the eggs, but both the male and the female take turns sitting on the eggs to keep them warm. An ostrich egg hatches about 42 days after it is laid. An ostrich egg is the largest of all eggs, weighing 3.5 to 5 pounds (about 1600-2300 grams). It would take an hour and a half to hard boil an ostrich egg!

People used to think that ostriches buried their heads in the sand when in danger, but this is not true. When ostriches sense danger, they try to hide by holding their heads close to the ground. The color of their feathers blends in with the color of the sand, which makes it difficult for predators to see them. Even so, we still use the expression "to bury your head in the sand" to describe someone who refuses to recognize or deal with a problem.

