

Ice Age Ireland Cool Fossils!

Do you ever wonder what kinds of ancient animals lived on your doorstep thousands of years ago?
In this Museum activity, we will explore Ice Age Ireland, learn about fossils and the different kinds of animals that lived here in the past.

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When was the Ice Age?

The last **Ice Age** began around 2.5 million years ago! The funny thing is that the last Ice Age hasn't really ended yet! The unusual thing about ice ages is that the Earth's temperature swings back and forth between very cold and warmer stages. The cold stages can last thousands of years. Today, **scientists** think we are in a warmer period of the Ice Age and this began about 11,000 years ago when the ice melted away.

What did Ice Age Ireland look like?

During the cold stages of the Ice Age, Ireland was under a blanket of snow and ice for thousands of years. It was a difficult place for any plants or animals to survive. Today, we say Ireland's **climate** is mild and wet. But long ago there was also warm stages of the Ice Age. During this time, Ireland looked and felt a bit like today. The climate was mild and plants and animals lived there.

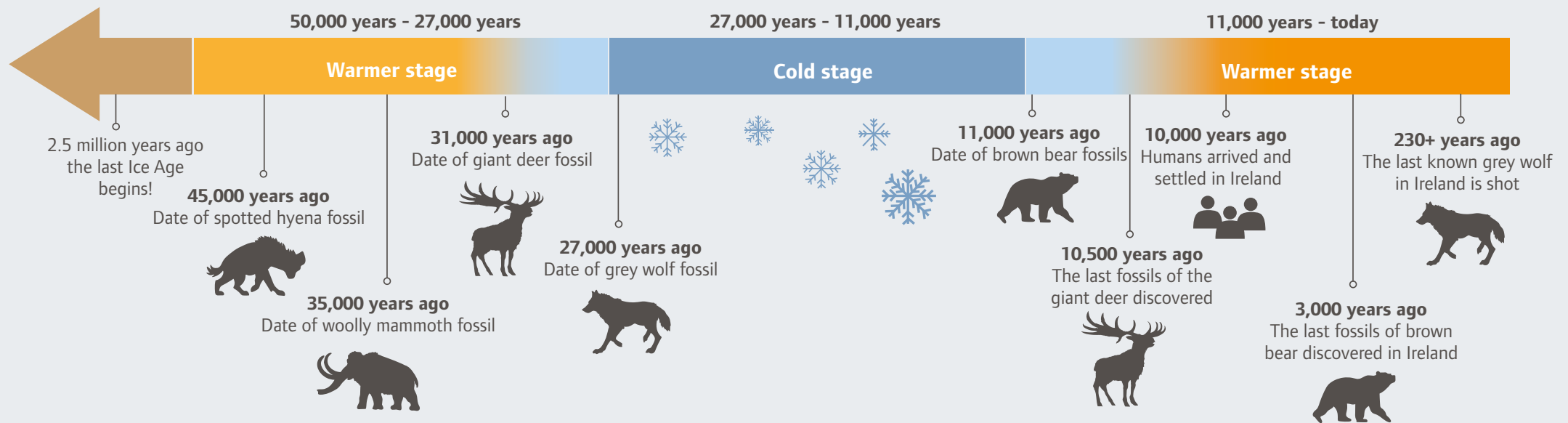
Why are Fossils Important?

Fossils are the remains of ancient animals (and plants!) that are **evidence** or clues into the past. Scientists study fossils to find out what kind of animal it was, where and when it lived and even what kind of food it ate! We know that animals lived in Ireland thousands of years ago from fossils found underground and within caves. The fossils of ice age animals are now in the National Museum of Ireland – Natural History, ever since it opened over 160 years ago! Turn the page to discover what kinds of ice age animals lived in Ireland long ago...

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Timeline – Meet the Animals of Ice Age Ireland!

Look at the timeline below. Can you see the drawings of the Ice Age fossils?
Scientists have dated some of the fossils to work out how long ago the animal lived in Ireland.



Did you know that woolly mammoth, spotted hyena, brown bear, grey wolf and even giant deer used to roam across Ireland? These ice age animals lived in Ireland thousands of years ago and during the warmer stages of the Ice Age. Can you see many fossils marked on the very cold stage of the timeline? People have not discovered many animal fossils from this time, which makes sense, as a sheet of ice covered Ireland and it was too cold for them to live here.

Ice Age Ireland

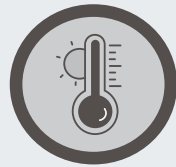
Cool Fossils!

Is our Climate Changing?

Scientists have recently discovered that the Earth's climate is warming very quickly because of human activity. Over the last 250 years, people have been burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, gas and peat and this is causing a rapid warming of the Earth. Today we call this type of climate change the **Climate Crisis**.

Did you know?

Climate change, like the Ice Age swinging back and forth between very cold and warmer temperatures, has happened naturally and slowly throughout the long history of life on Earth!



What happened to Ireland's Ice Age Animals?

The woolly mammoth and giant deer are now **extinct** – meaning that they no longer exist in the world. Spotted hyena, brown bear and grey wolves are locally extinct. That means that they no longer live here but still do in other countries today. Some of these animals went extinct because of natural climate change, while others disappeared due to human activity, such as the destruction of the animal's **habitat** or home. Today, the wildlife of Ireland face many challenges including the climate crisis. To help protect animals we need to stand up for wildlife!

Did you know?

Other fossils discovered in Ireland include that of an Arctic fox, Arctic lemming, Arctic hare, horse, reindeer, musk ox, wild boar, wildcat and even a fossil of an Eurasian lynx.



How can we Stand Up for Wildlife?

1. Brainstorm with your class and make a plan to encourage wildlife into your garden, local park or school.
2. Reduce, Reuse, Rethink, Recycle and Replace.
3. Plant a native tree or shrub.
4. Daydream about your future! You can make a difference by choosing a "green job" and work to help fix problems like the climate crisis or extinction of animals.
5. Learn as much as you can about wildlife and don't forget a visit to the National Museum of Ireland - Natural History is free!

