

References

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ARCHAEOPTERYX - NOT ALONE?

A single fossil feather impression, the discovery of which established the existence of Archaeopteryx, has now been augmented by partial or entire skeletons of a further four specimens. Since 1861, Archaeopteryx has held the distinction of being the most ancient known bird at about 135 million years old.

Dr. James Jenson, a palaeontologist at Brigham Young University, has unearthed two femurs from rock formed 130 million years ago, about the time Archaeopteryx was living. The new fossil femurs appear to belong to two different species. The femur of Archaeopteryx has a large well-developed knob that fits into a socket in the pelvis, which is typical of animals that run well on the ground; the newly discovered femurs, however, are small, a characteristic shared with birds that are good flyers.

Archaeopteryx has generally been regarded as a direct link between birds and reptiles; however, if Dr. Jenson's theory proves that Archaeopteryx shared the same period in time with other birds that were more adept at flying, its singular status may now be challenged.

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