

The great Dodo weight debate

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Dodo bird (*Raphus Cucullatus*)

(PhysOrg.com) -- The Dodo (*Raphus cucullatus*), a pigeon type bird that went extinct over 300 years ago is raising debate these last few months on just how slender or plump it really was. When the Dodo bird was first discovered by Dutch ships on the island of Mauritius, the drawings of the birds that were brought back showed a slender bird. However, over the years, the drawings showed a gradual plumping of the Dodo and this has been a big debate for years.

Back in the early 1990s, Andrew Kitchener from the National Museums Scotland in Edinburgh constructed a model based on bones and concluded the Dodo bird was far skinner than images had depicted them. His findings put the bird's weight in the range of 10.5 to 17.5 kilograms.

In a new study last month published in *Naturwissenschaften*, a team of researchers led by Delphine Angst from the Natural History Museum in Paris looked at 75 Dodo leg bones, including 25 femurs, tibiotarsus, and tarsometatarsus which they had collected from 14 different museums. By studying these bones, they came to the conclusion that the real body mass of the Dodo was really that of about 10 kilograms.

However, in yet another study published again this month in *Naturwissenschaften*, another team says that Angst and her team were wrong in their analysis of the leg dimensions and that it is the femur that is more relevant. Their research suggests that the accurate [weight](#) would have been in a range of 9.5 to 18 kilograms.

Paleo-ornithologist Antoine Louchart believes it is important that they get these figures correct as it will help scientists trying to understand just how [birds](#) evolve when living on islands when it comes to an increase or decrease of size.

More information: The end of the fat dodo? A new mass estimate for *Raphus cucullatus*, *NATURWISSENSCHAFTEN*, Volume 98, Number 3, 233-236, [DOI: 10.1007/s00114-010-0759-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00114-010-0759-7)

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