





Dodo (*Raphus cucullatus*)

Museum of Comparative Zoology

Ornithology Collection 340825 (skeleton) and 336771 (bird model)

Image credit: Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University

Explore more about the Dodo in the [Islands: Evolving in Isolation](#) online exhibit

The dodo was a large, pigeon-like flightless bird that once lived on the small island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. In an environment with ample ground fruit to feed on and an absence of predators, the dodo lost the capacity for flight and an awareness of predatory threat. When Dutch sailors arrived in the late 16th century, word spread of the large, meaty bird that was easy to hunt. By the end of the 17th century, the dodo was extinct. It has since become an international symbol of extinction and the fragility of island life.

Harvard's dodo *skeleton*, though a composite of real bones and some plaster reconstructions, is a rarity of considerable scientific value because so few museum specimens exist today. The feathered *model*, however, is a fake and only has value as a Victorian museum piece. Created around 1900 by Rowland Ward, Ltd. of London, it consists of chicken feathers, duck wings, and the curled feathers of egrets (for the tail).

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