

Canadian scientist aims to turn chickens into dinosaurs

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Hans Larsson, the Canada Research Chair in Macro Evolution at Montreal's McGill University, said he aims to develop dinosaur traits that disappeared millions of years ago in birds.

Larsson believes by flipping certain genetic levers during a chicken embryo's development, he can reproduce the dinosaur anatomy, he told AFP in an interview.

Though still in its infancy, the research could eventually lead to hatching live prehistoric animals, but Larsson said there are no plans for that now, for ethical and practical reasons -- a dinosaur hatchery is "too large an enterprise."

"It's a demonstration of evolution," said Larsson, who has studied bird [evolution](#) for the last 10 years.

"If I can demonstrate clearly that the potential for dinosaur anatomical development exists in birds, then it again proves that [birds](#) are direct descendants of dinosaurs."

The research is funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, the Canada Research Chairs program and National Geographic.

The idea for the project, Larsson said, came about during discussions with renowned American paleontologist Jack Horner, who served as technical advisor for the Jurassic Park films.

Horner recently wrote a book entitled "How to Build A Dinosaur," in which he refers to the embryo experiment as part of a quest to create a "chickenosaurus."

Larsson's team has previously worked to uncover prehistoric animal remains, including eight unknown species of [dinosaurs](#) and five new types of crocodile in Niger. He also recently uncovered the remains of a new carnivorous dinosaur in Argentina.

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