

## **The fossil that changed everything**

**Video transcript presented by Ben Garrod**

So what became of the dinosaurs?

Well the answer lies in part with the discovery of one of the rarest and most valuable fossils still known.

In 1861 a fossil was discovered in Germany that caused quite a stir, that of Archaeopteryx.

But why did this cause a commotion? A first inspection its body was similar to those found on dinosaurs.

It has a long bony tail; large claws on its fore-limbs and teeth in the jaw.

But other features are much stranger, the most notable one being this: around its fore-limbs and tail are the clear imprints of feathers.

Many people initially dismissed it as an elaborate hoax, but a hoax it was not.

This discovery blew apart all that we previously knew about these terrible lizards.

Here was a dinosaur with feathers. This fossil changes everything.

It was discovered just two years after Charles Darwin published his controversial theory of evolution.

And just a few years later another leading biologist of the day, Thomas Henry Huxley, was so moved by the fossil that he declared it to be an evolutionary link between dinosaurs and birds.

The name Archaeopteryx derives from the Greek archaios meaning ancient and ptéryx meaning feather or wing.

Whether Archaeopteryx is a direct ancestor of birds or not is still debated among scientists.

But what is evident is that here there are very clear signs of change.

Here we have an animal that looks half bird, half dinosaur.