

Indiana's Ancient Elephants



Mammoths and mastodons, relatives of modern elephants, lived in Indiana most of the last million years. Scientists believe that both of these giant

mammals lived throughout the harrowing years of the Great Ice Age and mysteriously became extinct worldwide about 8,000 to 10,000 years ago—just when the climate began to improve. A few complete skeletons have been unearthed

in the state, but teeth, tusks, and bones have been found in dozens of widely separated places in Indiana. Almost all the skeletal remains were discovered by workmen draining swamps, by operators of sand and gravel, marl, and peat deposits, and by construction workers.

Skeletons are identified more easily if a tooth is present. The molar of a mammoth contains a series of closely spaced flat-crowned ridges alternating with dentine and cement. The mastodon tooth has two, three, or four large enamel-covered crests. Although bones of both animals are found in Indiana, most of the identifiable remains have been the mastodon.



Mastodon tooth



Mammoth tooth