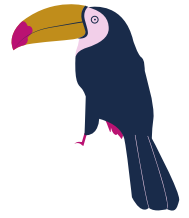# TAILS, TAILBONES, AND TAIL FEATHERS.
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

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WHAT IS A TAIL?

A tail is a distinct, flexible appendage that prolongs the backbone beyond the trunk of an animal's body. In dinosaurs, massive tails served as a counter-balance for their heavy, forward-leaning posture. Dinosaur tails likely had other uses, such as defense and protection.

TAILS HAVE DIFFERENT USES

Tails serve many roles. In monkeys and kangaroos they provide a 5th limb for **mobility and stability**. In other animals they convey **social signals**, such as happiness with the wagging tail of a dog.
Tails can be also be used for **steering** during the long leaps of gliding squirrels, **propulsion** during swimming, and an extra layer of **insulation** when wrapped around the body, as seen in foxes.

WHAT IS A TAILBONE?

The tailbone (or coccyx) is found at the base of the spine below the sacrum. It is not a tail. It consists of 3 to 5 bones that are fused by adulthood in humans and other tail-less animals like apes. It helps support weight of the body, especially while sitting.

In **chickens** and birds, the tailbone is called a **pygostyle**. It can support tail feathers, but they are not directly attached. This lack of feather attachment and loss of an ancestral tail gives birds their unique, upright posture. Birds bend their knees more deeply to offset their body's center of mass that pulls them forward.

CHICKENS HAVE TAIL FEATHERS

The tail feathers of birds and chickens attach to follicles and muscles in the skin above the pygostyle. The most common function of tail feathers is for steering during flight. They can also serve to attract mates. In roosters, the arched tail feathers are called *sickle feathers.*

Sources: Britannica.com, nwf.org, poultryhub.org, projectbeak.org, and "Did losing their tails make birds cock-o-the walk?" at theguardian.com

FIND AND DESIGN... A DINO-CHICKEN?

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-> Connect the dots to draw your outline.
-> Add an eye.
-> Find the pygostyle. Color it blue.
-> Find the beak. Color it yellow.
-> You decide! Add a reptile tail or tail feathers!
-> You decide! Add teeth on the beak (Mandible), or not.
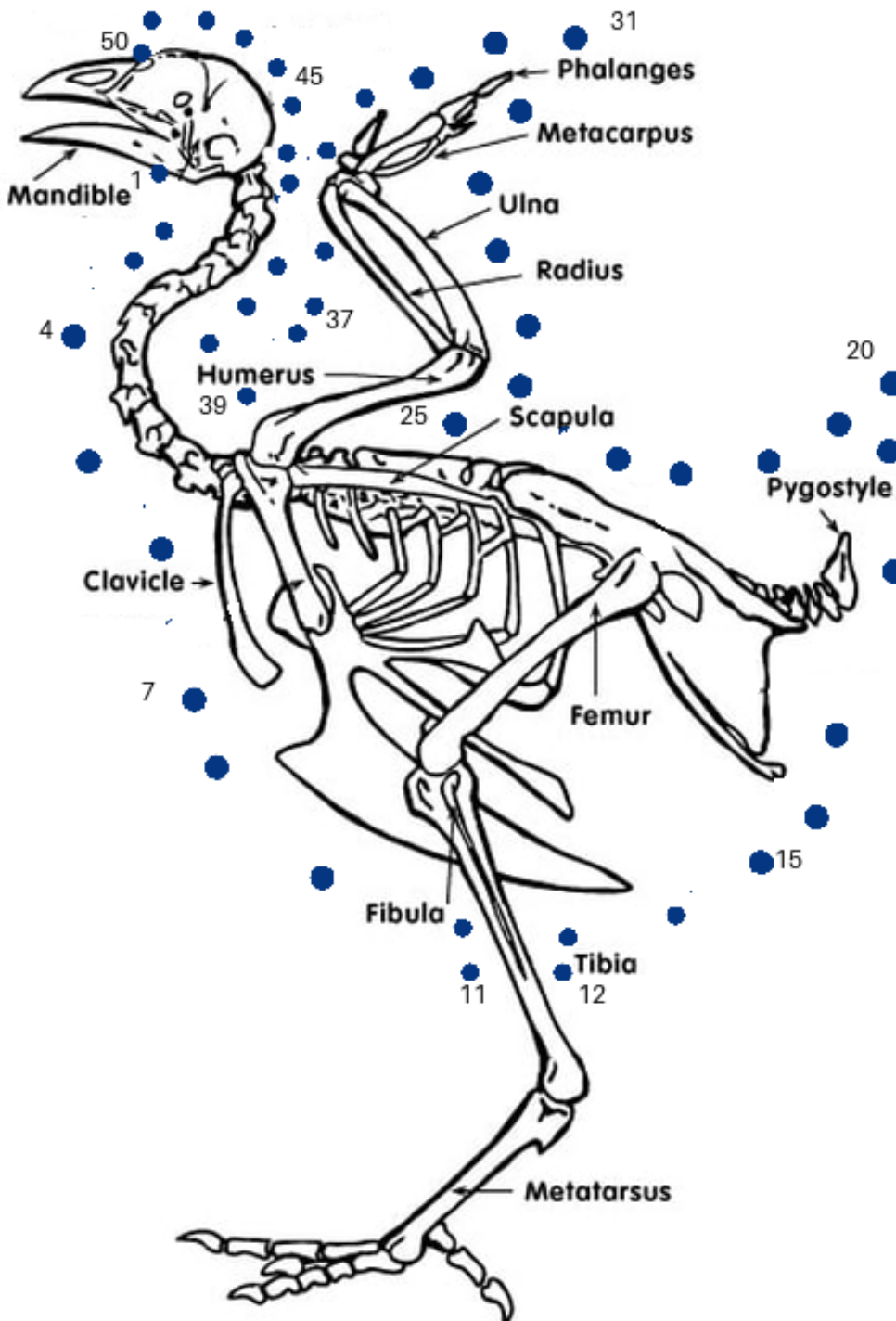-> Give your animal a name: _____