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Museum slot for bird that wrecked record bid

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A sparrow shot dead after flying into the middle of a Dutch world record attempt and knocking over 23,000 dominoes with one flap of its tiny wing is to be given pride of place at Rotterdam's Natural History Museum.

The bird, whose killing last month in the northern Dutch city of Leeuwarden enraged animal rights activists, will be placed on top of a box of dominoes at an exhibition.

The gesture will be greeted by many as a fitting tribute to the posthumously celebrated animal who almost ruined a painstakingly prepared world record dominoes attempt but was shot with an air rifle before it could wreak more havoc on the televised event.

Thousands of messages of condolence were sent after its death to the website dodemus - set up to record the storm of protest from people across the Netherlands. The Dutch animal protection agency had threatened to investigate the shooting and radio stations offered rewards for anyone who could knock down more of the dominoes before the event.

The sparrow's exterminator was fined €170 (£115) on Friday for shooting a protected species. The common house sparrow was added to the Dutch list of endan-gered species last year.

The television company Endemol filmed the attempt and said it felt "terrible" about the shooting, but organisers insisted the killing was justified, arguing the hard work of more than 100 people for the previous month should not have been allowed to be wasted by the unexpected arrival of a bird.

Participants in the record attempt went on to knock down about 4 million dominoes to claim a new record, yet to be verified by Guinness World Records.

As for the sparrow, it will be on display at the museum next year with another dead bird, famous for different reasons. The male duck, obtained posthumously by the exhibition's organiser, Kees Moeliker, is said to be the victim of the first scientifically documented case of "homosexual mallard necrophilia".

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