

Sharing the Ice Age: Humans & Mammoths



Beringia—circa 15,000 years ago

Mammoths Before People:

Toward the end of the Ice Age, much of the earth's fresh water was trapped in ice and sea level was much lower than it is today. A vast grassy plain known as Beringia, or the Bering Land Bridge, connected North America and Asia. Mammoths and other Ice Age animals thrived here for more than 1.5 million years before humans walked this land.



Excavation of a mammoth tusk at Swan Point

Mammoths and People:

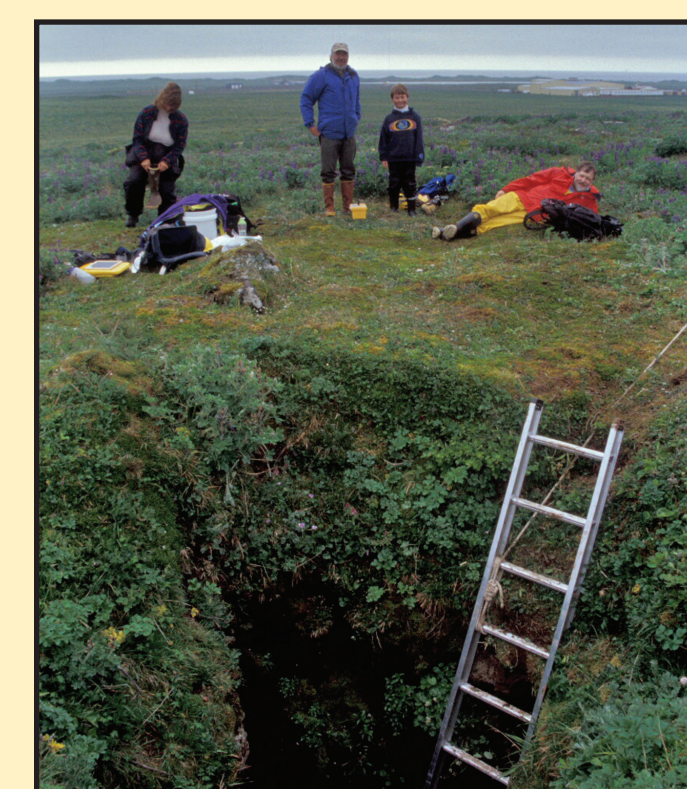
Archaeological evidence suggests that the first humans came here from Northeast Asia sometime before 14,000 years ago. For thousands of years mammoths and humans coexisted. Although there is currently no direct evidence mammoths were hunted here, kill sites have been found in the US and Russia.



Ivory tools from the Broken Mammoth Archaeology site—Central Alaska

Ivory as Paleoplastic:

Much like plastics of today, mammoth ivory was valued for its ability to be crafted into a variety of forms. Evidence from archaeological sites around the world demonstrates that ivory was used to create tools and weapons, as well as art and personal adornment.



Excavations at Qagnaʻ Cave, Pribilof Islands, of 6,000 year old mammoth tooth

Where Did the Mammoths Go?

The disappearance of mammoths from the mainland about 11,000 years ago is still one of prehistory's greatest mysteries. Stranger still, they survived until 6,000 years ago on St. Paul, one of the Pribilof Islands.



Atlatl event, Anchorage, Alaska, 2009

The Mammoth Lives On:

Mammoths are an international symbol of the Ice Age and the Alaska State fossil. Factors that may have contributed to their extinction include the arrival of human hunters and the changing climate and vegetation at the end of the Ice Age. Mammoths continue to live on through science, entertainment, and our imaginations.