

# Giving Thanks To Turkasaurus



By *Lila Abassi* — November 25, 2015



[1] via [shutterstock](#) [2]

As we sit down to gorge ourselves on the feasts of Thanksgiving, I wish to point out that our feathered friend, the turkey, is a direct descendant of dinosaurs. British biologist Thomas Henry Huxley originally proposed, shortly after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* back in 1859, that birds were descendants of dinosaurs.

Various studies have shown that is so and researchers at the University in Kent conducted [genomic studies](#) [3] on six different avian species and determined that the chromosomes from the chicken and turkey lineage have undergone the *least* change in comparison to their dinosaur ancestor.

Professor Darren Griffin explains, Bird genomes are distinctive in that they have more tiny microchromosomes than any other vertebrate group. These small packages of gene-rich material are thought to have been present in their dinosaur ancestors. After studying whole genome sequences they were able to make the determination that turkeys (and chickens) were the most similar in their chromosome (packaged DNA) pattern to their dinosaur ancestors.



[4] via

[www.maguzz.com](http://www.maguzz.com) [5]

Turkeys are the 110-million-years-removed cousin of the Cretaceous period's [Deinonychus](#) [6]

(a.k.a. terrible claw), a small predatory feathered dinosaur with keen eyesight and well-developed sense of balance. The name terrible claw refers to a large sickle-like claw on the second toe of each foot.

While we gather round the dinner table trying to decide between white meat or dark, it's good to pause a moment and take stock of the evolutionary roots of this tasty poultry. Perhaps, you may want to give thanks as well - that they have evolved to be so small we can eat them, and not the other way around..

---

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/2015/11/25/giving-thanks-to-turkasaurus>

**Links**

[1] [http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/shutterstock\\_223675927.jpg](http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/shutterstock_223675927.jpg)

[2] <http://www.shutterstock.com>

[3] <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2164/15/1060/abstract>

[4] <http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/turkey.jpg>

[5] <http://www.maguzz.com>

[6] <http://museumvictoria.com.au/melbournemuseum/discoverycentre/dinosaur-walk/meet-the-skeletons/deinonychus/>