

Bringing the Dino-Birds to Life

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Some 150 million years ago, a strange creature died in a tropical lagoon that today is located in Bavaria. In 1861, a single feather of this creature was discovered. Not long afterward, a complete fossil was found with the same bird-like feathers but dinosaur-like anatomical features. Darwin had just published "On the Origin of Species"; could this be the missing link that Darwin's supporters hoped to find? More recently, other dino-birds were discovered in China, and the debate about the early evolution of birds is still in full swing. Do these fossils contain information about the original animals that cannot be seen by eye? For example, is some of the original chemistry preserved, and can we learn something about the soft tissues? These questions were recently addressed with a series of studies carried out at SLAC, using a technique called x-ray fluorescence imaging. With the help of the intense X-ray beam from the Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Lightsource, the chemical remains of the original living creatures in one of the best preserved Archaeopteryx fossils, as well as specimens from China, including the Confuciosornis Sanctus, were probed. Please join us for this lecture, which will explain how the studies attempt to bring the original dino-birds back to life.

Date: Friday, March 2, 2012, 02:15 p.m.

Place: DESY Lecture Hall, Bldg. 5

Come early: You are invited for coffee and cookies.

