

Miniature Mammoths

Program: Prehistoric Beasts of Florida

After reading *Mammoths on the Move* by Lisa Wheeler, participants will craft miniature mammoths using recycled materials and Museum-provided supplies. Discussion will continue on the physiological differences between mammoths and mastodons, especially as related to prehistoric Florida's ecosystems.

Objectives:

- Educate participants about the presence of mammoths in prehistoric Florida and their role in the ecosystem.
- Discuss the history of prehistoric megafauna in Florida (saber-toothed cats included).
- Emphasize the importance of the distinctions in habitat and diet between mammoths and mastodons.

Materials Needed:

- Paper towel roll (empty, cut in half or thirds)
- Construction paper (brown [2], white [1]) – white paper only needed if not using pipe cleaner
- Glue sticks
- Pipe cleaner, 6" (white)
- Markers (brown, black)
- Single hole punch
- Scissors
- Googly eyes, if desired

Alternative/Pre-activity:

- Mammoth coloring sheet available.

Activity Plan

First, draw out a mammoth's head on one sheet of the brown construction paper (or use the template!) Note the "bump" on the head that is a distinguishing feature. Cut out the head and punch two holes just above the trunk for the tusks. Draw on eyes or use googly eyes. You can also add details to the trunk and ears. If you want to make the mammoth's trunk curl out, flip the head over and use the edge of a table or counter to gently add curve to the trunk.

Also draw a tail and cut that out. Make the tail in the shape of a long teardrop. You can add curve to the tail the same way you curved the trunk.

Next, carefully rip the other sheet of brown construction paper into short strips (8.5") to create layers of fur. These should be slightly uneven to add texture. You'll need four or five strips to cover the body. If you want a very furry-looking mammoth, you can gently tear small vertical rips to fluff up or use the markers to draw long, shaggy fur on these strips, before or after you rip them into strips.

Using the paper towel roll as the body, carefully wrap the layers of construction paper so they overlap and give a "fur" effect, securing both ends with glue. You can fluff the ridges to give the fur volume! Do this all the way up the tube. Using the straight edge of either side of the construction paper at the top and bottom of the tube can help the tube stay balanced and standing.

Once the body is covered, glue the mammoth's tail to one side. Covering the seams that the fur strips created is a good place for the tail.

Using a white pipe cleaner, carefully pull the pipe cleaner through the holes punched in the mammoth's head, to create to equal length tusks that jut out from the same side as the eyes. Curve these tusks slightly toward one another to give them a bow-like shape.

Glue the head to the body on the opposite side from the tail. Use the marker to draw a line toward the bottom of the body, to indicate two legs. You can draw toes, too, by making four humps, like lowercase M's: mm

Tada! You now have your own miniature mammoth!

Historical Research/Works Cited

- Paleontologists not only use preserved fossils to learn about prehistoric creatures, but also preserved stomach contents, surrounding pollen and plants, and many other clues around a fossil bed to make educated guesses about an extinct creature's diet.¹
- Fossilized skeletal remains of mastodons and mammoths are often found in riverbeds and marshes in the Southeast.² They may also be found in the mineral-rich mud at the bottom of ancient sinkholes.³
- Animals big and small were able to expand their range during the glacial periods of the Pleistocene because of low sea levels and the appearance of land bridges. Mastodons and mammoths traveled over these bridges from Asia, followed by predators like saber-toothed cats, dire wolves, and American lions. This is known as the Great Animal Interchange.⁴ Animals also migrated up from and down into Central and South America during this time.
- Florida (and most of the land around the Gulf of Mexico) was largely grassland during the time the mammoths roamed. They grazed the land alongside prehistoric horses and bison. Mammoth teeth are especially designed for grinding grass (and the gritty sand that goes along with grass), and as a tooth was worn down over time, another tooth grew behind it to replace it.⁵ These are often called "marching molars" and manatees (closely related to elephants!) have them also.
- Changes in climate led to changes in food sources, so when the glaciers began to melt and sea levels to rise, more forests grew to replace the vast grasslands that the mammoths fed on.⁶ This led to a decline in population that, when coupled with human hunters, ended in extinction.



¹ Judy Cutchins and Ginny Johnston, *Ice Age Giants of the South* (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press, 2000), pg. 6.

² *Ice Age Giants*, pg. 12.

³ *Ice Age Giants*, pg. 22.

⁴ *Ice Age Giants*, pg. 20.

⁵ *Ice Age Giants*, pg. 40.

⁶ *Ice Age Giants*, pg. 44.



Mammoths roamed on Florida's grasslands in the Pleistocene Epoch over 12,000 years ago.