

Press Release

Dodo Fred - the unique discovery of a cave fossil dodo

The Dodo *Raphus cucullatus* is probably the most famous bird in the world, yet we know virtually nothing about it in life. It is known only from a few contemporary pictures and accounts, a head with skin attached held at Oxford, UK, and a number of fossil bones collected from the Mare aux Songes marsh. One almost complete individual exists, but details of its discovery are not known.

In June 2007, 2 cavers, Fred and Debbie Stone, chanced upon a cave at a highland locality, Bois Cheri looking for cave cockroaches. They noticed some large bones in the cave and informed Dr. Julian Hume of the Natural History Museum, London to have a look should they turn out to be dodo. After confirming that the bones were dodo, Dr. Hume contacted Dr. Anwar Janoo of the National Heritage Fund and members of the Ministry to assist with their removal. This not only represented a unique opportunity to remove an individual dodo, with all the bones belonging to the same individual and to ascertain the conditions in which it died, but also to establish that dodos occurred in the highlands. Furthermore, this specimen is ideal for providing DNA, which will determine what species of pigeon the dodo is related to. Recent DNA work using dodo bones collected from the Mare aux Songes marsh and the Oxford head are not conclusive. Dodo Fred is easily the most important dodo in the world.

Some specimen of the fossil remains of the Dodo were successfully removed today and exhibited to the media in the presence of Hon. M. M. Dullo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation and Hon. M. Gowressoo, Minister of Arts and Culture and Officials of the Government.

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**Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade
and Cooperation**