

How did the dodo become extinct?

The dodo was a flightless bird that lived on the island of Mauritius, located in the Indian Ocean. Records show that the dodo was first seen by Dutch sailors around the start of the 1600s. Based on sailors' accounts, scientists believe that a dodo was bigger in size than a turkey. It had blue-grey feathers, a large head and beak, and small, useless wings. Palaeontologists studying the fossilised remains of the dodo have discovered that the wings were hollow, suggesting that it had been able to fly at some point in history.



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For many years, people thought that greedy sailors hunted the birds to extinction. More recently, however, findings have shown that hunting might not have been to blame for the dodo's demise. Remains of the bones of pigs have been found, meaning that sailors may have released farm animals onto the island to use for meat. These animals, along with the many rats from the ships, spread all over the island. They did not have any predators on the island, but they did have an available source of food—the dodos' eggs.



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The sailors on the island of Mauritius were there to harvest the dark hardwood from the ebony trees. Soon, much of the natural habitat of the dodo was lost. Not only did the birds now have predators that ate their offspring, they also had nowhere to hide to safely raise their young. Within one hundred years of the sailors arriving on the island, the dodo had gone.

