

just like it had always looked, stronger evidence for creation than evolution it would seem.<sup>9</sup>

Like *Ginkgo biloba* and the dawn redwood, the wollemi “dinosaur pine” is another example of a “living fossil,” a rare, unchanged survivor of a once widely distributed and successful group. The lesson is not evolution but creation (well-designed, after kind) followed by corruption and catastrophe, including worldwide habitat destruction and climate change following the Genesis flood.

My paleobotany professor (an evolutionist) started his class by saying he supposed we were there to learn about the evolution of plants. Then he told us that we weren’t going to learn much. What we *would* learn, he said, is that our modern plant groups go way back in their fossil history. Sure enough, all we studied was “petrified plant anatomy,” features already familiar to me from the study of living plants. We encountered some difficulties in classification, of course, but only the same kinds which we encounter among the *living* plants. Summarizing the evidence from fossil plant studies, E.J.H. Corner, Professor of Botany at Cambridge University, once put it this way (even though he believed in their evolution): “. . . to the unprejudiced, the fossil record of plants is in favor of special creation.”<sup>10</sup>

## VERTEBRATES: ANIMALS WITH BACKBONES

When we come to the vertebrates, the animals with backbones, the situation changes dramatically. We run smack into the most powerful evidence of *evolution*. At least that’s what I used to tell my students when I taught university biology as an evolutionist.

Sometimes I would run into a student who would ask me, “If evolution is true, where are the missing links?” “Missing links?” I’d say. “Glad you asked. It just so happens we have a perfect example: *Archaeopteryx*, the link that shows how reptiles evolved into birds!”

*Archaeopteryx* has been *the* showcase for evolution. Found in 1860, the Berlin specimen is pictured in nearly all biology

textbooks. That specimen, along with a reconstruction in the same position, is shown in Figure 25.

At first, you may wonder what the fuss is all about. It has feathers, wings, and a beak, so it's a bird. But look closer. It has teeth in the bill, claws on the wings, no keel on the breast bone, an unfused backbone, and a long, bony tail. These are all characteristics we normally associate with reptiles. What's more, the existence of a creature like *Archaeopteryx* was predicted by evolutionists before any such specimen was found! What's a creationist going to say to a "perfect example of evolution" like *Archaeopteryx*? There's no way I can get you to consider creation without facing up to *Archaeopteryx*.

Well, first of all, the reptile-like features are not really as reptile-like as you might suppose. The familiar ostrich, for example, has claws on its wings that are even *more* "reptile-like" than those of *Archaeopteryx*. Several birds, such as the hoatzin, don't have much of a keel. The penguin has unfused backbones and a bony tail. No living birds have socketed teeth, but some fossil birds do. Besides, some reptiles have teeth and some don't, so presence or absence of teeth is not particularly important in distinguishing the two groups.

More importantly, take a look at the individual features of *Archaeopteryx*. Is there any clue as to how legs evolved into wings? No, none at all. When we find wings as fossils, we find *completely developed, fully functional wings*. That's true of *Archaeopteryx*, and it's also true of the flying insects, flying reptiles (ptero-dactyls), and the flying mammals (bats).

Is there any clue in *Archaeopteryx* as to *how* reptilian scales evolved into feathers? No, none at all. When we find feathers as fossils, we find *fully developed and functional feathers*. Feathers are quite complex structures, with little hooks and eyelets for zippering and unzipping them. *Archaeopteryx* not only had complete and complex feathers, but feathers of several different types, including the asymmetric feather characteristic of strong fliers.



What about lack of a keel? Actually, muscles for the power stroke in flight attach to the wishbone or furcula, and *Archaeopteryx* had “an extremely robust furcula.” A growing number of evolutionists, perhaps a consensus, now believe that *Archaeopteryx* was a strong flier and the first bird, and not a missing link between reptiles and birds (see Carey<sup>11</sup>).

Despite the demise of *Archaeopteryx*, evolutionists retain a deep-seated belief that someday a missing link between dinosaurs and birds will be found. As I write this, the evolutionist’s faith is focused on fossils from China, where large numbers of dinosaurs, dinosaur eggs, and some birds are found.

Several mistaken claims have already been made and falsified, including the major blunder published in *National Geographic* under the title “Feathers for *T. rex*.”<sup>12</sup>

With all the artistic (NOT scientific) skill for which *National Geographic* is famous, the public was treated to the picture of a baby “*T. rex*-bird” covered with down feathers like a newly hatched chick. Detailed art-work showed a close-up of the presumed “dinosaur feather.” In three months, over 100,000 young people saw the “proof” for dinosaur-bird evolution on display at *National Geographic*’s headquarters in Washington, D.C.

It was all **FAKE**. The supposed fossil was fake. The art work and article in *National Geographic* described a **fake**. What influenced so many students touring the *National Geographic* exhibit in Washington was the display of a **fake**.

Scientists with expert knowledge of birds, such as Storrs Olson at the prestigious Smithsonian Institute, also in Washington, D.C., recognized the scientific problems with *National Geographic*’s story almost immediately. In an open letter published in the *Smithsonian* magazine (dated November 1, 1999), Storrs Olson<sup>13</sup> sternly rebuked *National Geographic* for (emphasis added) “. . . UNSUBSTANTIATED, SENSATIONALISTIC, TABLOID JOURNALISM. . .” — putting the *Geographic* article in the same class as those about alien abductions and pigs that fly. His

letter included details of many other examples of “scientific malpractice” in the *National Geographic* article.

The fake was not particularly clever or subtle. Bolstering the myth that evolution is making scientific progress, a fawning and uncritical media often publicize flashy stories of exaggerated claims, only to publish an obscure retraction or “different interpretation” a few weeks later.

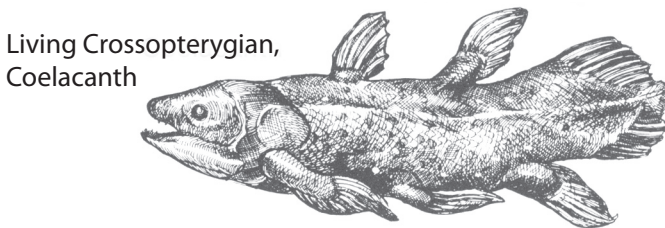
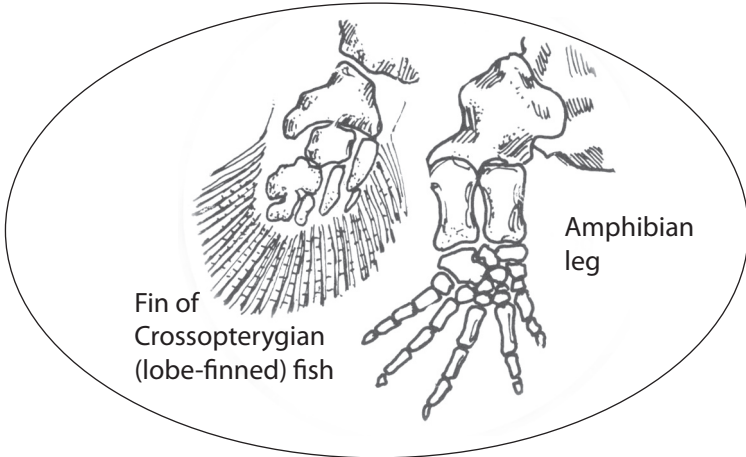
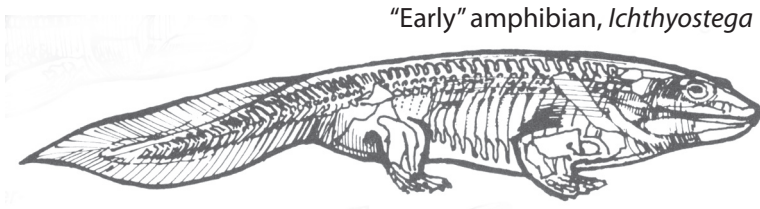
The “feathers for *T. rex*” turned out to be fossils of bird parts cemented together with fossils of dinosaur parts. At least this time the evolutionist’s error was so huge and obvious that it did get national media attention. The article detailing the fake in *USA Today*,<sup>14</sup> for example, was headlined:

#### The Missing Link That Wasn’t

The *National Geographic* debacle should encourage scientific skepticism for several reasons. First, evolutionists are human beings, and all human beings make mistakes. Second, even if it’s given a scientific sounding name (like “Archaeoraptor”), a discovery announced in the news is not really scientific until other scientists have checked it out thoroughly. It only took a few weeks for scientists to disprove both *Geographic’s* claims about its “dinosaur-bird” and the news report that a NASA team had found fossils in Martian rock, but it took over 40 years to prove that “Piltdown Man” (“*Eoanthropus dawsoni*”) was a hoax, and *Archaeopteryx* has remained in textbooks long after it was scientifically discredited as a reptile-bird link.

When you hear another fossil from China is claimed as a dino-bird link (and I’m sure you will), check out the “rest of the story” on a major creationist website such as [answersingenesis.org](http://answersingenesis.org) or [icr.org](http://icr.org). Furthermore, the fossils from China currently promoted in the press are in the *wrong place* to include the ancestors of birds, because fossil birds have already been found in lower layers. By the evolutionist’s own definition, a fossil qualifies as a missing link or transitional form in an *evolutionary series* IF AND ONLY





**Figure 26.** When they were known only from fossil remains, bones in the fins of the coelacanth were imagined to have joints at the wrist and elbow and to have a shoulder attachment strong enough for walking on land. Then the coelacanth was found alive and well, a fisherman's favorite deep in the Indian Ocean, having fins without wrists or elbows, designed for swimming not walking. Once again evolutionists were forced to abandon a presumed "missing link" used for decades to "prove evolution." The new evidence supported instead the creationist prediction that differences between fossil fish and amphibians would be like those between living members of these groups.





