

Scientists reverse evolution in birds to make them more like dinosaurs

The past hundred million years or so have not been kind to the dinosaurs. Once formidable “terrible lizards,” their closest modern descendant is the distinctly unimpressive chicken.

Now scientists say they have turned back the clock on evolution — at least, in one small aspect of anatomy. By manipulating proteins in embryonic chicken cells, they were able to turn a bird’s beak into something more closely resembling the dinosaur’s snout it evolved from.

The Jurassic Park-esque experiment, reported in a [study](#) in the journal “Evolution,” didn’t quite hatch a dinosaur from a bird’s egg. But that was never the point, lead author [Bhart-Anjan Bhullar](#), a paleontologist at Yale University, [said in a news release](#).

Instead, by reversing the process that allows chickens to develop beaks rather than snouts, Bhullar and his colleagues gained insight into how the fearsome predators evolved into feathered poultry in the first place.

The beak came along fairly late in bird evolution, [according to the New York Times](#). At that point, early birds had already developed feathers and the ability to fly. But their noses were still blunt and primitive, not the sophisticated, snapping beaks birds use today.

Those developed from a pair of bones called premaxillae, which sit near the front of most animals’ jaws. Previous research on the dinosaur-to-chicken evolutionary link showed that, over the course of millennia, these small bones fused and elongated, becoming a beak.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Turning back evolution: scientists turn bird beaks into dinosaur bones](#)