

# abstract

## DWARF ELEPHANTS ON PLEISTOCENE ISLANDS: INSIGHTS FROM THE WESTERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

The existence of dwarf elephants in the Mediterranean was first widely recognized during the mid-19th century, following the extensive collecting activities of Admiral (then Captain) Joseph Spratt and Dr. Andrew Leith Adams, both keen naturalists, on Malta (Spratt 1867, Adams 1870).

Prior to this, the fossil faunas of the Mediterranean islands were little studied, and more-often the subject of local folklore and myth (for examples the Cyclops may owe its origins to the dwarf elephants of Sicily), or accorded a religious significance (to this day fossil hippo and elephant remains are used as votive offerings at Christian shrines in Cyprus, although the practice is dying out).

Despite 150 years of scientific research, however, many questions remain: how many endemic species lived on each island? When did they arrive there? At what rate did they evolve? When did they go extinct? And why?

Many of these questions can only be addressed within a robust geochronological context, and this is currently lacking for the Mediterranean



islands. I will present preliminary results from an ongoing project that aims to redress this through new excavation and sampling, and contextualize my own research into insular body-size change and evolution within this framework.

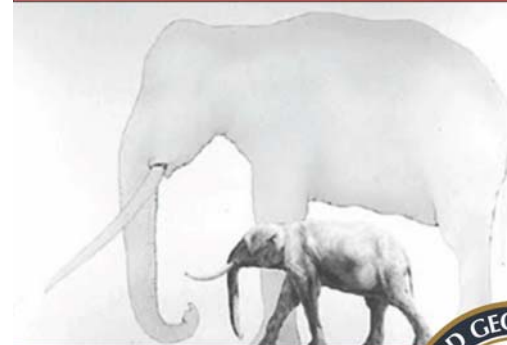
**Dr. Victoria Herridge**

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*Dwarf elephants on  
Pleistocene islands:  
insights from the western and  
eastern Mediterranean*

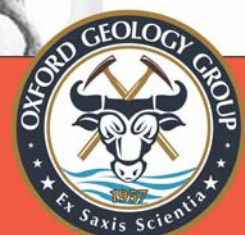
an illustrated talk by Victoria Herridge



7.30 pm

**May 17**

Earth Sciences Department  
South Parks Road, Oxford



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