

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

The Ostrich

THE Ostrich is the largest bird on earth - standing from 2 to 3 metres (7-9 feet) tall, and weighing as much as 156 kilos (345 pounds) Ostriches can't fly, but they can run very fast - up to 70 kilometres (45 miles) an hour! They have long, very strong legs, but, unlike other birds, only two toes. An ostrich's egg is as large as 24 chicken's eggs, with a shell 1cm (3/8 inch) thick.

These giant birds live wild in Africa and Australia, although there are now ostrich farms in many parts of the world, including Europe and America. Ostriches can cope with both cold and heat. Their feathers are good insulators, and they use their wings as a fan when it is very hot. They have very big eyes, which are even larger than their brain!

Many people believe that ostriches bury their heads in the sand. This is not true, although they sometimes rest their long neck and head on the ground, which may explain where this idea came from.



Evolutionists believe that ostriches evolved long ago from flying birds, but have lost the ability to fly. However, the oldest ostrich fossils show that they have always been much as they are today - there no evidence of evolution.



Ostriches are very well designed for the life they live. We believe they did not evolve, but were created by God.

LEARNING FROM THE BIRDS

The Bible tells us that God created birds in the beginning. Many different birds are mentioned in the Bible, and they are often used to teach us something about ourselves and God. At the end of the great flood, Noah sent a dove from the ark, and it came back with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. This told Noah that dry land had appeared above the water, and they would soon be able to leave the Ark. When Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove. Today, the dove is often used as a sign of the Holy Spirit, and also of peace.



Doves are gentle, but eagles are large, strong birds, which soar high in the sky. The Bible tells us that when we feel weak God can make us strong, like the eagle (left): "The people who trust the Lord will become strong again. They will be able to rise up as an eagle in the sky." (Isaiah 40: 31).



Jesus taught that God cares about the birds that He created. Sparrows (below) are very tiny birds, and when Jesus lived on earth five sparrows were being sold for only two pennies, but He said "God does not forget any of them." (Luke 12: 6). Jesus went on to say to the people, "Don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows." (Luke 12: 7).

God cares for all His creation, but we are more special to Him than anything else. He proved this by sending Jesus to die for us, so that our sins could be forgiven and we could live with Him for ever. "This is now God showed his love to us: he sent his only Son into the world to give us life through him." (1 John 4: 9).



PUZZLE CORNER ANSWERS

MISSING LETTERS:
 1. Hoatzin, 2. Struthiomimus, 3. Archaeopteryx, 4. Feathers, 5. Dinosaurs, 6. Ostrich, 7. Eagle, 8. Sparrows.

BIBLE VERSE:
 "God also made every bird that flies. And each bird produces more of its own kind." (Genesis 1: 21)

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The BIRDS that FLY

Did birds really evolve from dinosaurs?

A Flight of Fancy

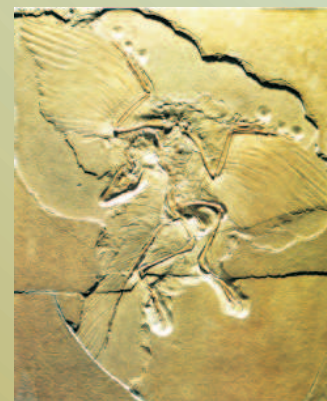
ACCORDING to evolution, the birds we see in our forests, gardens and parks evolved from dinosaurs, or reptiles similar to dinosaurs. There is no real evidence for this, as we shall be explaining in this issue, so where did this strange idea come from? People who believe that all living things came through evolution have to believe that birds evolved from something, and they think dinosaurs are the most likely ancestors of modern birds. However, there are some big differences between reptiles and birds, so lots of things would need to change to turn a dinosaur into a bird. Birds have a special breathing system which is quite different from that of reptiles. Any creature that was evolving from a reptile into a bird wouldn't be able to breath, and would soon die!



Reptiles have scales, while birds have feathers, and there is no evidence that scales did, or even could, become feathers. The fossils show that true birds were living at the same time as dinosaurs, which means that birds couldn't possibly have evolved from them. The idea that birds evolved from dinosaurs is just a flight of fancy.

THE 'MISSING LINK' THAT NEVER WAS

There was great excitement in 1861 when fossils of a creature called *archaeopteryx* were discovered in Germany (below). It had wings and feathers like a bird, yet it also has teeth and claws on its wings, so it was called a "missing link" between dinosaurs and birds.



Archaeopteryx fossil

For many years *archaeopteryx* was said to be proof that birds did evolve from dinosaur-like ancestors.

Yet from the very beginning it was obvious that this creature was a true bird. It had teeth, but so did some other ancient birds that are now extinct. And not all dinosaurs had teeth. Some, such as *struthiomimus*, had no teeth, yet they were still reptiles. Although *archaeopteryx* had claws on its wings, so do some living birds. Ostriches have them, and hoatzins, which live in the South American rain forest, have wings claws when they are young, but lose them when the start to fly. So having teeth and wings claws does not mean that *archaeopteryx* was half dinosaur-half bird. Fossils of modern-type birds that are older than *archaeopteryx* have been found, and most scientists now agree that it was not a "missing link" after all.



A pair of hoatzins

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Birds lived with dinosaurs!
 Nature Notes: cabbages.
 Feathers are wonderful.
 Puzzle Corner
 Weird and Wonderful: The Ostrich.
 Learning from the birds.

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Dinosaurs and birds lived at the same time!



The idea that birds evolved from dinosaurs is even more unbelievable since the fossils of true birds have been found in the same rock layers as dinosaur fossils. In China, lots of birds and dinosaurs were buried together, which means they must have lived at the same time. These fossil discoveries included the fossils of swimming birds which looked like modern ducks. Many scientists were very surprised by this evidence that ducks were paddling around when dinosaurs were alive.

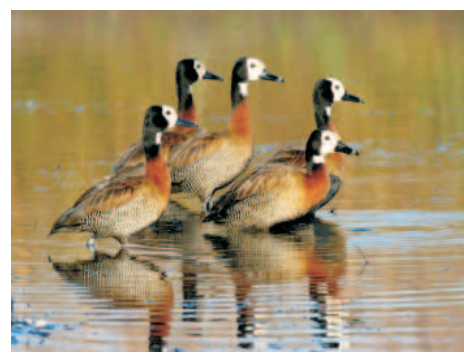
One amazing discovery was a tiny bird embryo that had become a fossil before it hatched from its egg. This tiny bird had real feathers, like modern birds, yet lived at the time of the dinosaurs. Scientists have also found fossil footprints of birds with backward-pointing toes (like the one on the right).



Foot of perching bird



Fossils found in China show that ducks and dinosaurs once lived together. This means that dinosaurs could not have been the ancestors of ducks or any other birds.



This suggests they perched in trees, like flying birds do today, yet these prints are in rocks which are supposed to be even older than the duck-like fossils.

Such discoveries completely destroy the idea that millions of years ago dinosaurs somehow took to the air and evolved into the flying birds we now see.

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Feathers are wonderfully designed!

Birds are different from other animals in several ways, but the greatest difference is that they have feathers. How birds got their feathers is a great problem for people who believe birds evolved from reptiles. Reptiles have scales, and no fossils of any reptiles with partly-evolved feathers have been found. Some scientists say that there are fossils of "feathered dinosaurs", but a closer look at these fossils reveals that the "feathers" are really only stubby, frayed bits of skin fibre.

Evolutionists say that scales may have turned into feathers after becoming frayed, but what good would frayed scales be to reptiles if they had to wait millions of years for them to turn into feathers? If we compare the scales of reptiles with the feathers of a bird, we can see just how different they are. Scales grow in a continuous sheet, and when reptiles moult (lose their skin) the whole sheet falls off, to be replaced by a new set of scales underneath. On birds, each feather grows from a single stalk, and when birds moult, the feathers fall out singly.



When we compare the rough, hard scales of a reptile (below, left), with the delicate, beautiful feathers of a peacock (above, left), the evolution idea seems foolish. Feathers are wonderfully designed to be light yet strong, and link together rather like a "zip" fastener. We believe birds have feathers because God created them that way.

SCALES AND FEATHERS ARE QUITE DIFFERENT!



Compare the scales of a reptile (left) with the feather of a peacock (right). They are quite different! There is no way that one could have evolved into the other.

In 1999 some scientists were fooled by a "feathered dinosaur" fossil from China. They called it *archaeoraptor*, and told the world it was a "missing link" between dinosaurs and birds. Then they discovered the truth — it was a hoax: someone had carefully joined the tail end of a dinosaur fossil to the front end of a bird fossil!

Nature Notes by the Editor



Wild cabbage



Cabbage



Cauliflower

Have you ever been told to "eat up your greens!" It might be cooked cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli or brussels sprouts, but they really are good for you because they contain lots of vitamin C! Did you know that all these different vegetables are members of the brassica (cabbage) family, and that they have all descended from the wild cabbage plant? Over many years, plant breeders have worked with nature to produce these different varieties by carefully choosing the plants they take seeds from. The result is vegetables that look very different from their ancestor, the wild cabbage. When you eat broccoli or cauliflower you are eating the flower heads, brussels sprouts are side shoots, and the strangely-named kohlrabi are swollen stems.

This is not evolution, as many people believe, since they are all still members of the brassica family, and have all come from the original cabbage kind which God created in the beginning. We can thank Him that He made it possible to have such a wide choice, but brassicas will always be brassicas!



—Geoff Chapman



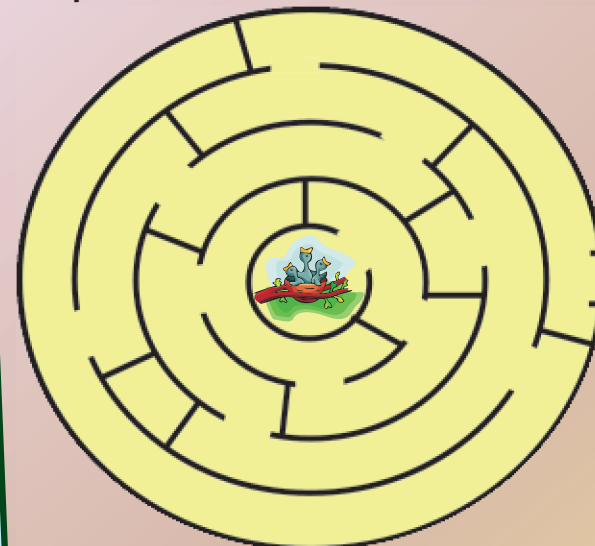
Brussels sprouts



Kohlrabi

PUZZLE CORNER

Help the bird find its way to its nest



FILL IN THE MISSING LETTERS:

1. A bird that lives in the rain forest. -o--z-n.
2. A toothless dinosaur. S-ru-h--m-m-s..
3. Not a "missing link". A-ch-e-pte-y-.
4. Only birds have these. -e-t-r-s.
5. Fossils of birds were found with these. -i--s--r-.
6. A large, non-flying bird. -st-c-.
7. A very strong bird. -a-g-.
8. We are worth more than these. s-a--o-s.

CROSS OUT EVERY OTHER LETTER TO READ THE BIBLE VERSE:

"Gmojd pamlwsbo qmfagdke sedvtehrpyn bwyrodc tlhroat gfmuidexs. Bafnxds erafcph hbpilroda pyrkomdlubcwevs gmlosrupep odfx imtcs eodwzn wkgipnlido."

(answers on next page)