

FUN FACTS ABOUT LAND ANIMALS WITH THE LARGE EYES: THE OSTRICH

Directions: Read the article below and use close reading strategies as often as possible: highlight, underline, and take notes.

While we often associate big eyes with creatures of the deep sea or the night sky, the land animal with the largest eyes might surprise you: it's the ostrich! Ostriches are fascinating creatures in more ways than just their large eyes. They are the largest living species of bird, standing tall with a height of about 9 feet and weighing around 300 pounds. Their long legs are incredibly powerful, enabling them to run at speeds of up to 43 mph. In fact, ostriches are the fastest land birds. And, most interestingly, this fascinating bird boasts the biggest peepers, by far.

The honor of having the largest eyes among land animals goes to the ostrich. These magnificent flightless birds are known for their incredible speed, distinctive appearance, and, of course, their BIG eyes. An ostrich's eye is about the size of a billiard (pool table) ball and slightly smaller than a lacrosse ball, measuring around 5 centimeters (2 inches) in diameter. An ostrich's eyes are actually bigger in size than its brain.

An ostrich's eyes are an important part of its survival within its habitat. Ostriches are native to the vast grasslands and savannas of Africa. They inhabit countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, and Kenya. Ostriches live where there are very few places to hide. There's so much wide open space that an ostrich can be seen quickly and easily by predators lurking in tall grass or other places. With their eyesight, ostriches can scan their surroundings for any signs of danger, giving them a much better chance of survival. Their eyes can easily spot potential predators, such as lions or hyenas, from a great distance.

Interestingly, ostriches have the largest eyes among all birds, and not *just* land animals. This means their eyes are even bigger than those of eagles or owls. Their eyes are well-adapted to their environment and lifestyle, making them an excellent example of how animals evolve to meet the challenges of their habitats.

The ostrich, with its impressive size and distinctive appearance, takes the crown for having the largest eyes among land animals. Their eyes provide them with excellent vision, allowing them to spot potential threats from afar in their open grassland and desert habitats. Next time you imagine the animal with the biggest eyes, think of the mighty ostrich and its remarkable adaptation! Today, conservation efforts are in place to protect these magnificent birds and ensure their survival.

"THE LAND ANIMAL WITH THE LARGEST EYES: THE OSTRICH" MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Where do ostriches typically live?
 - a) the United States
 - b) Africa
 - c) Australia
 - d) Europe

2. What is the approximate size of an ostrich's eye?
 - a) 0.5 inches
 - b) 1.5 inches
 - c) 2 inches
 - d) 6 inches

3. Why do ostriches need large eyes?
 - a) to spot potential predators
 - b) to see their own reflection
 - c) to scare away predators
 - d) to look more attractive to mates

4. What type of habitat do ostriches typically live in?
 - a) dense rainforests
 - b) arctic tundras
 - c) deep ocean waters
 - d) open grasslands and deserts

**"THE LAND ANIMAL WITH THE LARGEST EYES: THE OSTRICH"
MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWER KEY**

Answer Key

1. B
2. C
3. A
4. D

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing Prompt: Take the perspective of a safari leader who loves to observe ostriches in the vast grasslands of Africa. Write a short story describing your adventures and what it is that the ostriches do that make them so interesting to observe. You can make your story funny, thrilling, and/ or very dramatic.

Creative Task: Design your own bird species with unique adaptations and features to survive in a specific environment. Draw your bird and explain the special features it has, such as its eyesight, beak, or wings, that help it survive in its chosen habitat.

Mock View: Using tools or implements in your classroom, determine what it would be like to see from very high up and very far away. Remember, ostriches can grow anywhere from six to nine feet in height! In other words, safely attempt to see the way an ostrich does. Be mindful of how the experience makes you feel. Do you think ostriches feel more safe? Less safe? In what ways are they well- and poorly-adapted against lurking predators, like lions?

CONNECTION TO THE UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The United Nations (UN) is an international organization composed of countries working together to address global issues. One important focus of the UN is sustainability, which means taking actions to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To promote sustainability, the UN developed "The 17 Goals," also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals will help us create a better world by the year 2030. These goals are essential for all people because they address the challenges our planet and people face.

Ostriches can be connected to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15: Life on Land.

Task: As educated people, we have the power to spread awareness about the importance of protecting ostriches, as well as other animals, in their natural habitats. Create a presentation or poster to educate your classmates about ostriches. Include information about the challenges they face and why it's critical to conserve their populations. Ostriches are not an endangered species, but they still play an important role in the wild.

Use ample images, statistics, and infographics to engage your classmates. Your goal is to inspire others and be proactive about protecting their environment. You should also be mindful to share the impact of what could happen if the ostrich population deteriorates. In other words, which other animals might suffer? How might the habitat change?

SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOR OSTRICH FEATHER FASHION

According to the African Wildlife Foundation, ostrich feathers are some of the most sought after feathers in the fashion industry (<https://www.awf.org/wildlife-conservation/ostrich>). Design a campaign in which you help people understand the impact of using ostrich feathers in fashion. Propose alternative material options to engage your audience in sustainable fashion practices.

Your social media campaign should include:

1. Colorful and purposeful visuals or videos related to ostriches and their habitat.
2. Image captions that are concise and informative.
3. Relevant hashtags to attract more people to your campaign.
4. “Call to Action” language so viewers will share the message and take action to support ostrich conservation. Examples: “Join us now...” “Help us by...”