

Press Release

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A new prehistoric bird in the museum

Preparator reconstructs one of the world's most famous fossils

The Natural History Museum in Basel has a new addition to exhibit. Preparator Tandra Fairbanks-Freund has brought to life an Archaeopteryx, probably the most famous prehistoric bird. The color and plumage are based on current scientific knowledge of the animal. The primitive bird lived 150 million years ago. The magnificent new model can now be admired in the permanent exhibition "Dino & Saurian".

She studied numerous scientific studies, pored over many illustrated books and made countless sketches before creating a new model of the Archaeopteryx. She made special reference to the specimen found in 2010 in the Eichstätt region, since it shows the complete tail feathers. From this, the preparator was able to draw conclusions about the size and plumage of the bird. These coincided with the images of the other previous fossil finds of the probably best-known bird of prehistoric times, with scientific studies and with comparisons to living birds. Under the hands of the preparator, a new, impressive model was created, which is one of the newest of its kind.

Impressive bird

Archaeopteryx is an extraordinary fossil. It is considered one of the so-called "missing link"s of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. In his main work "On the Origin of Species", published in 1859, he already noted that there should be transitional forms in the development of new species, which nevertheless combined characteristics of an old as well as a new species. At this time, however, he could not furnish any proof. When the first specimen of Archaeopteryx was discovered in 1860, this gave the theory of evolution a corresponding boost.

A rare treasure

To date, twelve specimens of Archaeopteryx have been found. They all come from quarries around Solnhofen in Bavaria. They vary in degrees of preservation. The specimens discovered so far lived in subtropical lagoon landscapes about 150 million years ago. Original Archaeopteryx specimens can be found in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, the Senckenberg Naturmuseum in Frankfurt am Main or the Natural History Museum London, among others.

For more information

Media corner

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