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## Ancient Egyptians were the first falconers: Mummified kestrel reveals birds of prey bred and preserved in huge numbers as offering to the gods

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- 3D imaging of a mummified kestrel found it died due to forced overeating
- Scan revealed the contents of the raptor's stomach
- First evidence to point to mass breeding of raptors as offerings to gods.

By MARK PRIGG FOR DAILYMAIL.COM

PUBLISHED: 21:01, 3 September 2015 | UPDATED: 13:15, 4 September 2015

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The ancient Egyptians bred birds of prey to mummify as offerings to the gods, researchers have found.

These stunning images reveal the results of CT Scans of a mummified Kestrel.

They reveal that the kestrel was force-fed its last meal - a mouse - suggesting it was kept in captivity.



© Iziko Museums/Carina Beyer

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The ancient Egyptians bred birds of prey to mummify as offerings to the gods in large numbers, researchers have found.



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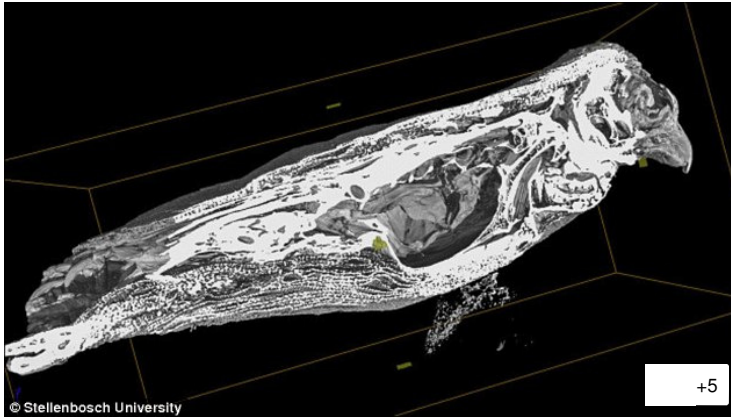
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Scans reveal that the kestrel was force-fed its last meal - a mouse - suggesting it was kept in captivity.

The new study, published in the Journal of Archaeological Science, is the first evidence to point to mass breeding of raptors as offerings to gods.

'The idea of birds of prey being bred to the extent of being kept and force-fed is new,' said Dr. Salima Ikram, Professor of Egyptology at the American University in Cairo and lead author of the study.

'Until now, the sheer number of raptor mummies had been a mystery - did they catch or trap them and kill them, raid nests, or find them dead?

'Our results explain why they had so many: we now think it was because of active breeding.'

The researchers behind the study, from the American University in Cairo, Stellenbosch University and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies say their findings also have implications for the use of birds of prey in falconry for hunting.

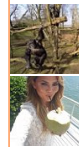
'Taken together, these factors provide, for the first time, strong evidence for the ancient Egyptians keeping such birds in captivity, with the possibility that they had also established a captive breeding program for them, favouring the offering of males over females,' they wrote.

'This would establish the possibility of a controlled large-scale breeding program for raptors in Egypt, leading to speculation about their possible use in falconry.'

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Animal mummies were common in ancient Egypt and used in religious ceremonies, often as offerings.

Millions of mummified animals have been found, most dating from around 600 BC to AD 250.

Ancient Egyptians believed in many gods and associated different animals with them; raptors like kestrels were connected to the sun god Re.

### ANIMAL MUMMIES IN EGYPT

Animal mummies were common in ancient Egypt and used in religious ceremonies, often as offerings.

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Ancient Egyptians believed in many gods and associated different animals with them; raptors like kestrels were connected to the sun god Re. Ancient Egyptians believed they commanded the sky and whose coloring and eyes evoked the sun.

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© Stellenbosch University

Since the bird had not been gutted prior to mummification, they could also look into its digestive tract to see what its last meal had been. They found the tail of a young house mouse (*Mus musculus*), which appears to have caused the kestrel to choke to death. Looking further into the gizzard and stomach, they found other mouse fragments, including 27 loose teeth, suggesting that the kestrel had eaten more than one mouse earlier in the day. They also found parts of a small sparrow.

In ancient Egypt, birds used as votive offerings were prepared by being gutted and dried, then dipped into molten resin and wrapped.

However, sometimes the birds were not gutted, giving the researchers a chance to take a glimpse into one particular bird's life before it died.

The researchers carried out a virtual autopsy on a bird mummy from Iziko Museums of South Africa in Cape Town.

The bird mummy, SACHM 2575, was scanned using CT imaging and the team created 3D images of the bird.



© Stellenbosch University

The bird mummy, SACHM 2575, was scanned using CT imaging and the team created 3D images of the bird.

Based on morphology, limb measurements and beak shape, they established it was a European kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*).

Since the bird had not been gutted prior to mummification, they could also look into its digestive tract to see what its last meal had been.

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### DRIVEN TO EXTINCTION

Animals and pets held a special significance in the afterlife for ancient Egyptians, and were buried with the dead as offerings to the gods and to help their owners in the journey to the afterlife.

It is thought the animal mummy industry was so large that it almost drove certain species to extinction.

Among the hardest hit was the Baboon, which was wiped out in Egypt by the practice. Millions of mummified animals have been found, most dating from around 600 BC to AD 250.

Ancient Egyptians believed in many gods and associated different animals with them; raptors like kestrels were connected to the sun god Re and Egyptians believed they commanded the sky and whose coloring and eyes evoked the sun.

Certain animals, recognizable to the priests by their markings, were thought to act as hosts for the divine spark of a particular deity.

During its lifetime, such an animal would be worshiped and catered to as the living god; upon its death it would be buried with great pomp, amidst national mourning.

The god's spirit would then migrate to the body of another distinctly marked animal, and the cycle would continue, as is the case with Buddhist Tibetan lamas.

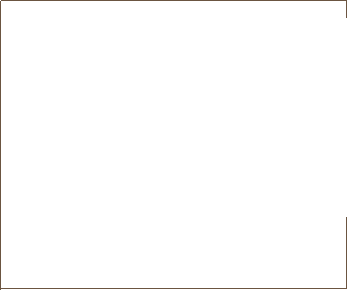
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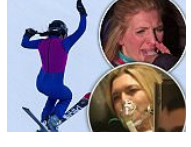
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As part of the cult celebrating these living animal deities, votive offerings in the form of animal mummies were given, a custom that became particularly popular from c. 600 BC until the Roman era, stopping in c. AD 250.

These animal mummies were of the same species associated with the deity in question, but were not sacred themselves.

Millions of such votive mummies of cats, dogs, ibises, and raptors have been and are found in museums all over the world today.

Unlike sacred animals, which lived out their natural lives to the full extent, votive animals were sometimes put to death by strangulation, through a blow to the head, and in the case of juveniles, untimely removal from parent.

Looking further into the gizzard and stomach, they found other mouse fragments, including 27 loose teeth, suggesting that the kestrel had eaten more than one mouse earlier in the day.

They also found parts of a small sparrow.

'This was one of the most entertaining and exciting bits of research to do - when we saw how much the kestrel ate and how it choked, we suddenly had an idea about how the ancient Egyptians managed to mummify so many raptor and the implications about wild animal husbandry and the possibility of falconry being practiced in ancient Egypt,' said Prof. Ikram.



Based on morphology, limb measurements and beak shape, they established it was a European kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), the same bird that shot to fame in Ken Loach's 1969 film *Kes*, which tells the story of a Barnsley schoolboy who tries to escape his narrow working-class existence by looking after a young kestrel.

### CCTV captures battle for nest space between kestrel & jackdaw



'We know raptors were religiously important but it's interesting to think about the role they may have had in falconry.

It's also interesting that Egyptians were exerting so much thought and control over nature and that their aptitude with wild animals is considerable.'

The findings open the door to further work to distinguish the different breeding groups by analyzing the DNA of the raptors and determining their sex.

The researchers say this will provide a deeper understanding of the role of raptors in ancient Egypt and explain how the Egyptians saw nature and their role in it.

### THE SCANDAL OF EGYPT'S FAKE ANIMAL MUMMIES

Researchers claim to have uncovered a huge scandal in the Ancient Egyptian animal mummy industry after revealing a third of the religious offerings are empty.

Experts at the University of Manchester and the city's museum used X-rays and CT scans to examine the interior of 800 bundles of cloth.

They found a third were empty - and packed with mud, sticks and reeds.

A third contained well-preserved complete animals while a further third consisted of partial remains - but the rest were empty.

Scientists say those at involved in the industry may simply have struggled to keep up with demand - and packed them with mud, sticks and reeds.

Dr Lidija McKnight, an Egyptologist from the University of Manchester, told MailOnline:

documents haircut in FOURTEEN Snapchat videos... as she sings, distorts her face and refuses to sit still Striking new look



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Ariel Winter puts on a very leggy display in skimpy denim shorts as she accompanies her boyfriend Laurent to the barbers



'You can see he is excited!' David Beckham shares photo of himself taking son Brooklyn to his first Super Bowl! He's a good sport!



Mom's the word! Blue Ivy steps onto the field to support Beyonce in behind the scenes Super Bowl rehearsal pictures She gets the best access



Double date! George and Amal Clooney dine with Cindy Crawford and her husband Rande Gerber in West Hollywood A-list circle of friends



Victoria Beckham suffers rare fashion fail as she swamps her slender frame in oversized monochrome ensemble Hardly ever has an off day





© AP +5  
 Researchers may have uncovered a scandal in the Ancient Egyptian animal mummy industry after revealing a third of the religious offerings are empty (file picture)

'Early excavators who unwrapped mummies on site documented that some bundles did not contain complete animals or in fact any animal at all, so this in itself is not new,' she said.  
 'What this research has shown by looking at a large group is what percentage seem to contain bones and which don't.'  
 'The early preconception - and for quite some time afterwards - was that these empty mummies were fakes, but we now believe that there is more likely to be much more to it.  
 'She said that sometimes the linen parcels were actually padded out with items from the mummy-maker's home.

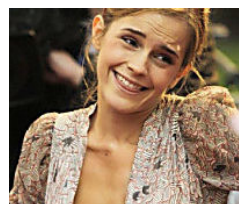
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 Spot the difference



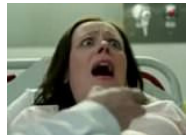
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 Tuppence Middleton stuns in daring plunging



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 don't believe everything you read. let me know when they find an MRI machine or microwave.

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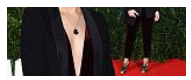
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Catherine Tyldesley showcases her incredible figure in fitted cobalt blue gown as she and Corrie co-star Katie McGlynn attend corporate event as guests of honour



'People offer me one night stands!': Rebel Wilson opens up about the hazards of being a single girl in Hollywood She's still single



Brotherly love! Scott Disick supports Tyga in Las Vegas as the rapper performs at Drai's nightclub Not quite brothers-in-law



Taking style tips from Kate? Princess Mary steps out in a navy dress VERY similar to the one worn by Duchess of Cambridge to her engagement announcement



Party girl! Gwyneth Paltrow looks cool in her aviators as she drives a Range Rover away from Robert Downey Jr's Malibu bash Cool as a cucumber



'Showtime!': Mariah Carey shares behind-the-scenes photos following return to her Las Vegas residency Shared a BTS look at her 'hectic' show



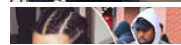
Celebrity Big Brother's Stephanie Davis will 'NEVER speak to ex-boyfriend Sam Reece again.. as she looks forward to moving on with Jeremy McConnell'



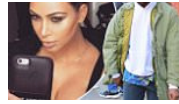
Justin Bieber gives French Montana a \$150k gold chain necklace as a birthday gift and the rapper adds \$90k in extra diamonds Extravagant



Dynamic duo! Kanye



West prepares for his highly anticipated Yeezy Season 3 NYFW show as wife Kim Kardashian teases new project on Instagram



Bold bottoms! Selma Blair sports Beetlejuice inspired black and white trousers while at an LA farmer's market with her son Arthur Nice stripes



'I'm very much enjoying being single!' Kate Hudson confirms she is unattached days after Nick Jonas gushed about the pair's 'unbelievable connection'



She can train anything! Jillian Michaels walks around with green parrot perched on her shoulder during family outing in Malibu



This Apple didn't fall far from the tree! Gwyneth Paltrow poses for a selfie with her mini-me daughter Child with Chris Martin is now 11



'I can't wait to sing for you all!': Lady Gaga posts makeup-free snap in bed with her dogs hours before Super Bowl performance



'Happy Super Bowl Sunday!': Kourtney Kardashian shares flashback photo from 2009 with a nearly unrecognizable Khloe Muscles



Emma Watson has 'found love with Silicon Valley entrepreneur ten years her senior' William Knight has visited her Oxford home



Is it sexual tension? Reports claims Australia's I'm A Celebrity stars Shane Warne and Laurina Fleure are bickering because they're attracted to one another



Having a roo-ly good time! Kelly Osbourne goes casual while Sophie Monk dons clingy dress and heels to snap selfies with kangaroos at Zoo



Khloe Kardashian poses naked in a swimming pool... as she compares herself to Marilyn Monroe Shared the extremely racy images on Twitter



'She's not interested': Dame Helen Mirren 'refused to profit from THAT bikini snap as she would not brand herself in that way'



'Divided we fall': Superbowl trailer for Captain America Civil War shows Marvel's superheroes in dramatic face off Made the most of the captive audience



Sticking with tradition! Gwen Stefani is spotted without boyfriend Blake Shelton as she takes her sons to church in Studio City Been almost inseparable



'I've kept my mouth shut and taken the blame': Ronan Keating



says he doesn't regret affair as he defends the end of his marriage to Yvonne Connolly  
Split in 2011



'I taught Cam Newton everything he knows!' John Travolta, Ashton Kutcher and Larry David recall their best Super Bowl memories in pregame video



Wet 'n' wild! Zilda Williams goes skimpy bikini shopping in Bali with Playboy bunny pal Sarah Robertson before displaying her ample DD-cup size curves by the pool



'I barely left the house': Top Gear's new host Matt LeBlanc admits he was headed for a 'nervous breakdown' after Friends as he struggled with marriage troubles



Wanna look good for you! Hilary Swank steps out in skintight black leather slacks while enjoying romantic dinner date with beau Ruben Torres



We know it's you! Margot Robbie covers her flawless blonde locks and face with a beanie and scarf while strolling the streets of New York with boyfriend Tom Ackerley



'It was a beautiful thing, to have my sisters left and right of me': Beyonce talks reuniting Destiny's Child for her 2013 Super Bowl performance ahead of Sunday's appearance



Some new ink? Sofia Vergara, 43, is a T-shirt and jeans type of woman as she visits a tattoo shop in Los Angeles  
Took two friends along



Born to perform! Ellie Goulding shows off her sculpted legs in tiny leather hotpants as she hits the stage in Madrid  
At Vistalegre Palace



It's a bird... It's a plane... Jasmin Walla dons Superwoman costume for indoor skydiving session with beau Ross Worswick  
Making people stop and stare



Call The Midwife star Jessica Raine and husband Tom Goodman-Hill enjoy low-key amble... after hinting they would like children



Naomi Campbell cuts a striking figure as she dons knee high boots and knitted mini dress to launch her new lingerie collection



Real Housewives of Cheshire star Dawn Ward looks sensational in mustard coat, mini-skirt and knee-high boots as she steps out amid Sinitta assault court battle



Bear crushes the undead! Kung Fu Panda 3 sits on US box office top spot as Pride and Prejudice and Zombies fails to crack top five



**Rolling Stones? I prefer The Kinks, says Mick Jagger's son**  
Just because he's your dad, you don't have to like his music



**'On my feet... sort of': TV host Eamonn Holmes shares hospital snapshot following his double hip replacement surgery**  
On the road to recovery



**Imogen Thomas cuts an understated figure in black as she and lookalike daughter Ariana attend Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip's London premiere**



**It's rained on her parade! Georgia May Foote falls victim to the weather as she heads out in Glasgow with Joanne Clifton ahead of Strictly tour**



**Woman's best friend! Lucy Watson braces against the cold as she cosies up to beloved pup Digby and boyfriend James Dunmore during cosy trip to the park**



**'The biggest surprise!' CBS confirms The Good Wife will end after this season with announcement in Super Bowl advert**  
N season eight



**Emma, is that you? Stone ditches her vibrant, red tresses for a darker 'do following Beverly Hills salon visit**  
Upcoming role as tennis star Billie Jean King



**Is Diana fashion's new muse? Alexa Chung takes style inspiration from the late Princess with 80s-inspired ruffle collars, pussybows and military jackets**



**She's dressed with military precision! Sharp-suited Carol Vorderman wears formal RAF uniform as she attends 75th anniversary of the Air Cadets**



**'I haven't felt like this since my first love': CBB's Jeremy McConnell laughs off cheating rumours as he gushes about Stephanie Davis**



**The world's youngest beauty icon? Princess Charlotte has a bright pink lipstick named after her in new Marc Jacobs cosmetics line**



**Tilda Swinton shows off her own unique sense of style as she wears bronze reflective shades with yellow knee-high boots to attend movie photocall**



**That dress is working overtime! Chanel Iman wears white mini that manages to show off both her chest and legs at Super Bowl bash**  
Quite the entrance



**Going Hollywood? Game Of Thrones star Kit Harington leaves girlfriend Rose Leslie behind to hit Lure nightclub solo**



**Trinny Woodall looks sensational in chic white blazer as she**



enjoys fun-filled date with boyfriend Charles Saatchi at favoured hot spot Scott's Al fresco lunch



Back on? Justin Bieber is spotted for first time in weeks with model Hailey Baldwin during Super Bowl festivities in San Francisco



Taking the plunge! Ashley Greene shows off her assets in low-cut sapphire gown at DirecTV Super Bowl event in San Francisco



Maisie Williams, 18, cuts a cute figure in Mickey Mouse ears as she dons a pinafore dress to explore Disneyland with a male companion



Lion Babe rocks a perilously plunging black catsuit for appearance on Channel 4's Sunday Brunch alongside a leggy Emily Atack and casually suave Laurence Fox



The (love) Force Is Strong! Daisy Ridley cuts a relaxed figure in tight denim jeans and padded jacket as she enjoys leisurely outing with boyfriend



Jeremy Clarkson lets his emotions fly into Top Gear at the football as he watches beloved Chelsea avoid last-minute defeat Cringed, screamed and finally rejoiced



Fifty shades of Gwyneth: Miss Paltrow plays cupid with her steamy Valentine's Day gift guide including 'sex dust' and a blindfold Racy tips on Goop



'I'm grateful every day for the love and light in my life': Bindi Irwin cuddles up to boyfriend Chandler Powell as she prepares to join I'm A Celebrity cast



Double act! Rebel Wilson poses backstage with fellow comedienne Sheridan Smith as pair rehearse for new West End musical Funny Girl



Can't stop, won't stop! Reality diva Kim Zolciak refuses to back down from haters as she posts yet another stunning bikini snap on Instagram



'Accidental twinsies!' Julianne Hough and Olivia Munn suffer the ultimate red carpet blunder as they sport near identical white trouser suits



Tatt's a bit racy! Kylie Jenner exposes new hip inking as she poses for alluring photod in just a hoodie and underwear New tattoo is phonetic pronunciation of 'sanity'



Sharing is caring: Thomas Cohen wears girlfriend Daisy Lowe's leather jacket with garish-print trousers to walk her dog Monty



Diamonds are a girl's best friend! Jennifer Metcalfe can't keep the



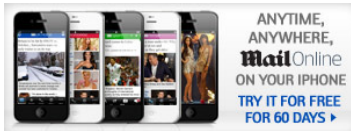
smile off her face as she goes jewellery shopping with long-term boyfriend Greg Lake



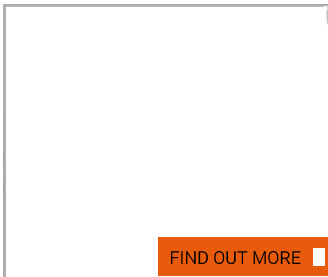
Cara Delevingne flashes her incredibly taut tummy as she take the Paris streets by storm for shopping trip with chic sister Poppy and adorable pup Leo



Playing happy families! Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner cut relaxed figures as they reunite for a low-key outing with their children Out in Brentwood

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## GADGET REVIEWS

### Review: Under Armour's fitness gadgets need to shape up

Under Armour is jumping into the crowded market for wearable gadgets that aim to help both athletes and couch potatoes track their fitness.

### Speaker that looks as good as its sounds: B&W Zeppelin Wireless review

It's not cheap, but the \$699 (£500) Zeppelin Wireless is perfect for the design conscious music fan.

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### Samsung's \$99 Gear VR gives a glimpse into the virtual world

Samsung's Gear VR headset is pretty impressive as first-generation devices go.

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### The iPad grows up: Apple's iPad Pro

The iPad Pro is, for many, a real laptop replacement - and a way to combine work and play in a gadget that will last all day and won't break your back to carry.

182 comments 2 videos

### B&W's P5 Wireless review - The ultimate commuter headphones

They cost \$400, but B&W's P5 wireless headphones will change the way you listen to music on the move - and could spell the end for annoying wires.

comments 1 video

### 'A glimpse into the future of the living room': The new Apple TV

Apple says apps are the future of TV, and while its new \$149 box does have some issues, its combination of streaming services, games and other apps make it the best way to make your TV smart.

75 comments 4 videos

**'Intuitive controls and gorgeous visuals':  
Heads on with PlayStation VR**

Sony's Playstation VR will go head to head with Facebook's Oculus Rift and HTC's Vive next year - Experts predict it will be a bloody battle - and Dailymail.com was able to try out the technology.

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**\$799 Blackphone 2 is secure handset anyone can use**

The Blackphone 2 is fully encrypted by default and comes with a suite of secure features that let you make calls and send texts that are impossible to eavesdrop on or track.

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**The end of wonky wifi: Google's OnHub**

It's incredibly simple to set up, and we found it tripled the speed of our home wifi connection - but at \$199 is expensive..

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**No more tangled wires: Powerbeats2 Wireless review**

Beats by Dre's Powerbeats2 headphones have a new look - so now you can pound the treadmill, listen to your favourite tunes and make sure you're fully colour-co-ordinated.

1 video

**The best all in one wireless speaker you'll ever hear: Naim Mu-so review**

It might not be a name familiar to the US market, but Naim is a legendary British brand hoping to make a splash with the American launch of its \$1499 Mu:So speaker.

3 comments 1 video

**The only remote you'll ever need: Logitech's Harmony Elite works with 270,000 gadgets from TVs to speakers and lights**

Harmony Elite (pictured) was unveiled at this month's IFA conference in Berlin. It works with the Bluetooth and Wi-Fi enabled Logitech Hub which connects all the devices together.

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**The Mail's verdict on the Apple Watch**

While it's not the first smartwatch on the market, the \$349 (£299) Apple Watch is the first you'll actually want to use - and will change the way you communicate.

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