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Out of Thin Air: Dinosaurs, Birds, and Earth's Ancient Atmosphere

Peter Ward

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For 65 million years dinosaurs ruled the Earth--until a deadly asteroid forced their extinction. But what accounts for the incredible longevity of dinosaurs? A renowned scientist now provides a startling explanation that is rewriting the history of the Age of Dinosaurs. Dinosaurs were pretty amazing creatures--real-life monsters that have the power to fascinate us. And their fiery Hollywood ending only serves to make the story that much more dramatic. But fossil evidence demonstrates that dinosaurs survived several mass extinctions, and were seemingly unaffected by catastrophes that decimated most other life on Earth. What could explain their uncanny ability to endure through the ages? Biologist and earth scientist Peter Ward now accounts for the remarkable indestructibility of dinosaurs by connecting their unusual respiration system with their ability to adapt to Earth's changing environment--a system that was ultimately bequeathed to their descendants, birds. By tracing the evolutionary path back through time and carefully connecting the dots from birds to dinosaurs, Ward describes the unique form of breathing shared by these two distant relatives and demonstrates how this simple but remarkable characteristic provides the elusive explanation to a question that has thus far stumped scientists. Nothing short of revolutionary in its bold presentation of an astonishing theory, *Out of Thin Air* is a story of science at the edge of discovery. Ward is an outstanding guide to the process of scientific detection. Audacious and innovative in his thinking, meticulous and thoroughly detailed in his research, only a scientist of his caliber is capable of telling this surprising story.

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