

Facts about mastodons - General

The Ice Age ended in New York about 12,000 years ago. Mastodons loved the cold weather.

Mastodons were one of the largest animals living here during and after the Ice Age.

Mastodons lived here until about 9,000-11,000 years ago and then became extinct.

Scientists can test mastodon bones (radiocarbon dating) to determine how long ago the animal lived.

Mastodons had a heavy fur coat which made them feel very warm after the Ice Age ended.

Their fur coat had three layers with a heavy layer of fat just beneath the skin

Their fur color was yellow-brown to reddish-brown.

Mastodons had small ears and a short tail which meant less heat loss.

Note: Modern elephants have large ears to cool their blood in the warmer climates where they live.

Mastodons had two large upper tusks that measured up to six feet long.

Mastodons had two smaller lower tusks that measured from 7 inches to 2 feet.

Mastodon tusks are made from ivory which is similar to an elephant tusk. These are worth a lot of money.

A mastodon tusk has rings, like a tree. Scientists can count the rings to tell how old the mastodon was.

Mastodons ate herbs, shrubs and trees like the pine trees found here over 10,000 years ago.

The mastodon used its long flexible trunk for gathering food from trees and bushes, like an elephant.

The mastodon species found in America is known as *Mammuth americanum*.

The mastodon walked on its toes and had a large fatty pad on the bottom of its feet.

Mastodons measured as much as 8 to 10 feet tall at the shoulder.

Mastodons were slightly shorter and slightly longer than the elephant.

Mastodons weighed as much as 10,000 - 15,000 pounds.

Mastodons ate about 300 pounds of food each day.

Mastodons are extinct relatives of modern elephants and extinct mammoths.

Mastodons traveled in herds like elephants. Males are called bulls, females are called cows.

Mastodons showed a lot of affection for each other and the family. Like elephants, mastodons are believed to be highly intelligent.

The large animal in the movie "Ice Age" is actually a mammoth.

Scientists who investigate ancient (very old) plants and animals are known as paleontologists.

Paleontologists study fossils.

Fossils are any naturally occurring objects that tell us about ancient life. They can be bones, teeth, shells, leaf impressions, footprints, insects trapped in amber, or any number of other sorts of things.

A vertebrate paleontologist is a paleontologist who studies animals with backbones. These backbones are made from many individual bones called vertebrae.

Why did mastodons die off?? Three theories

1. Dramatic climate change that affected vegetation patterns and their food source
2. Overhunting by humans (no direct evidence)
3. New diseases introduced by animals and humans coming from Asia over the land bridge (no direct evidence) – possibly tuberculosis

Many scientists believe it was a combination of the first two (climate and humans)

Some mastodons died when they fell into tar pits that were all over the area. Some mastodons may have been driven into the tar pits by humans who hunted them. The tar pits later became swamps.

These swamps preserved the mastodon bones quite well due to the lack of oxygen which would have decayed the bones.

Most of the mastodons skeletons were found by accident. Farmers would dig in swamps for marl (a gooey substance) which they would use on their fields for fertilizer. When they did this, they often found mastodon bones.

A mastodon would have fed a human clan or family for several weeks.

The mastodon meat would have been preserved in the cool period following the Ice Age.

More mastodon bones were found in Orange County than anywhere else in America.

Within Orange County, the Town of Montgomery had the most mastodon finds.

The best preserved mastodon ever was found in 1845 in Coldenham in the Town of Montgomery. This became known as the Warren Mastodon after Dr. Warren who purchased it. This mastodon is on display at the New York Museum of Natural History. It was found near where the Coldenham Firehouse is today.

mastodont, carnivore, herbivore, radio carbon dating, prehistoric, Paleo Indians (Clovis), extinct (extinction)

extinction is the cessation of existence of a [species](#). The moment of extinction is generally considered to be the death of the last individual of that species

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