



# Ostrich (Animal)

*Edgar Williams*

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## **Ostrich (Animal)** Edgar Williams

In many senses the ostrich looms large – the tallest and heaviest of any living bird, a fully grown North African ostrich can reach 2.75 metres (9 feet) in height and weigh almost 160 kgs (350 pounds). It also lays the largest egg of any living bird. From its eggs to its meat, skin and feathers, the ostrich has been exploited by humans since history began.

The demand for its feathers was so great in Victorian times that vast fortunes were made from ostrich farming, particularly in South Africa and the United States. Following the First World War fashions changed, fortunes were lost and new uses for the now domesticated ostrich had to be found. Nowadays, the modern ostrich farmer not only produces plumes and leather for the luxury market but also meat for the supermarket.

In addition to its sheer physical presence, the ostrich has long been an object of curiosity and fascination, becoming a byword for passivity while being feared for its aggression. It has featured in art, literature, film and popular culture, been represented in cave paintings, ancient medieval manuscripts and the Bayeux Tapestry, shown in advertising and drawn as a cartoon character in many modern films.

Edgar Williams has provided a singular, comprehensive insight into this extraordinary, outlandish bird, chronicling its behaviour, history and habitat as well as its effect on our culture. Featuring many striking illustrations drawn from nature and culture, Ostrich will appeal to all those interested in birds and the natural world, as well as anyone who follows fashion, art or ancient history.

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