

World's oldest bird discovered

A newly discovered 66-million-year-old fossil indicates that “modern” birds survived the asteroid impact that caused the mass extinction of all large dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous period

Asteriornis maastrichtensis:

Well preserved skull and other bone fragments found in rock from limestone quarry in Belgium



Skull has features seen in present-day ducks and chickens

Asteriornis provides earliest direct glimpse of modern birds during initial stages of their evolutionary history

Scientists believe Asteriornis weighed just under 400 grams and may have been shore-dwelling bird

Asteriornis: 66.8-66.7 million years old. Dates from less than one million years before asteroid impact

Pictures: Phillip Krzemiński, Daniel J. Field, University of Cambridge

