This feathery dinosaur likely could fly, but not like any birds of today

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With this Archaeopteryx specimen, imprints from plumage can be seen near the shoulder and the tail's tip. Photo by: Pascal Goetgheluck/ESRF.

In 1861, a German scientist wrote about a fossil that had been found. Fossils are the remains of living things from long ago. They may be old bones or shells.

The fossils the scientists found were bones of a dinosaur. It lived about 150 million years ago. The bones show scientists what dinosaurs looked like. This one had feathers. Scientists called the bird-like fossil Archaeopteryx.

This was an important finding. It was the first hint that dinosaurs are related to birds.

Unlike Birds Of Today

Now, scientists have learned more about Archaeopteryx. A new study says it flew like no other animal we know.

Scientists have found 10 more Archaeopteryx fossils. They know more about it now.

The dinosaur was about the size of a crow. It weighed little more than a pound. It was covered in feathers.

Still, that does not necessarily mean it could fly. Penguins and ostriches have feathers, but they cannot fly.

Flapped More Like A Butterfly

The new report says that Archaeopteryx probably did fly.

Archaeopteryx likely flapped more from it shoulders. It is how a butterfly flaps its wings, says Dennis Voeten. He is a scientist that helped lead the study. This is not the way that birds fly today.

Scientists were not sure if Archaeopteryx ever flew. Some thought it used claws on its wings to climb up trees. Then, maybe it used its wings like a sail to float to the ground. This is what flying squirrels do.

Having Feathers Does Not Mean An Animal Can Fly

Back when dinosaurs roamed the Earth, not everything that looked like a bird was a bird. Many creatures had feathers but could not fly.

In the new study, Voeten looked at the fossils using a special machine. They looked at bones for clues.

Bones, Voeten says, are like records of what we do. Tennis players have stronger arm bones, Voeten says. Similarly, birds' wing bones look different. They show stress from flying.

Bones Similar To Those Of Turkeys

Voeten looked for this stress in Archaeopteryx fossils. They compared these to other birds and animals.

The scientist says the bones look like the bones of turkeys and roadrunners. These birds run on the ground. They can also fly when they want to.

Voeten expects that the new study will be questioned. He welcomes this, saying he is not totally stuck to his ideas.