

As Dead as a Dodo

If you tried looking for a dodo today, you would be looking for a very long time. You wouldn't find one in a zoo, nor would you find one in the wild. In fact, the only place you might find a dodo is in a museum. That is because it is *extinct*.

When a creature becomes extinct it means there are no more left alive on the Earth – and never will be.

So why did the dodo die out and what can we learn from the dodo's tragic story?

The dodo was an odd-looking bird. With its strangely-shaped head, short stubby wings and ugly hooked beak you would think it had no friends. But you would be wrong. Before man came along, this loving bird had no real enemies and lived happily with all the other animals on the island of Mauritius.

However, when Portuguese sailors landed on the island in 1507 the peaceful life of the dodo changed forever. 170 years later, not a single dodo was left alive.

Dodos were very friendly birds and would waddle up to new visitors to see what was happening. Little did they know that the sailors wanted them



on their dinner table. As big as turkeys, they tasted great! The sailors even began to call them 'doudo' which meant 'stupid' in their language.

Along with the sailors came dogs, pigs and rats. These scared the dodos from their nests and probably ate their eggs too. These poor flightless birds couldn't do much to protect their young from attack.

In 1681 the last dodo on Mauritius was killed and, with it, any hope of saving this beautiful bird.

Today many other creatures on our planet are on the verge of becoming extinct. If only we could learn a lesson from the story of the dodo, then perhaps the dodo will not have died in vain.

