



**Visit the Royal Institute for Natural Sciences in Brussels and  
discover the world's oldest calculator**

*Starting on 5 September 2001*

The idea that mathematical activity began 20,000 years ago in Ishango, in Africa's Great Lakes area, seems to be confirmed by an analysis researcher from Belgium's Royal Institute for Natural Sciences made in 1950 of a bone tool handle in which a series of notches had been carved. The bone was found to group numerical values (2, 4, 10, 12...) or point to various mathematical relationships, thereby casting doubt on the idea that the Mesopotamians or Egyptians were responsible for the first sophisticated uses of mathematics !

As result of the support the Brussels-Capital Region is offering during its Presidency of the EU Research Council, the Ishango bone is at last being given a place of honour in the museum rooms. A magnifying camera has been provided to allow you to examine all the details of this mysterious object. A multimedia kiosk is available to take you on an adventure to discover the bone. It describes the fascinating culture of Ishango and reveals all the theories surrounding what is undoubtedly the oldest known slide rule.

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[www.naturalsciences.be](http://www.naturalsciences.be)