

The Woolly Mammoth



Did You Know...?

Scientists can work out a woolly mammoth's age by how many rings there are on its tusk!



The first woolly mammoth skeleton was discovered in 1799!



Mammoth ivory is sometimes used in making violin bows today!



What was it?

The woolly mammoth was an extremely large species of mammal that roamed the Earth long, long ago. This animal existed during the last ice age, which was between 200,000 and 4,000 years ago. It is known to have lived in northern Europe and Asia, as well as in North America. Due to the discovery of frozen carcasses in Alaska and Siberia, the woolly mammoth has become one of the most studied prehistoric animals in history.

What did it look like?

Because the woolly mammoth lived during the ice age, it was covered with long fur to help it keep warm; its fur is thought to have been brown in colour. Its ears and tail were short to lessen the chance of frostbite and it also had two very long ivory tusks. The woolly mammoth was so big that it weighed about 6 tons - that is around the size of an African elephant! Mammoths and elephants actually come from the same family of animals and they look very similar, apart from the size of their ears and tusks.

What did they eat?

The woolly mammoth was a herbivore. It is referred to as a grazer, as it ate mainly grass but also other plants and flowers. It is believed that the animal used its 15 feet trunk to shovel the snow out of the way to reach the grass underneath. When humans eat, the jaw moves in an up and down motion; the woolly mammoth used a grinding motion, moving the jaw forwards and backwards, which helped to grind down the grass. It is also believed that the reason the animal was so big was due to the size of its stomach, which needed to be vast to ferment the grass which wasn't particularly nutritious.

Did You Know...?

The Woolly Mammoth Revival is a project aiming to bring back woolly mammoths using DNA extracted by scientists.

**Why did it become extinct?**

About 4,000 years ago, the woolly mammoth became extinct. The main reason for the disappearance of this species was climate change. This animal was made to live in extremely cold weather and planet Earth has since become much warmer. Another reason it became extinct was because humans began hunting the woolly mammoth for the ivory that came from their tusks to make tools and art. They also used their meat for food.