A Race with an Ostrich - a Memorable and an Amazing Experience!

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Ostrich was a popular entertainer in the dome of the Roman Empire in the first century AD. When we use horses in races, the ancient Romans used ostriches to pull their chariots while playing games like a gladiator. People enjoyed and applauded the powerful bird as it got the ability to kick back ferociously that any gladiator can lose his life in the game. Roman generals also had a practice of wearing Ostrich feathers on their helmets when they go for battles, while their better halves rode on the big birds in a parade to honor their partner.

During the same period Egyptians domesticated Ostriches and later it became the symbol of Themei, the Egyptian goddess of Truth and Justice. Ostrich is considered as one of the oldest birds in the world, as they existed as a species nearly 40 million years ago. They used to graze on the lands of Asia, Europe and Africa in the earlier periods, but now we can see these birds only in the open dry grasslands of the African continent and rarely in South Australian grasslands. However, Ostrich farms are common in many countries as they grow these birds for its meat and skin.

Ostrich, belonging to the ratite family of birds, cannot fly due to the absence of a keeled sternum and small and loose feathers. But it compensates its inability to fly by running faster than a lion or a hyena. Its long legs are very powerful that it can cover 3 to 5 meters in a single stride. Ostrich even has the potential to kill a human or its enemy as it has a pair of two-toed foot with a long and sharp claw. Male ostrich, also called a rooster, can be very dangerous especially during mating season.

While its long legs help it to run faster, its wings known as 'rudders' assist it in changing directions. Ostrich feathers became a symbol of style in the 18th century itself. During that period, the French queen Marie Antoinette kept a feather in her hat, which later became a popular fashion. The search for the most beautiful feather leads women of that time to the ostrich. From that time onwards hunting of ostriches became a passion for the people. As fashion will keep on changing, ostrich saved from the verge of extinction.

Breeding season of ostriches starts shortly before the onset of the rainy season and the birds attain breeding age at 4. A female ostrich, or a hen, can lay nearly 40 to 100 eggs each year with an average of 60 eggs per year. It will take around 42 days for the egg to hatch and they are the largest eggs on the earth, as each one of which weighs as much as two dozen chicken eggs. One of the interesting facts about ostrich pairs is that when one duo bearing the young one meets another pair, there will be a fight between the parents and the winning pair will become the parent of both pairs of offspring. Research states that the biggest group of ostriches contains 300 offspring.

A healthy ostrich can live up to the age of 70 years, but people kill ostrich for its meat. Ostrich meat is similar to beef and is said to be the healthiest meat with high protein content and low fat and cholesterol content. Many documentaries and short films are airing on television channels from providers like Dish TV, from where we can collect interesting facts about birds like ostrich, kiwi, penguin, emu, vulture, eagle etc.

Man has bred ostrich for commercial purposes, as their meat, eggs and feathers are profitable business stuffs. Because of continuous hunting and unsuitable climatic conditions some of the ostrich species already wiped out from the earth, including the Syrian Ostrich and Struthio camelus syriacus. Let's all unite and save our ostrich population before it get extinct.

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Ann is a writer and she visit places that attract her mostly because of the rare species of flora and fauna it occupies. She also watches programs related to the biological world on her LED television powered by a Dish TV.

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