

## DNA's half-life identified using fossil bones

We are used to radioactive substances having a half-life, but DNA? Now a study of bones from extinct birds suggests the double helix too has a measurable half-life – and that we have underestimated its ability to survive in the fossil record.

“DNA degrades at a certain rate, and it therefore makes sense to talk about a half-life,” says Morten Allentoft at Copenhagen University, Denmark, who together with Mike Bunce at Murdoch University in Perth, Australia, and colleagues, extracted DNA from the leg bones of 158 [extinct flightless birds called moas](#).

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