

## Did dinosaurs fly? Are there feathered dinosaurs?

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**M**ost evolutionists believe that dinosaurs evolved into birds. Therefore, in museums around the world, we often see displays that proclaim “dinosaurs are birds”.

Here, I will provide a brief overview of the various feathered dinosaur claims. What does the scientific evidence suggest, and are there clear examples of dinosaurs with feathers in the fossil record?

One of the main arguments used to promote the idea of dino-to-bird evolution is the claim that there are many examples of feathered dinosaurs in the fossil record. Evolutionists assume that this is evidence that dinosaurs evolved into birds. However, the existence of feathered dinosaurs does not disprove biblical creation. God could have created dinosaurs with feathers. Having said that, however, the scientific evidence does not lead us to believe that dinosaurs had feathery plumage. We are not alone in this. Many of the larger creationist organizations have looked at the evidence and have come to the same conclusion. Yet, many other ‘creationists’ disagree. They believe dinosaurs had real feathers. Knowing that there is some contention on this issue among Bible believers, we need to be careful and think critically. Here we will focus on the fossil evidence of feathers only.

We need to be aware that there are two very distinct categories of fossils that are used to argue for dino-to-bird evolution. These two are often conflated into one big category, as if they are the same thing, leading to a lot of confusion.

First, true pennaceous (i.e., flight) feathers have been found in the fossil record. Almost everyone, creationists and evolutionists alike, agrees that these are fossils of true feathers. They are only found on fossils that are distinctively bird-like in their anatomy. Examples of these include creatures such as *Archaeopteryx*, *Microraptor*, and *Confuciusornis*. These are winged birds that fly, and some were nimble enough to hunt smaller creatures such as lizards, fish, and small mammals. We can tell what they ate from the remains that are preserved in the gut in some fossils. Despite several unusual anatomical features, these birds exhibit most of the diagnostic anatomical traits of birds and are rather different in their overall body plan from dinosaurs.

Another group consists of creatures that are not avian-like but have a clear dinosaur-like anatomy. These fossils are sometimes found with a fuzzy or even hair-like appearance on their surface. These filamentous structures are quite different from true feathers, and they do not look anything like the classic feather shape. Evolutionists call these fuzzy structures ‘protofeathers’, believing that this is evidence of a transition towards feathers.

Evolutionists often lump both categories as one, calling all of it, “dinosaur feathers”. This is unhelpful since it only serves to blur the distinction between dinosaurs and birds. One group is fully avian with actual feathers, while the other group is dinosaurian and seems to have isolated parts with a fuzzy integument.

The data suggests that the fuzzy dinosaur ‘protofeathers’ are just remnants of decayed skin collagen. These structures are very different in form compared to the true feathers that are only found in birds. Collagen is a common structural protein that can take on many different forms as it breaks down.

In 2007, two evolutionists, Alan Feduccia and Theagarten Lingham-Soliar, buried dolphin and shark carcasses for a year before digging them up for examination. They described how the skin collagen broke down over time, forming the exact same fuzzy structures that we find on dinosaur fossils. Similar structures are also found on extinct marine reptiles such as ichthyosaurs and mosasaurs. In fact, the hairlike structures in the decaying carcasses were indistinguishable from the fuzzy structures that are found on dinosaur remains. Marine reptiles, dolphins, and sharks do not fly, much less have feathers!<sup>1</sup> Not only are similar fuzzy structures found in fossils of marine creatures, but these fibrous structures are even observed under the scales<sup>2</sup>—an observation that is only consistent if what was found is just decayed collagen.

Collagen fibers can take on various forms as they decay. They can take on a branching form somewhat similar to a tree without leaves; they can take on the appearance of a thick tuft stemming from a single point; they can appear as long rigid strands or even wavy strands; they can take on the appearance of a wavy mat; and, depending on how the different layers of collagen overlap, they can even take on a superficial feather-like pattern. All of these are well-documented in the scientific literature. In fact, almost all known forms of “dinosaur fuzz” can be matched with known forms of decayed collagen.

### Two Distinct Groups



#### Birds

We find well-defined flight feathers. Found only on creatures that are bird-like in anatomy. These are just birds.



#### Dinosaurs

We find fuzzy or filamentous structures, unlike feathers. These creatures are dinosaurian in their anatomy. Just dinosaurs with decayed collagen fibers on their fossils.

The most reasonable explanation is that the “fuzz” in dinosaur fossils is just decayed skin collagen, which is very different from flight feathers that are clearly defined in bird fossils.

In other words, the fossil record fits best with two distinct groups. In the first group, we have avian-like creatures in the fossil record that have well-defined flight feathers. There is no reason to call these creatures anything other than birds. In the other group, we have creatures that have a clear dinosaurian anatomy. Some of the dinosaurs in this group are not even in the lineage that evolutionists believe evolved into birds. The ‘protofeathers’ that we find in this group are very likely to be just decayed skin collagen.