

A close-up, low-angle shot of a Moai statue's head and neck. The stone is dark brown and heavily textured with white lichen or mineral deposits. The statue's face is partially visible, showing a prominent nose and a slightly open mouth. The background is a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Easter Island

By Dylan Macauley

The Moai (the heads)

- monolithic human figures carved from rock on the Chilean Polynesian island of Easter Island between the years 1250 and 1500.
- Nearly half are still at Rano Raraku, the main moai quarry, but hundreds were transported from there and set on stone platforms called ahu around the island's perimeter.
- The tallest moai erected, called Paro, was almost 10 metres (33 ft) high and weighed 82 tons, the heaviest erected was a shorter but squatter moai at Ahu Tongariki, weighing 86 tons and one unfinished sculpture, if completed, would have been approximately 21 metres (69 ft) tall with a weight of about 270 tons

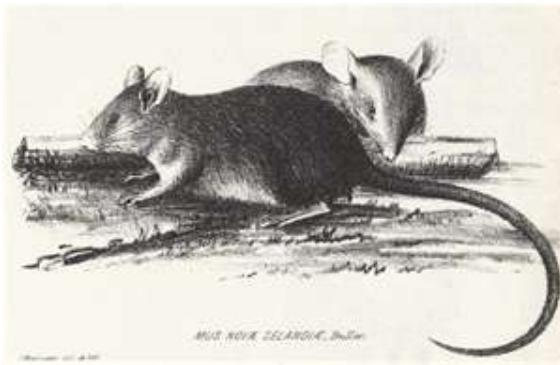




The Plants



- At the time of European arrival the toromiro tree, endemic to the island, was the only wild tree and the Carolina wolfberry the only wild shrub.
- The toromiro tree was overexploited by the island wood carvers, and the last local specimen died in the 1950s. The species was saved from extinction, however; the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition.
- Analysis of pollen deposits has revealed that other trees and shrubs, among them the giant Chile palm (*Jubaea spectabilis*), were formerly present on the island until exterminated by extensive fires occurring at the time of aboriginal human settlement. Today only 31 wild flowering plants, 14 ferns, and 14 mosses are reported. Grass and small ferns dominate the barren landscape, whereas the boggy crater lakes are thickly covered by two imported American species, the totora reed (an important building material) and *Polygonum acuminatum* (a medicinal plant). A number of cultivated species of plants were also introduced partly from America and partly from Polynesia before the arrival of Europeans



The Wildlife

- Before the arrival of human beings, the only vertebrates were either fish or seabirds capable of long flights. The animal life on land was otherwise restricted to a very few species of spiders, insects, worms, a snail, and a centipede. Vast quantities of flies, large cockroaches, and a small scorpion were introduced recently.
- The aboriginal edible Polynesian rat was subsequently replaced by larger European species. Sheep, horses, cattle, and pigs were introduced by the missionaries who established themselves ashore in 1864.
- A large wild cat, living in caves, is of unknown introduction. A Chilean partridge, a quail, and a small hawk have been added to the wildlife since 1880. Sea turtles and seals are now rare curiosities, but crayfish and various coastal and deep-sea fishes abound around the coast.



The End