

Dinosaurs

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From dinosaur to bird: how *Anchiornis huxleyi* adds to the story

Ian Sample

🐦 @iansample

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Evidence that today's birds are descended from dinosaurs came to light in the 19th century, when remains of a 150m-year-old creature were recovered from a slab of Bavarian limestone. Archaeopteryx (ancient wing), was hailed as the oldest known bird, but is now recognised as an extraordinary link. It had the feathers, wings and the wishbone of modern birds, plus a full set of teeth, a flat breastbone and a long, bony tail. Only a handful of Archaeopteryx fossils have ever been found, and some scientists argue bird-like dinosaurs appear too late in the fossil record to be true ancestors of modern birds.

Anchiornis huxleyi predates Archaeopteryx by up to 10m years and has feathers on forearms, tail, and - remarkably - feet. The remains suggest a four-winged bird might have existed as dinosaurs made the transition. It was originally thought to be a primitive bird, but a closer look reveals it belongs to a group of dinosaurs called Troodontidae.

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