

Beat: Miscellaneous

Russian scientists recover woolly mammoth blood from frozen carcass

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USPA News - The carcass of a woolly mammoth has been discovered on an island in the arctic seas of eastern Russia and is so well-preserved that blood was flowing freely from the ancient animal which became extinct thousands of years ago, Russian scientists announced on Thursday. Members of a paleontological expedition of the North-Eastern Federal University made the discovery earlier this month during a visit to the Lyakhovsky Islands, part of the New Siberian Islands in the arctic seas of eastern Russia.

It is believed the carcass is between 10,000 and 15,000 years old, and the animal itself is estimated to have been about 50 to 60 years old when it died. Semyon Grigoriev, the head of the expedition, said the soft tissues of the animal are almost ideal, with only the upper part of the body, head and left hind leg skeletonized. "The fragments of muscle tissues, which we've found out of the body, have a natural red color of fresh meat," he said. The scientists said the carcass of the animal - a female - is so well preserved because the lower part of the body was underlying in pure ice while the upper part of the body was found in the middle of tundra. "We found a trunk separately from the body, which is the worst-preserved part," Grigoriev said. But perhaps one of the most stunning findings was the discovery of blood, which some scientists claim may be crucial in their efforts to clone the extinct animal and bring it back to life. "The blood is very dark, it was found in ice cavities below the belly and when we broke these cavities with a poll pick, the blood came running out," Grigoriev said. The temperature at the time of excavation was about 7 to 10 degrees Celsius (44.6 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit), which could possibly indicate that the blood of mammoths had cryoprotective properties. "The researchers collected the samples of the animal's blood in tubes with a special preservative agent," Grigoriev added. Samples from the carcass have been taken to the Russian city of Yakutsk for bacterial examination in order to detect causative agents of potentially dangerous infections. A group of Russian and international scientists is expected to visit Yakutsk in July to further study the findings. In October 2012, Australian scientists revealed that bonds in a DNA strand could survive up to 6.8 million years under ideal conditions. While it rules out the possibility of one day cloning dinosaurs as shown in the popular film "Jurassic Park," it may suggest that extinct animals from the more recent past - such as woolly mammoths and saber-toothed tigers - may one day be cloned. The woolly mammoth became extinct about 10,000 years ago, but it is believed small populations of the animal may have lived on Russia's Wrangel Island as recent as 4,000 years ago.

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