

Title: Breakthrough: The Avian Authority

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Short Description:	Follow Jingmai O'Connor as she catalogues ancient avian dinosaurs and learn how her Chinese-American roots helped lead her to incredible paleontological discoveries.
Long Description:	<p>When paleontologist Jingmai O'Connor looks at the abdomen of a small, ancient avian fossil, she gets a thrill when she spots a jumble of nodules, no bigger than a scattering of goosebumps, protruding from the creature's bones. Their presence could mean the animal's metabolism supported rapid egg growth. In another specimen, O'Connor discovers an entire bird gobbled up inside of a chicken-sized feathered dinosaur, revealing a clue about the ecology in which both animals lived.</p> <p>O'Connor's obsessive eye for detail and encyclopedic knowledge of morphology comes in handy when she's placing these fossils on the ancient family tree of birds. She credits those skills, as well as her enthusiasm for science, to her mother, a geochemist who earned her Ph.D. while raising O'Connor and her three siblings. It was also her mother's influence that led O'Connor to focus on geology—and to explore her own Chinese-American roots—by focusing her studies on the scores of bird fossils coming out of China at the turn of the century.</p> <p>Dozens of discoveries later, O'Connor is now a professor at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology in Beijing where she uses the world's largest collection of avian dinosaurs to explore the changes in ancient species that led to wings, tail feathers, flight, and many other adaptations seen in modern birds.</p>
Production Credits:	Produced by Science Friday in collaboration with HHMI Tangled Bank Studios

	<p>Directed and Produced by Luke Groskin Director of Photography Kartsen Hohmann and Christian Baker Edited by Erika Sutter and Luke Groskin Animations by Luke Groskin and Lottie Kingslake</p> <p>Paleo-Illustrations by Gabriel Ugueto</p> <p>Music by Audio Network On-Location Production Support by Karsten Hohmann Series Producer Luke Groskin Additional Photos and Video Provided by Jingmai O'Connor, Pond5 Shutterstock, University of Southern California Project Advisors for HHMI Tangled Bank Studios - Richard Stone and Aileen O'Hearn</p>
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