

# Microraptor Zhaoianus Discovery Strengthens the Dinosaur-Bird Connection Theory

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## Microraptor Zhaoianus Discovery Strengthens the Dinosaur-Bird Connection Theory

The evolutionary connection between dinosaurs and birds (that birds evolved from theropod dinosaurs) has long been theorized and is today generally accepted as a scientifically viable school of thought. Furthermore, several monumental discoveries have recently been made (21st century) in the area of the fossil record which have acted to solidify this evolutionary [connection](#), drawing the evidentiary ties between dinosaurs and birds even closer together. Paramount among these new unearthings is the recent discovery (in 2000) of the Microraptor zhaoianus. In the following analysis I will attempt to summarize both the discovery of this unusual specie, and the impact the discovery has had on the school of thought regarding the evolution of birds.

The discovery expressed in the original article of my research is that of a Microraptor zhaoianus fossil. The Microraptor zhaoianus is classified as a non-[avian](#), dromaeosaurid (swift lizard), which is a subgroup of the theropods<sup>1</sup>[1]. The theropods were a group of raptors whose characteristics included small size, bipedalism, and a close relation to

birds2[2]. Certainly, there is no doubt that the Microraptor fits this description.

The size of the Microraptor is indeed a large part of what makes its discovery so important. On the whole, non-avian dinosaurs are classified as medium to large sized entities. However, the Microraptor is unusually small as its body measures a mere 47 mm<sup>3</sup>[3]. In fact, it is the first fully mature non-avian dinosaur on record that has been found to be smaller (only slightly) than the earliest known bird, Archaeopteryx<sup>4</sup>[4]. Furthermore, in [addition](#) to its comparabl...

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...arning.com/subjects/dinosaurs/glossary/Dromaeosaur.shtml> (15 March 2004).

3[3] Xu, 705-708.

4[4] Xu, 705-708.

5[5] Anna Salleh, "Chinese microraptor looks like bird-dinosaur link" 8 December 2000, <<http://www.abc.net.au/science/news/stories/s221244.htm>> (15 March 2004).

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