

Emu

Among the world's largest flightless birds

- Feet have three large, distinct forward-facing toes, whereas most other birds have four toes. It is thought that loss of the fourth toe (which reduces leg weight) makes the emu faster and more efficient at running.
- Their calves are packed full of fast-twitch muscle fibres, which are made for sprinting.
- Emus are hunted by dingoes and eagles.
- Emus protect their eggs and young chicks, using their strong legs as a defence.
- Dark feathers can absorb heat from the sun, and the fluffy layering of the feathers keeps the heat away from their skin to keep the emu cool.
- The emu's vibrating throat, called gular fluttering, helps to keep it cool. The rapid movement increases airflow over blood vessels in the neck.
- Emus lower their wings down in hot weather; this is called 'wing venting'. The wind circulates as they walk, helping to cool them down.

The emu can reach speeds of up to 50 kilometres an hour for several kilometres.



“Up there in what is known as the Milky Way is the shape of a giant emu... First Nations peoples call this Emu in the Sky, or the Celestial Emu. The orientation of this Emu in the Sky is said to be linked to the life cycle of the emu that lives on the ground.”

PHIL BRESLIN,
BUILT TO SURVIVE HOST



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