Warm and Fuzzy Dinosaurs

LOS ANGELES, California The discovery of a giant meat-eating dinosaur sporting a downy coat has some scientists reimagining the look of Tyrannosaurus Rex. Were we mistaken?

With a killer jaw and the sharpest claws, T. Rex has long been portrayed in movies and popular culture as having incredibly scaly skin. The new discovery of an earlier relative suggests that the king of dinosaurs may have had a softer side.

The evidence comes from the unearthing of a new tyrannosaur species in northeastern China that lived before T. Rex. The fossil record preserved remains of fluffy down, making it the largest feathered dinosaur ever found.

The new tyrannosaur species is called Yutyrannus Huali. Its name is a blend of Latin and Mandarin, and it translates to "beautiful feathered tyrant."

It would have felt like touching "long, thick fur," one researcher said. The dinofuzz likely provided important insulation, though using it for camouflage or for show, like a peacock, was not impossible.

If a T. Rex relative had feathers, why not T. Rex? Scientists said the evidence is trending in that direction. Since T. Rex is related to this newfound feathery species, chances are good that T. Rex was feathered as well, scientists said. Just don't mistake fuzzy for cuddly. The predatory dinosaur would have been just as menacing. Having feathers doesn't make it harmless said Holtz, who was not involved in the research.