

Woolly Mammoths

Woolly Mammoths were monstrous elephant-like creatures that lived in Europe about 300,000 - 500,000 years ago. An adult woolly mammoth was around nine to eleven feet tall, and weighed from four to six tons. They had large, curling tusks, a domed head, and a thick coat of fur. The male woolly mammoths were larger than the females and had thicker skulls and larger tusks. You can probably imagine what they used these tusks for.

As I mentioned, Woolly Mammoths originated in Europe, but then spread into Asia and America over ice bridges. They were built for living (and surviving) in cold environments. I mean, really cold. Surprisingly for their size, they ate little shrubs and grass, and were gentle (well, depends whether they were male or female for the gentle bit) herbivores.

Mastodons

Mastodons were also large elephant-like creatures, but lived much, much earlier than woolly mammoths. In fact, they probably are descendants of an ancient group that originated in Africa 40 million years ago. Mastodons first appeared 20 million years ago, and lived in North America from at least 3.75 million years ago. They had jagged teeth that were good for chewing up bits of trees. They were a bit smaller than woolly mammoths, at about 10 feet tall at the shoulder. They had thick coats of reddish-brown hair. Their range was from Alaska to Florida, and scientists think they roamed America in huge numbers.

Similarities and Differences

They were both, obviously, in the elephant family, but what else is the same about woolly mammoths and mastodons? They were both roughly the same height, they were both built to conserve heat and energy, and they were both very woolly. But they had some differences too. They were both from very different time periods, and from slightly different habitats (the mastodons lived in the forest, the mammoths on the plains). They also looked very different, and the mastodon had less hair. It's hard to say how closely related they were.