

Our dodo comes back to life

Museum of geology, Lausanne, Switzerland

Our exceptional newly restored 3D dodo skeleton has now taken centre stage in the middle of our large vertebrate showcase. Although this emblematic bird disappeared less than four centuries ago, its fossil remains are extremely rare. Only a few other big museums around the world possess a skeleton as complete as ours.



Thanks to an exchange with the owner of the main dodo deposit on the Island of Mauritius, the museum received in 1907 about fifty bones, enough to constitute a nearly complete skeleton. However, for more than a century, the fossils went unnoticed by visitors, as they were exhibited in separate bits and pieces, labelled “*Didus ineptus*”, an old scientific name.

So far only a single complete dodo skeleton belonging to a single bird has been found and is housed in the Port Louis Museum in Mauritius. All other skeletons are composites of bones from different birds. Most of our bones, the brown ones, come from the Mare-aux-Songes deposit, a marsh which suffered a terrible and prolonged drought 4200 years ago. The faeces-flooded waters triggered a bloom of poisonous algae causing a hecatomb of not only countless dodos but also other native species such as giant tortoises. Our white vertebrae were found in caves in the vicinity of Port Louis. In order to complete our skeleton, the missing bones - the upper part of the skull, ribs and toes - were cast from the Paris Museum specimen.

The Lausanne Museum of Geology is located in the Palais de Rumine, in downtown Lausanne, Switzerland and is open every day except on Mondays (Tu-Th: 11h-18h; Fr-Su 11h-17h); free entry; www.unil.ch/mcg.

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Press release with royalty-free images:

www.unil.ch/mcg/medias/dodo

