

Abstract:

The ostrich is the world's largest living bird. It is very adaptable and can thrive under extreme conditions, Ostriches may be found in a variety of open habitats: Semi-arid, open and short-grass plains. They are also able to thrive in very poorly vegetated areas. It has remarkable tolerance to heat, withstanding air temperatures of 56°C without undue stress. Wild ostriches live for about 35 years and domesticated birds for 45 to 50 years. The weight of the mature bird (one-year-old) is on average 100 to 120 kg. Originally, ostriches were known for their feathers, but since 1970 ostrich skins became the major source of income. It is considered one of the most luxurious leathers, and some even place it on a par with crocodile and snake skin. Ostrich leather is thick, durable and extremely soft and can be manufactured into a variety of products, such as shoes, bags, purses and jackets. More recently, ostrich meat became popular because of its health benefits; it has almost no fat, low cholesterol and is rich in protein and iron. The greater focus on a healthy lifestyle is causing a growing demand for ostrich meat worldwide and South Africa is normally the main supplier. Currently the income from ostrich products is leather (50%–70%), meat (30%- 45%) and feathers (5%-15%)