

An Exceptional Mammoth

One of the world's finest Ice Age animals

The large bull Columbian Mammoth discovered at this site was over 95 percent complete. At over 12 feet tall, it was the largest animal of any Utah Ice Age landscape.

The huge molars show extensive wear, indicating this was a very mature individual, maybe past the prime of its life.

Evidence of injury and disease to several bones show that it lived through times of hardship.



Utah Mammoths

The Columbian Mammoth, *Mammuthus columbi*, is one of several species known from North America. Like its near relative the woolly mammoth, *Mammuthus primigenius*, it was a very successful species with a wide distribution.

Numerous individuals have been discovered across the intermountain region, but this is the most complete and spectacular of any yet found. Cast replicas of the exquisite skeleton now stand in numerous museums around the world.



The remains removed from this watery grave represent some of the best-preserved mammoth material in the country.

Analysis of the bones revealed intact proteins very similar to modern elephants. Preservation was unusually good down to microscopic scale, with bone cells preserving even DNA-bearing nuclei.

Diet

A mammoth this size would need to spend much of its day eating. Its enormous molar teeth were very well adapted for chewing tough plants such as grasses.



Amazingly, stomach contents were preserved in the body cavity of this specimen, consisting of poor food such as fir needles. This was probably not the main fodder for the mammoth, suggesting that it may have been sick or undernourished.



Preservation

The cause of death for this mammoth is a mystery that might never be solved. But its preservation in a cool, high lake is a textbook case. The calm, icy waters acted like a refrigerator for many years after the animal's death, helping to make it one of the best specimens ever unearthed.



World of the Mammoth

The Huntington Mammoth lived in a dynamic, changing world

In Search of a Refuge

No one knows why a grassland mammoth found its way up into Huntington canyon, but with climatic warming throughout the region, the Huntington Mammoth may have been driven to higher altitudes in search of the last refuge of moderate temperatures.

Glacial landforms in this vicinity point to the persistence of ice on mountain slopes. Many animals and plants were displaced from their original habitats towards ever-shrinking areas with comparable climates.

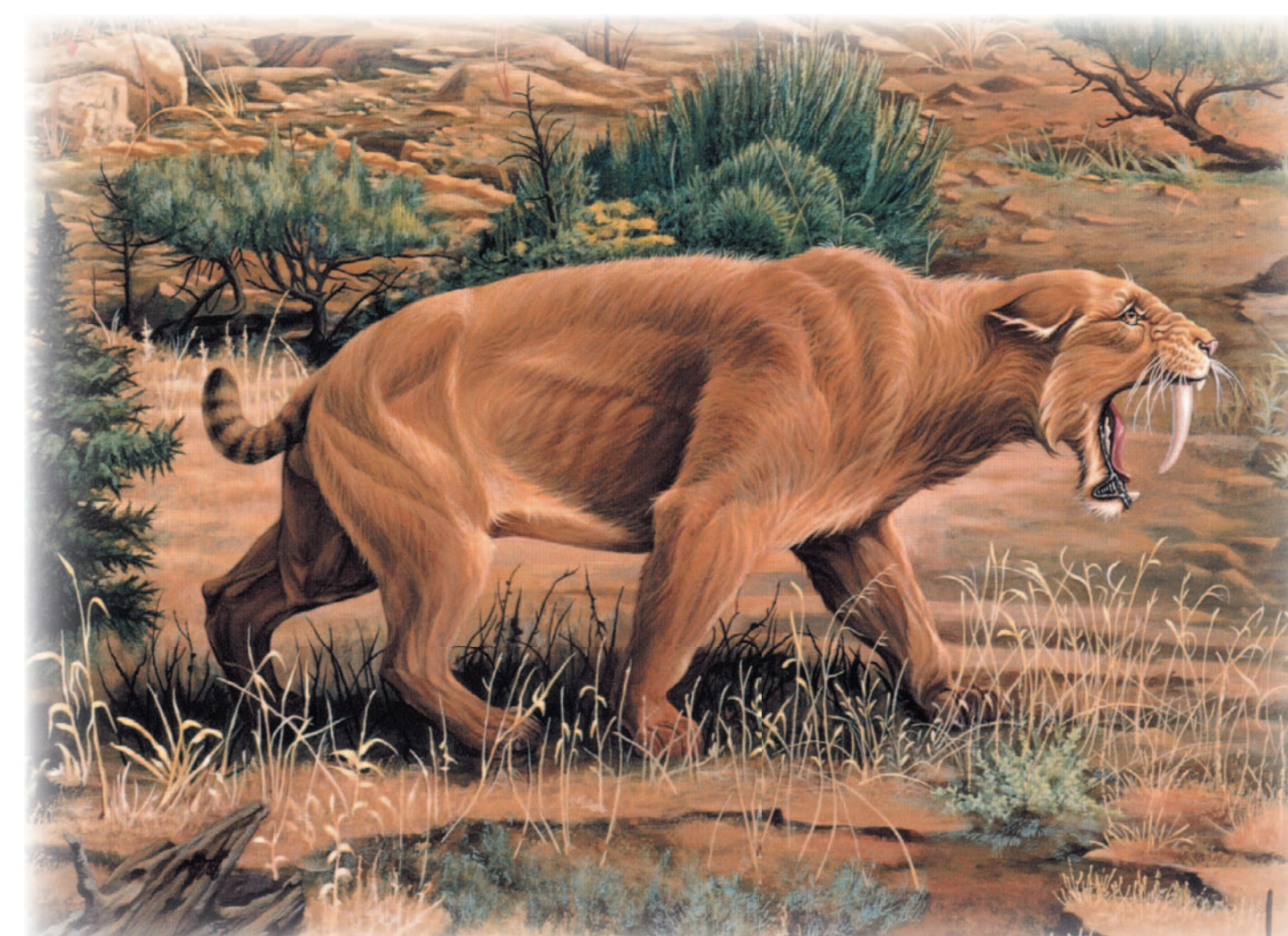


This canyon may have become an ecological refuge, remaining cool and habitable for the mammoth long after lower elevations lost their lushness.

Ice Age Waypoint

Utah occupied a unique place in the Ice Ages. Its ecology supported a rich diversity of animals and plants. At times Utah lay between vast migrations from the north, over the Bering land bridge, and from the south, across Panama.

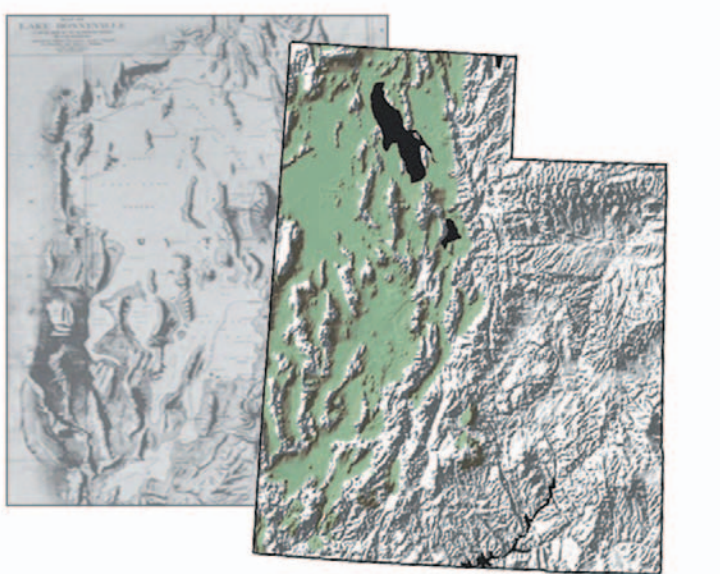
The resulting variety of immigrants gave the region a strange mixture of creatures.



Time of Transition

The Pleistocene ice ages were just yesterday in geologic context, but Utah was quite different even near the end of the epoch some 11,000 years ago.

The ancient Lake Bonneville, which had once covered nearly 20,000 square miles and nearly half of Utah, was starting to



shrink to the present-day size of the Great Salt Lake. Dynamic activity in the region, such as uplift and volcanic activity, slowed and the climate began becoming warmer and drier.



Utah supported not only herds of Columbian mammoths, but also camels, sabertooth cats, and even musk oxen, along with more familiar deer, horses and sheep.