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Ice Age Discovery Fact Sheet: Mammoths, Mastodons and Giant Sloths...oh my!

Learn the difference between Mammoths and Mastodons among other fascinating Ice Age facts at the Snowmass Ice Age Discovery Center, which presents a wealth of information about the remarkable mountain discovery of one of the richest alpine fossil deposits in the entire world. Visitors can talk one on one to an onsite Paleontology Interpreter, who will explain how the sediment moved through the ancient Rocky Mountains and paint the intricate picture of the rare Ice Age ecosystem.

Snowmass, an Ancient Paleontological Site

In 2010, a construction crew unearthed a single tusk of a young female mammoth...but that was just the beginning. The Denver Museum of Nature and Science stepped in and uncovered more than 5,000 bones of 10 mammals and over 26,000 small bones from small vertebrate animals—40 species in all. The 10-month project became a race to uncover and carefully extricate these bones, each preserved in the gooey, wet muck of an ancient pond. Mammoths, mastodons, camels, horses, sloths, and other species, as well as insects, plant life and more were found. The Snowmass paleontological site quickly became the richest Ice Age ecosystem found at such high altitude. Even leaves were peeled up from the muck, still green after 150,000 years, only to slowly oxidize in the presence of air.

In the Beginning

More than 150,000 years ago, glaciers covered the area that would become Snowmass Village. The ancient site began humbly in a carved-out pit of sediment left behind by the movement of massive glaciers. Slowly, over thousands of years, the massive Bull Glacier retreated and carved this bowl that would fill with melting glacier water and eventually become what is now Ziegler Reservoir in Snowmass Village.

The Difference Between Mammoths & Mastodons

The main difference is the very different tooth morphology that is diagnostic between these two gargantuan mammals. Mammoths have teeth that look almost like a washboard, while mastodons have mountain-like teeth. This reflects their differing diets, with mammoths grazing on grasses and mastodons browsing on leafy and crunchy greens. Mastodons were slightly smaller than mammoths, with shorter legs and lower, flatter heads. Both species stood between seven and 14 feet tall, and were covered in long, shaggy hair that protected them from the harsh conditions of their respective environments. But mammoths also possessed fatty humps on their backs that provided them with the additional nutrients necessary in their more northerly, ice-covered habitats.

Ways to Learn More About the Discovery Take a Snowmass Ice Age Discovery Hike

Guests can learn about Snowmass' incredible Ice Age Discovery Dig by taking a free guided tour with an Aspen Center for Environmental Services (ACES) Naturalist. The two-hour round trip tour is an easy hike just adjacent to the site of the incredible fossil discovery offered daily at 1pm.

The Snowmass Ice Age Discovery Center, located on the Snowmass Mall, is **open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., June 2, 2016 to Sept. 30, 2016**. Admission is free. Check out the full-sized drawings of the massive mammals on the Snowmass Mall right across from the IADC. For more information call (970) 922-2277.

About Snowmass, Colorado

A vibrant summer playground and renowned winter destination, Snowmass offers a wide variety of outdoor activities, nearly 30 restaurants, 95 percent on-slope lodging and great shopping, as well as exciting special events and music – all year round. Summertime, Snowmass features more than 90 miles of hiking and biking trails; gold medal fly-fishing; Class V white-water rafting and kayaking, and a full lineup of weekly events. Consistently ranking as one of the best ski areas in the world, the area boasts the second longest vertical drop in the United States, with 3,332 skiable acres. Located six miles from Aspen's airport and with 300 days of sunshine per year, Snowmass is an ideal summer and winter destination. For more information and a complete calendar of events and activities, visit www.gosnowmass.com.

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