

FOSSILIZED FLYER -- Fossils discovered in western Texas have been identified as the remains of the world's oldest known birds, 75 million years older than any found before. The bones, shown here with a penny for scale, belong to 225-million-year-old crow-sized birds with teeth and long tails, according to Sankar Chatterjee, a paleontologist at Texas Tech University who led the team of scientists. Artist drawing (right) shows recovered fossil bones (black) of the bird which Chatterjee named the genus Protoavis. Although feather impressions were not found with the fossils, they did include hollow bones, a wishbone, breastbone with a keel, a skull with avian features and a large brain case. The forearm and hand show a series of nodes or bumps to which feathers were attached. Researchers say that the bones will strengthen the evolutionary relationship of dinosaurs and birds. The expedition was supported by the National Geographic Society. (86-1751) C17SGFI



UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

86-1751