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National Geographic Readers: Prehistoric Mammals

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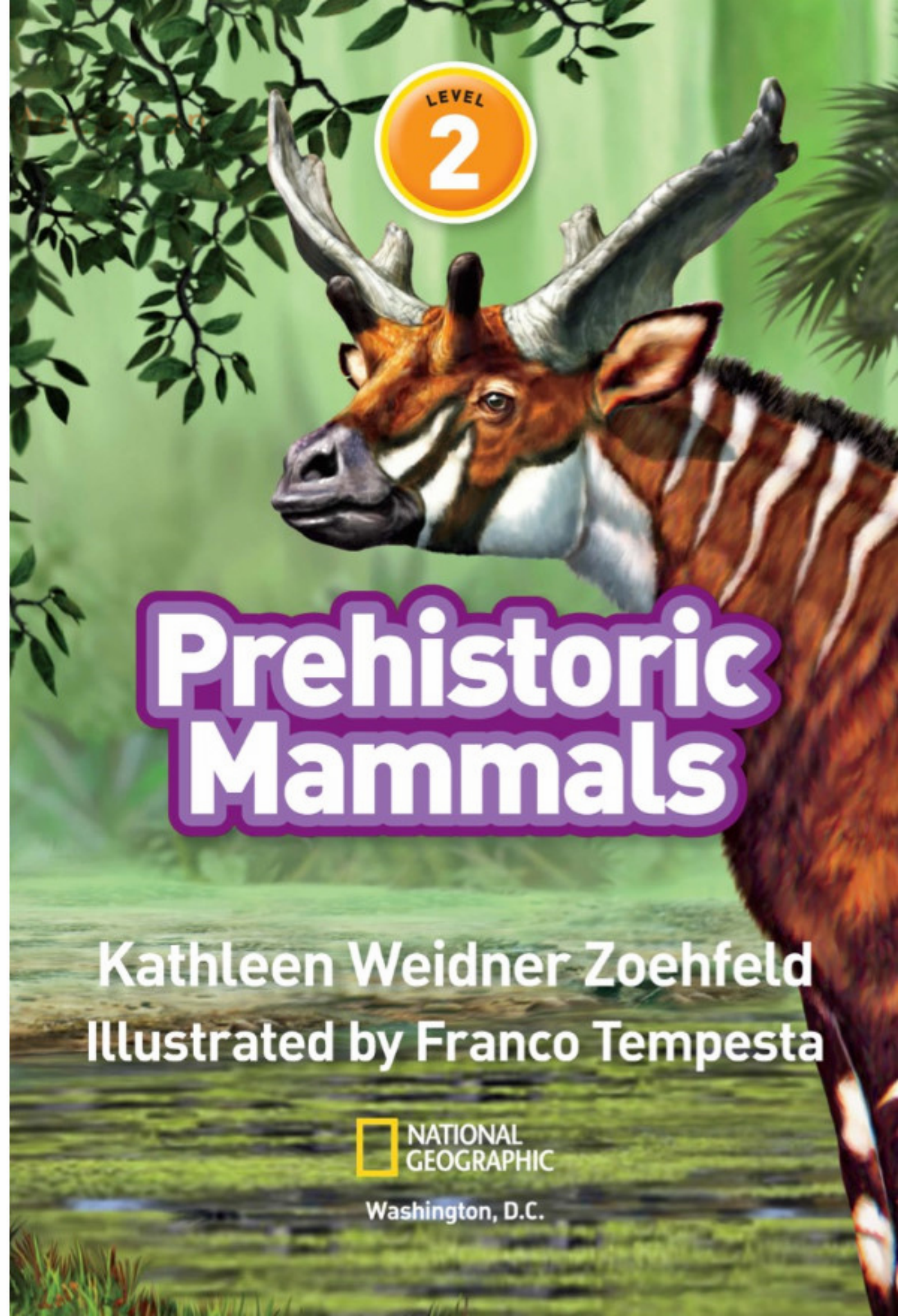
From woolly mammoths to saber-toothed cats, prehistoric mammals once roamed Earth.

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Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld
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For Nancy —K.W.Z.

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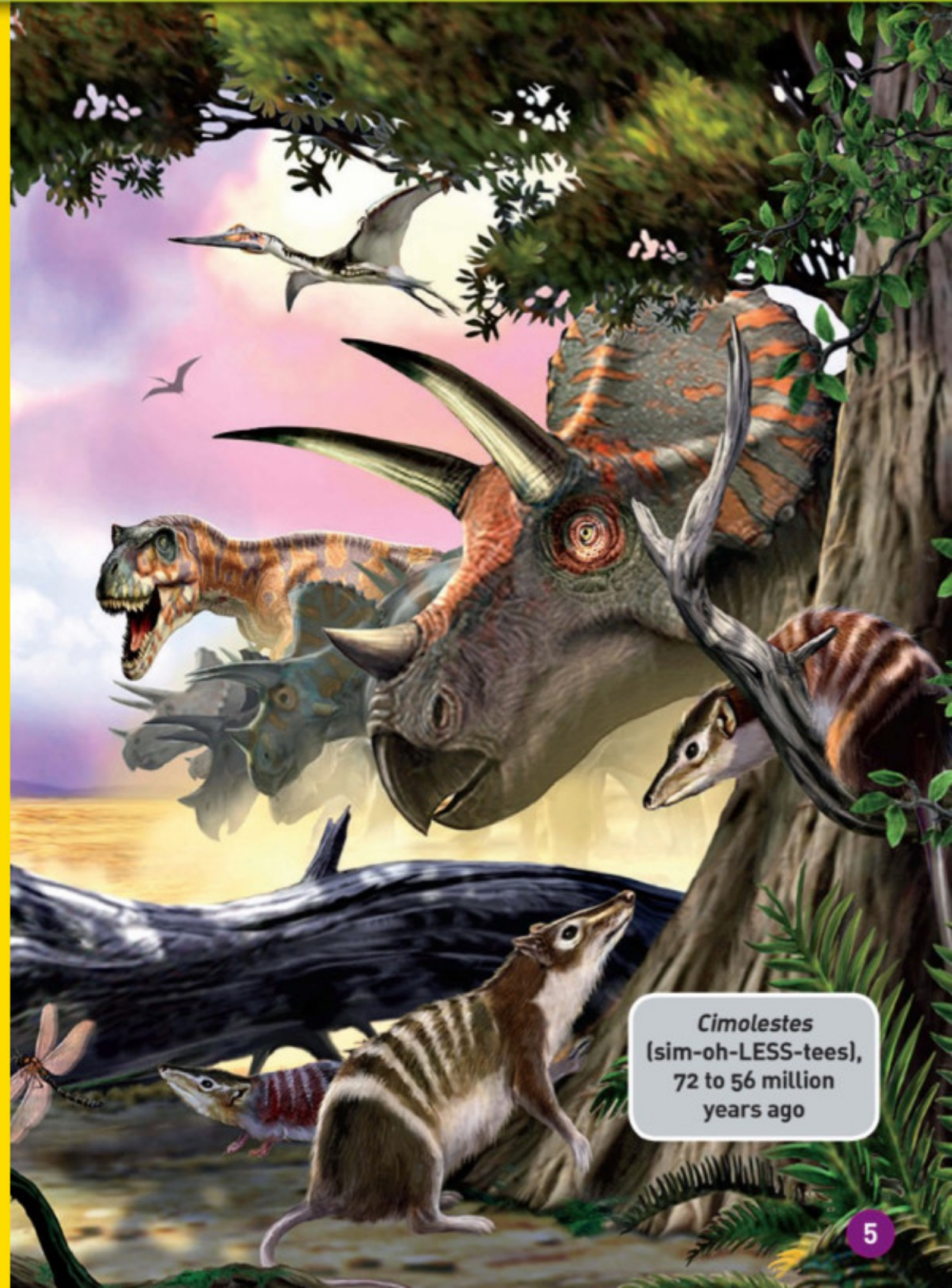
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Mammals Long Ago

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Earth's first mammals lived long, long ago. Like mammals today, they had hair or fur. Most gave birth to live babies. And they fed the babies milk.

The first mammals were small. They lived among giant dinosaurs. Most mammals came out only at night and hid safely during the day.




Cimolestes
(sim-oh-LESS-tees),
72 to 56 million
years ago



Alphadon
(AL-fa-don), 75 to 66
million years ago

Then, 66 million years ago, all the big dinosaurs died out. A few types of tiny mammals lived on. But with all the big dinosaurs gone, mammals didn't have to hide anymore.

Over millions of years, mammals of many shapes and sizes filled the Earth. Let's meet some prehistoric mammal superstars!

Word Watch 

PREHISTORIC: from a time long ago, before people invented written language

Super Size

公众号: We MEAT-EATER

Some prehistoric mammals were huge. A large size helps an animal fight off smaller enemies.

Earth's first really big mammal was about the size of today's rhinos.

It had long, saber-like teeth. But, it only ate plants!

Uintatherium
(you-IN-tah-THEER-ee-um),
50 to 45 million years ago

PLANT-EATER



Andrewsarchus (AN-drew-SAR-kus),
40 million years ago

One of the biggest meat-eating mammals had a head almost three feet long. Its jaws were strong enough to crush bones.

Word Watch



SABER-LIKE: shaped like a long, curved sword, or saber

Q When can three hornless rhinos stand under an umbrella and not get wet?

A When it's not raining!

公众号：Wecancan

But even larger mammals walked the Earth. The hornless rhino was the biggest mammal that has ever lived on land.



This plant-eating giant was bigger than four elephants put together. It was almost as large as the biggest dinosaurs.

Indricotherium
(in-DREE-co-thee-ree-um),
37 to 23 million years ago

Huge mammals lived in the ocean, too. Some prehistoric whales were as big as the biggest dinosaurs.

One of Earth's first whales was nearly as long as two buses. Its jaws were full of sharp teeth. Fish swam away fast when this huge hunter was nearby.



Basilosaurus
(bah-SILL-oh-SORE-us),
40 to 34 million years ago

Horns Galore

Prehistoric mammals had some of the strangest horns the world has ever seen.

This skeleton of *Arsinoitherium* in a museum shows two huge horns on its snout and two little horns above its eyes.



Arsinoitherium
(are-sih-noy-THEE-ree-um),
36 to 30 million years ago

Q What's the difference between a car and a *Megacerops*?

A A car has only one horn.



Megacerops (meg-ah-SER-ops),
37 to 34 million years ago

Horns could help fight enemies. Special horns could also help animals attract and win mates.

Word Watch

MATE: either a male or female in a pair



Mammal Armor

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Q

Where did the armadillo get its new armor?

A

At the hard wear store.

Some prehistoric mammals had armor to keep them safe. One animal looked like today's armadillo. But it was the size of a small car!

It had a giant dome of bony armor on its back.

Word Watch



ARMOR: a cover, layer, or shell that protects the body

Glyptotherium
(GLIP-toe-THEER-ee-um),
4 million to 10,000 years ago

6 FUN FACTS About Prehistoric Mammals

公众号: We

Scientists have studied the bodies of woolly mammoths that have been found frozen in the ice in the cold, northern parts of Siberia.



3



1

Ceratogaulus (sir-AT-oh-GALL-us), the horned gopher, was the smallest horned mammal that has ever lived. It was a foot long and weighed about 5 to 10 pounds.



4

Elasmotherium (ee-LAZ-mo-THEER-ee-um) was a big rhino with long hair. It had one huge horn on its head.



5

Tinimomys (tye-nee-MOH-mees) was so small, it could sit on the end of your nose!



2

Entelodon (en-TELL-oh-don) looked like a giant warthog, or pig. It was a fierce meat-eater with jaws as strong as a crocodile's.



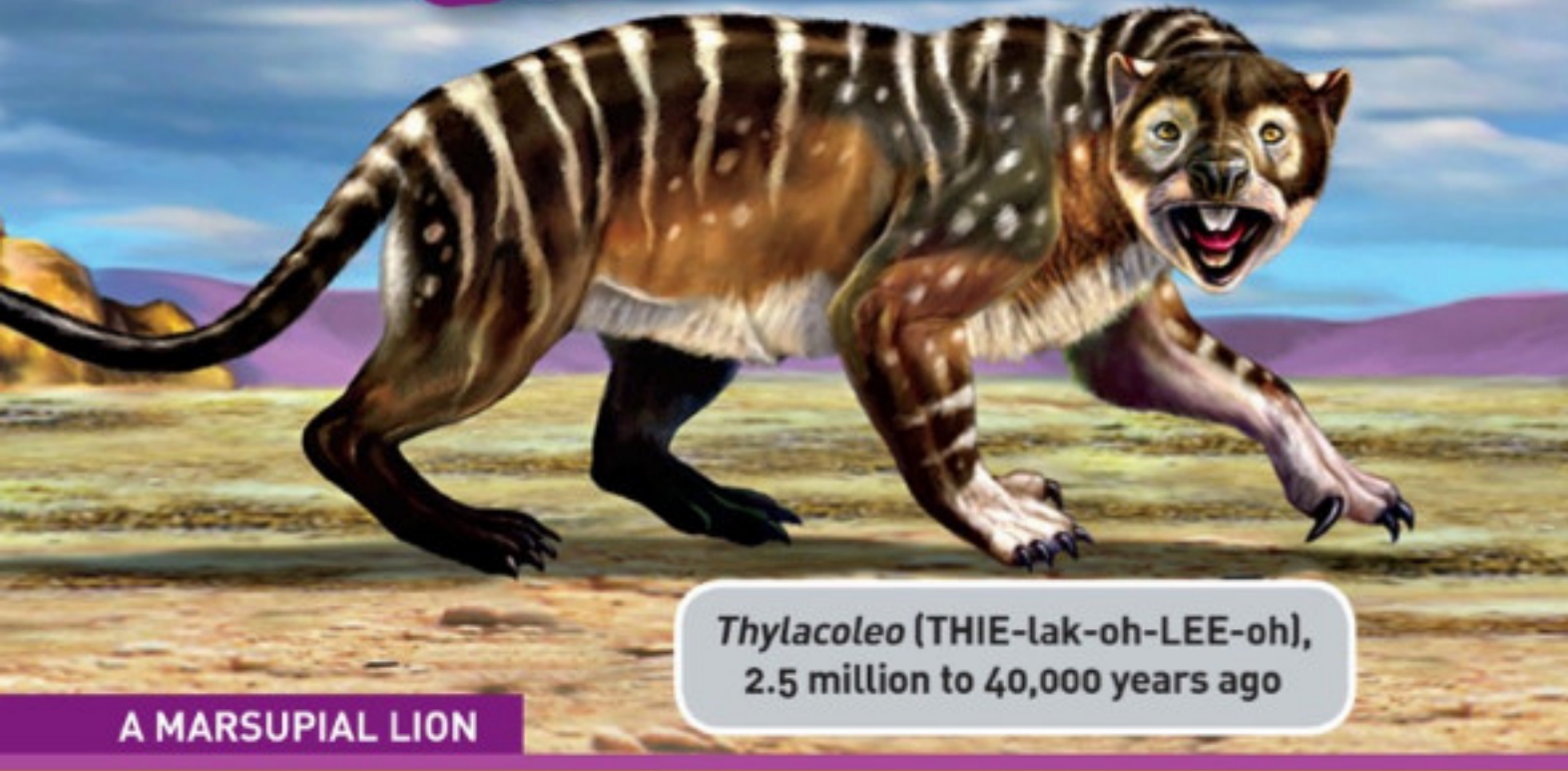
6

The giant deer, *Megaloceros* (meg-uh-LAH-sir-us), had the biggest, fanciest antlers of any mammal ever. They were about 12 feet across.

Pouches for Babies

公众号: Wecan

Q What's a giant kangaroo's favorite season? A Spring



Thylacoleo (THIE-lak-oh-LEE-oh),
2.5 million to 40,000 years ago

A MARSUPIAL LION

Many kinds of marsupials (mar-SOO-pee-uls) lived long ago. Marsupial lions were fierce. They had large thumb claws and sharp teeth. They hunted giant kangaroos.

Word Watch



MARSUPIAL: a mammal that keeps its baby in a pouch until the baby grows bigger

Giant kangaroos were much bigger than today's kangaroos. They grew taller than basketball players and twice as heavy. They were fast, too. That helped them escape the marsupial lion's powerful jaws.



Sthenurus
(sthen-OR-us),
2.5 million
to 40,000
years ago

A GIANT KANGAROO

Coats for the Cold

公众号: We A WOOLLY MAMMOTH

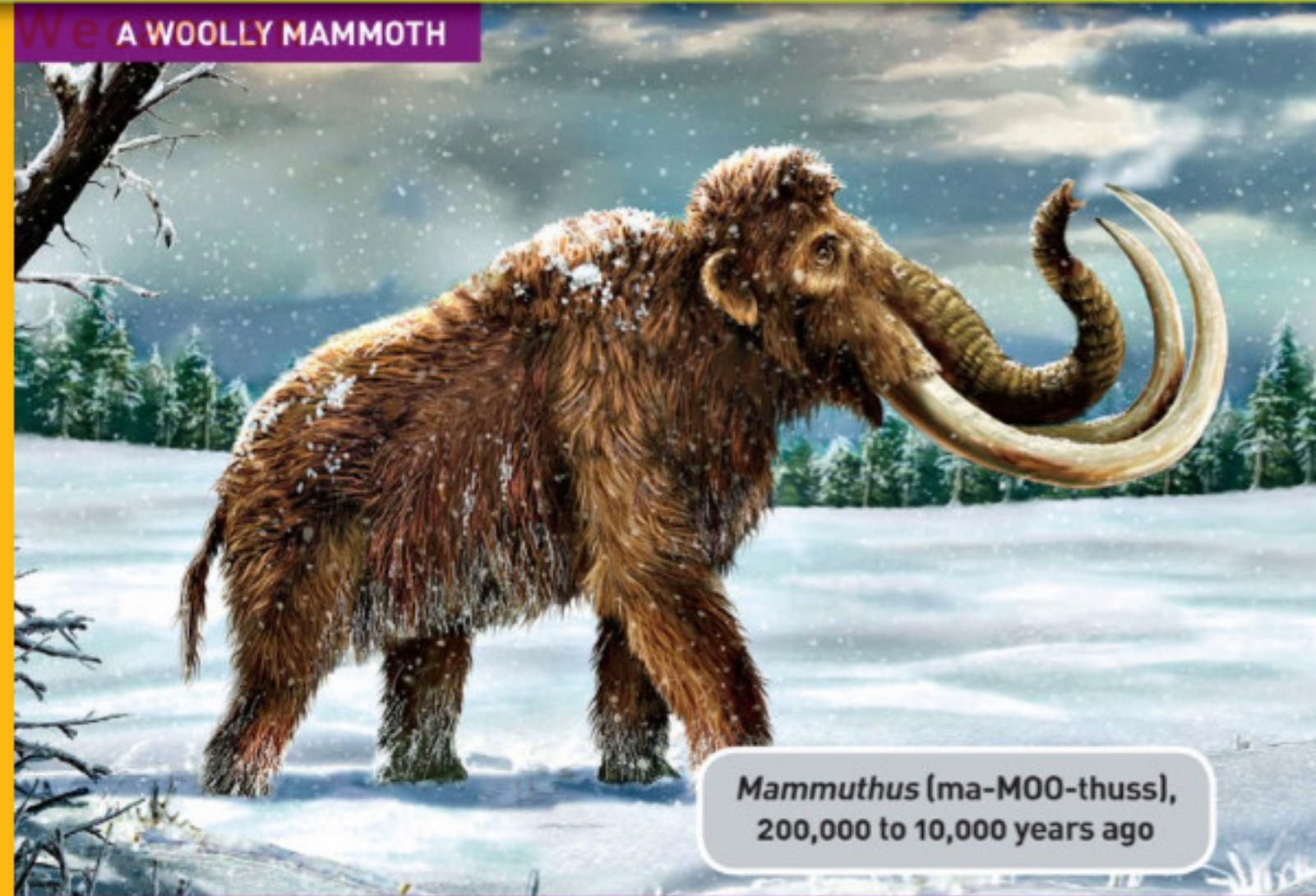
Two million years ago, Earth entered an ice age. Winters grew long and very cold.

Many mammals that lived during this time had thick fur coats.

These coats helped them stay warm. The woolly mammoths and woolly rhinos were very furry.

Word Watch

ICE AGE: thousands of years of extreme cold, with thick ice sheets covering much of the land



Mammuthus (ma-MOO-thuss),
200,000 to 10,000 years ago

WOOLLY RHINOS

Coelodonta (SEE-lo-DON-tah),
200,000 to 10,000 years ago



Hunting Skills

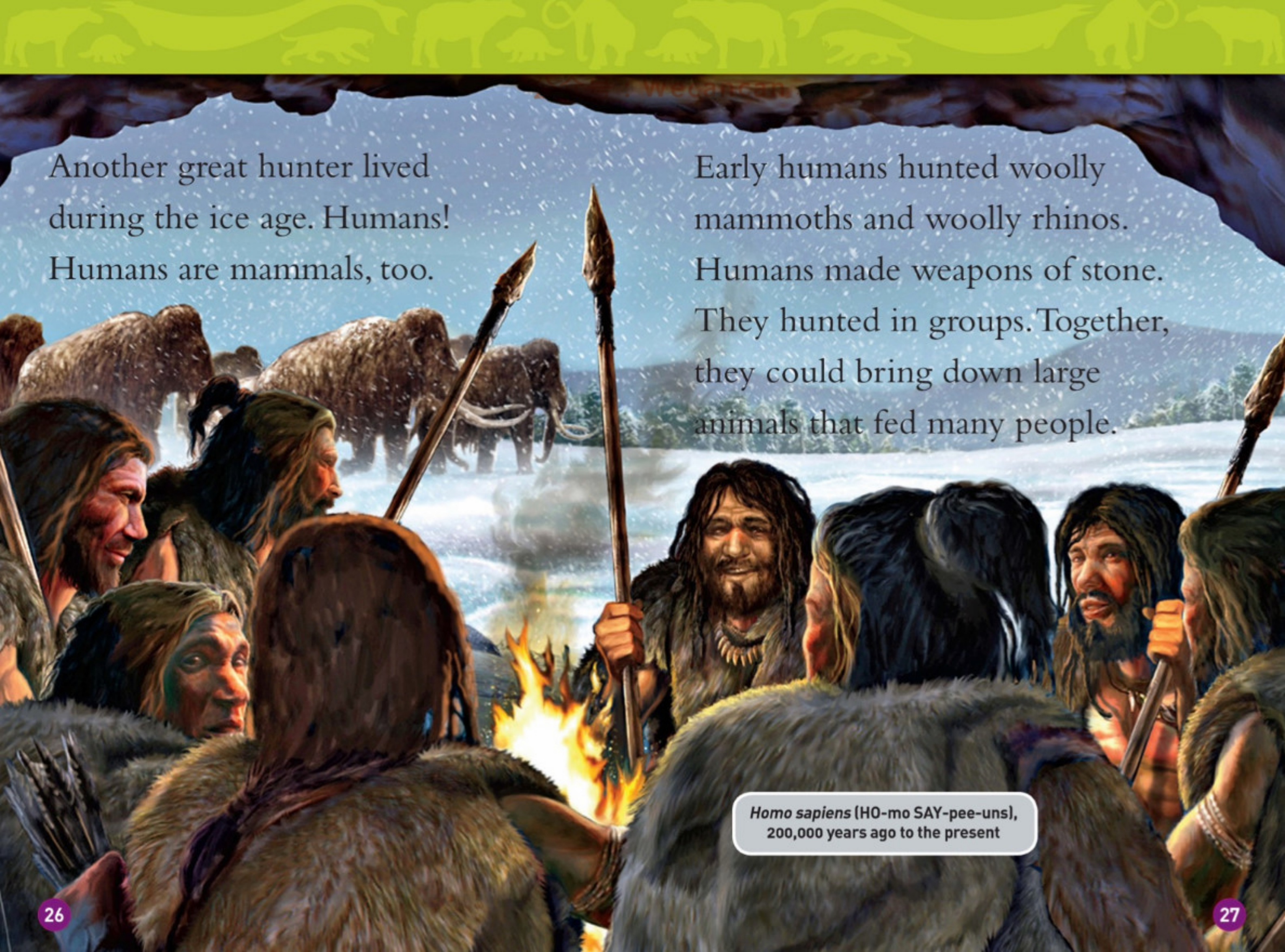
The ice age brought many great hunters. The saber-toothed cat used its two swordlike teeth for slicing. These fierce cats hunted horses and bison. They may have tried to hunt giant ground sloths.

Smilodon (SMILE-oh-don),
1 million to 10,000 years ago



Megatherium
(MEG-ah-THEER-ee-um),
4 million to 10,000
years ago

But that would not have been easy! This sloth was more than 20 feet tall, with huge clawed hands.

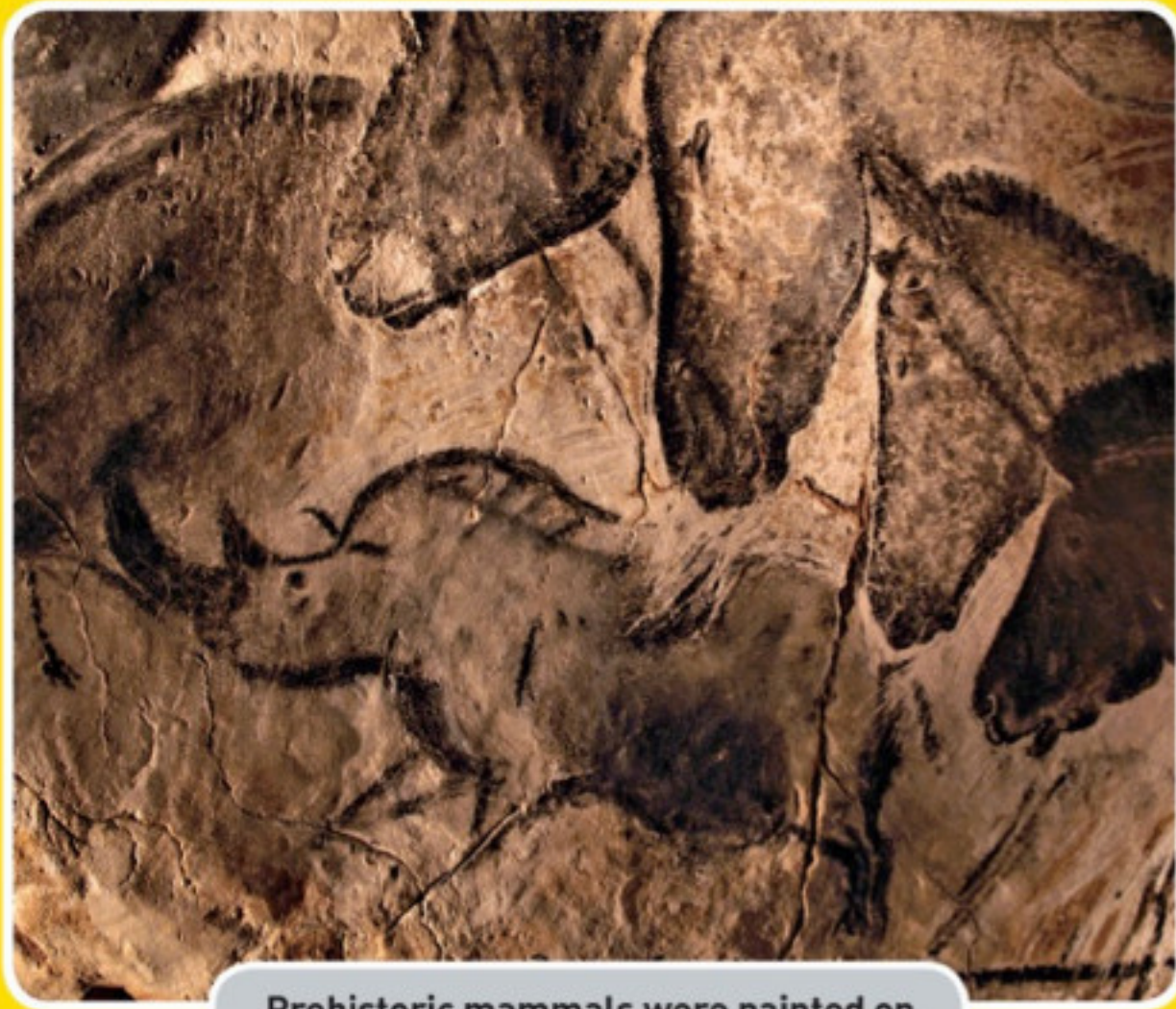
A group of early humans, including men, women, and children, are gathered around a fire in a snowy landscape. They are wearing fur clothing and holding spears. In the background, several woolly mammoths are visible. The scene is framed by a cave entrance.

Another great hunter lived during the ice age. Humans! Humans are mammals, too.

Early humans hunted woolly mammoths and woolly rhinos. Humans made weapons of stone. They hunted in groups. Together, they could bring down large animals that fed many people.

Homo sapiens (HO-mo SAY-pee-uns),
200,000 years ago to the present

Over 30,000 years ago, humans painted pictures of large animals on cave walls. Today, most of these giant mammals are gone.



Prehistoric mammals were painted on the walls of the Chauvet Cave in France.



Today's rhinos are relatives of prehistoric woolly rhinos.

As the Earth changed, mammals changed with it. Today, mammals still rule the planet. What animals do you know that are like the prehistoric mammals?

QUIZ WHIZ

公众号: Wecan

How much do you know about prehistoric mammals?
Probably a lot! Take this quiz and find out.
Answers are at the bottom of page 31.



1

Which of these is NOT a mammal?

- A. a horse
- B. a dinosaur
- C. a dog
- D. a person



2

The largest land mammal that has ever lived was the _____.

- A. elephant
- B. armadillo
- C. hornless rhino
- D. woolly mammoth



3

Which mammal could be as big as the biggest dinosaurs?

- A. a whale
- B. a horned gopher
- C. a warthog
- D. a deer



4

A mammal that carries its baby in a pouch is called a _____.

- A. dinosaur
- B. sloth
- C. woolly rhino
- D. marsupial



5

Which type of animal gives milk to their babies?

- A. birds
- B. dinosaurs
- C. mammals
- D. reptiles



6

Which animal had the largest antlers?

- A. triceratops
- B. woolly rhino
- C. giant deer
- D. giant ground sloth



7

All mammals have _____.

- A. scaly skin
- B. fur or hair
- C. four legs
- D. feathers



ARMOR: a cover, layer, or shell that protects the body



ICE AGE: thousands of years of extreme cold, with thick ice sheets covering much of the land



MARSUPIAL: a mammal that keeps its baby in a pouch until the baby grows bigger



MATE: either a male or female in a pair



PREHISTORIC: from a time long ago, before people invented written language



SABER-LIKE: shaped like a long, curved sword, or saber