

Birds and Other Dinosaurs

by American Museum of Natural History
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Long ago, many kinds of dinosaurs lived on Earth. Some dinosaurs were as tall as a house. Others were smaller than you! Different dinosaurs had different body parts. The biggest dinosaurs had long necks that could reach leaves that were far away.

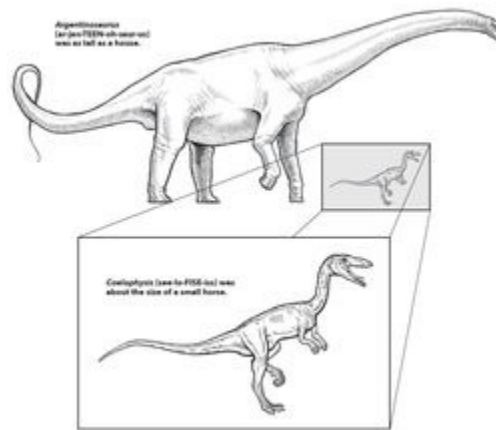
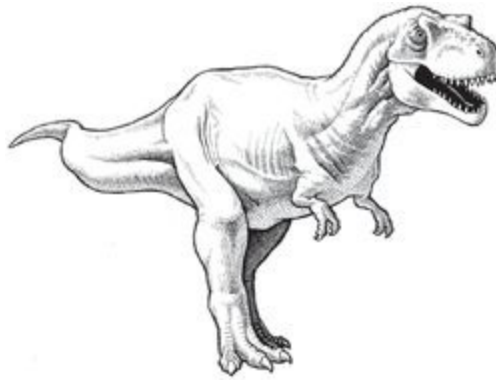


Illustration Credits: Argentinosaurus, © AMNH/Sean Murtha; Coelophysis, © AMNH/Ed Heck

Dinosaurs moved in different ways too. Some walked on four legs. Others walked on two. The dinosaurs that lived long ago are extinct. This means that there are none of them living today.



Tyrannosaurus rex (tie-ran-uh-SAW-rus rex) walked on two legs. It used its powerful jaws to catch animals.

Illustration Credit: © AMNH/Sean



Stegosaurus (steg-uh-SAW-rus) walked on four legs. It had thick skin and a spiky tail.

Illustration Credit: © AMNH/Ed Heck

But one kind of dinosaur survives: birds! We know that birds are a kind of dinosaur because birds and extinct dinosaurs are alike in lots of ways.

Compare the two animals in the pictures below. *Sinornithosaurus* (sigh-NOR-nith-oh-sawr-us) is a dinosaur that lived long ago. The roadrunner is a bird living today. Both animals walk and run on two legs. They are alike in other ways too. They both have claws, and their bodies are covered with feathers.



No one has ever seen a living Sinornithosaurus. This is a photograph of a model that was made by an artist.

Image Credit: © AMNH



Photo Credit: © Sandy & Chuck Harris

Roadrunners are birds living today. A photographer took this picture of a roadrunner in a field.

Let's take a look at more dinosaurs. See if you can spot other ways they are alike and different.

Living Dinosaurs

Here are three birds, or living dinosaurs:



Photo Credit: © Craig O'neal

Cardinals are familiar birds in many parts of the United States. The northern cardinal male is very easy to spot because of its feathers. It has a bright red body, a black face, and a pointed crest of feathers on its head. The males show off their feathers to attract females. They might stick up their crest and sway back and forth while chirping a song. Feathers aren't just for finding mates. They also help keep cardinals warm and dry. Without feathers, cardinals couldn't fly!

The ostrich is a very different kind of bird. This large bird is covered with feathers, but it doesn't fly. It runs!

Ostriches stand and run on two long, powerful legs. When they're chased, ostriches can run over 70 kilometers per hour (43 miles per hour). That's as fast as a car on a city street. And if they can't run away, they use their strong legs to deliver a mighty kick!



Photo Credit: © Davida De La Harpe

Eagles are big, strong birds. They can fly high and far.

They can also dive very fast to catch dinner. This eagle has sharp, curved claws. These claws are good for grabbing and carrying small animals. It also has a big, sharp beak shaped like a hook. The eagle uses its beak to kill and eat the animals it catches.

Extinct Dinosaurs



Photo Credit: © Bob Harris

Compare those birds to these dinosaurs from long ago. Remember, these dinosaurs have never been seen alive. The drawings are based on clues that scientists have found.

Living birds aren't the only dinosaurs with feathers. Some dinosaurs that lived long ago had feathers too! Look at *Anchiornis* (an-kee-ORN-is). Red, black, and white feathers covered its body from its head to its tail. These feathers kept the dinosaur warm. Feathers may have helped it get around, too. *Anchiornis* could not fly. But it may have used its wings to glide through the air.



Image Credit: © Zhao Chuang, Courtesy of Peking Natural Science Organization

Yutyranus (yoo-tee-ran-us) was a big, strong hunter like its cousin *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Like *T. rex*, it could walk on two legs. This meant it could run fast to catch animals. This dinosaur also had huge jaws and sharp teeth for eating meat. But unlike its cousin, this dinosaur was covered with spiky feathers. They may have used these feathers to stay warm and show off for other dinosaurs.



Image Credit: © Zhao Chuang,
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Coelophysis (see-low-FIGH-sis) was a small, fast hunter that ran on two legs. It had sharp claws for catching and holding small animals. And it had lots of sharp, jagged teeth for biting and eating them. One *Coelophysis* fossil was found with small lizard-like animals in its belly. This was probably what the dinosaur ate right before it died. Small lizard-like animals may have been a typical meal for all *Coelophysis*.



Image Credit: © Zhao Chuang,
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Dinosaurs Past and Present

We used to think that dinosaurs were extinct. Now we know birds are dinosaurs too. Like some of their extinct dinosaur relatives, birds walk on two legs. They also have feathers and claws. Scientists are still learning about dinosaurs of the past and the dinosaurs flying above us today!

Dinosaurs live among us today. Look at all the different kinds of birds!

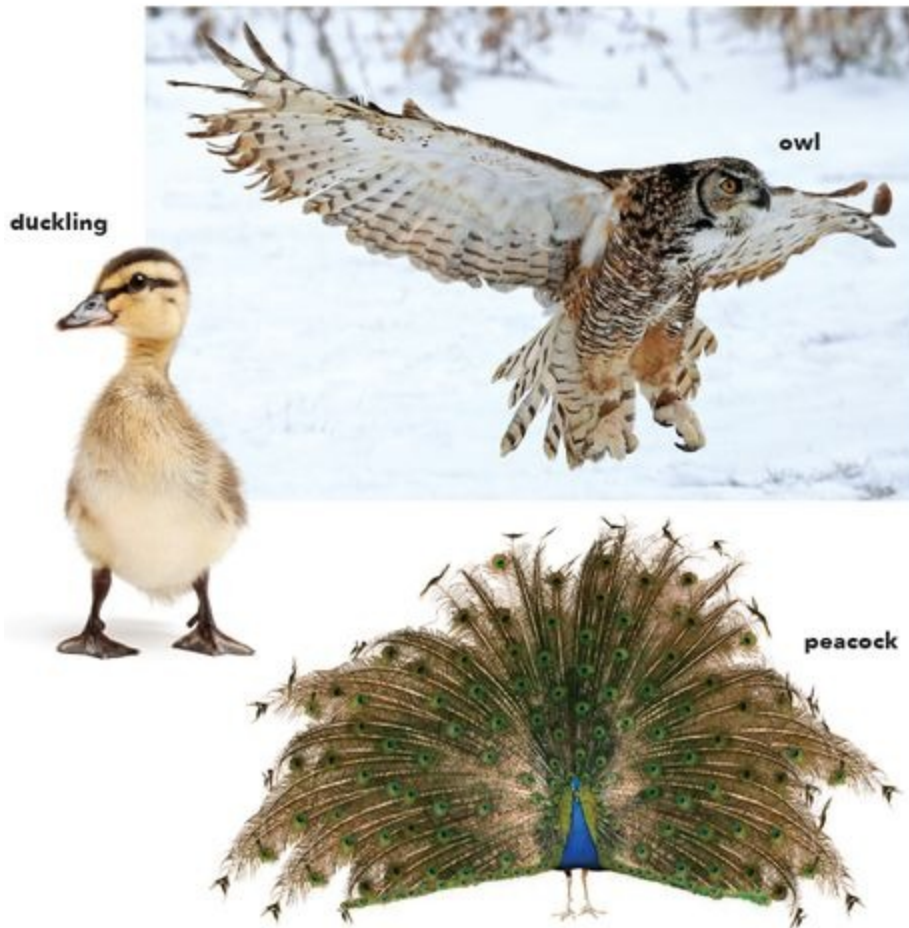


Photo Credit: owl, Shutterstock; duckling, CSP-Alptraum/AGE Fotostock; peacock, iStockphoto

Vocabulary

claw

noun

definition: A claw is a thin, sharp, curved nail on the foot of an animal.

Our cat has very sharp claws. She scratches my brother sometimes, but she never scratches me.

Spanish: garra, talón

compare

verb

definition: When you compare things, you say how they are like each other or how they are different.

My aunt compared the two desserts she made. She said they were both good but one had coconut and the other had chocolate.

Spanish: comparar, equiparar

forms: compared, compares, comparing

extinct

adjective

definition: When a type of animal is extinct, there are no more of that type of animal living, and there can be no more in the future.

Dinosaurs have been extinct for millions of years.

Spanish: extinguido, extinto

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What kind of dinosaur survives today?

- A. lizards
- B. birds
- C. *Anchiornis*

2. What does the author ask readers to compare in this text?

- A. birds and lizards
- B. birds and small, lizard-like animals
- C. birds and dinosaurs that lived long ago

3. *Yutyranus* was a dinosaur that could run fast on two legs.

Based on this information, which of the birds in the text was this dinosaur most like?

- A. the cardinal
- B. the ostrich
- C. the eagle

4. What information in the text supports the idea that birds are dinosaurs?

- A. "Different dinosaurs had different body parts. The biggest dinosaurs had long necks that could reach leaves that were far away."
- B. "Eagles are big, strong birds. They can fly high and far. They can also dive very fast to catch dinner."
- C. "Like some of their extinct dinosaur relatives, birds walk on two legs. They also have feathers and claws."

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. Birds are living dinosaurs.
- B. *Tyrannosaurus rex* walked on two legs.
- C. Cardinals live in many parts of the United States.

6. Read these sentences about the dinosaur *Anchiornis* from the text.

"Red, black, and white feathers covered its body from its head to its tail. These feathers kept the dinosaur warm."

What does the word "covered" tell you about the feathers on *Anchiornis*'s body?

- A. There were feathers all over *Anchiornis*'s body.
- B. There were a few feathers on *Anchiornis*'s body.
- C. There were no feathers on *Anchiornis*'s body.

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

We used to think that dinosaurs were extinct, _____ now we know birds are dinosaurs too.

- A. so
- B. but
- C. because

8. What did *Coelophysis* use its sharp claws for?

9. What do eagles have in common with *Coelophysis*?

10. Read this sentence from the text.

"We know that birds are a kind of dinosaur because birds and extinct dinosaurs are alike in lots of ways."

Identify two or more ways that birds and extinct dinosaurs are alike. Support your answer with an example from the text.
