

Study: Dinosaurs are not birds' ancestors

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University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill scientists say no good evidence exists to indicate that dinosaurs are the ancestors of modern birds.

Alan Feduccia and colleagues say fossilized structures found in China that some paleontologists claim are the earliest known rudimentary feathers were not feathers. Instead, Feduccia -- a professor of avian evolution, paleobiology and systematics -- says the fossilized patterns appear to be bits of decomposed skin and supporting tissues that just happen to resemble feathers to a modest degree.

"We all agree that birds and dinosaurs had some reptilian ancestors in common," said Feduccia. "But to say dinosaurs were the ancestors of the modern birds we see flying around outside today ... is a big mistake."

A report on the team's research appears in the online Journal of Morphology.

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