

OSTRICH



Struthio camelus

STATUS

- Still common in many areas, but numbers are falling due to habitat destruction

HABITAT

- The Sahara, Somalia, Ethiopia and parts of east and southern Africa.
- Inhabits sparsely wooded areas, savanna grassland or areas of semi-desert where there must be sufficient grass or vegetation for survival.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- A typical group consists of a male and one to four females.
- Females lay 12—14 eggs. The chicks hatch in about 42 days.
- The female and male share sitting on the eggs, the male most often at night, camouflaged by his darker colouring.

DESCRIPTION

- The Ostrich is the largest flightless bird – standing up to 2.2m tall and weighing 150 kg.
- It is the only bird with 2 toes on each foot, one long with a sharp nail and the other short with no nail.
- The male is black with white wing tips. During the breeding season the male's legs and beak are a bright pink colour.
- The females are a tawny colour.
- Ostriches have very keen vision.

POINTS OF INTEREST

- The Ostrich lays the largest egg of any bird species, but one of the smallest in relation to its body size.
- It has strong leg muscles — walks at 4 km/hr, runs at 30 km/hr and, when alarmed, it can sprint at 60 km/h which is faster than any other bird.
- 7 million-year-old Ostrich-like fossils have been found in rocks in southern Russia, India and China.