Beat: Arts

Complete 9,000-year-old extinct bison uncovered in Siberia

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USPA News - A complete, frozen carcass of a Steppe bison that lived approximately 9,300 years ago has been discovered in Russia`s Far East, Russian and American scientists announced on Thursday. It is the most complete find yet of the animal which became extinct thousands of years ago.

The frozen carcass, which has been named the Yukagir bison mummy, was recently uncovered in the Yana-Indigirka Lowland of Eastern Siberia. The carcass has a complete brain, heart, blood vessels and a digestive system, making it the most complete find to date for this species, although some of its organs have shrunk over time. "The exclusively good preservation of the Yukagir bison mummy allows direct anatomical comparisons with modern species of Bison and cattle, as well as with extinct species of bison that were gone at the Pleistocene-Holocene boundary," said Dr. Evgeny Maschenko of the Paleontological Institute in Moscow. A necropsy of the frozen carcass showed a relatively normal anatomy with no obvious cause of death, but researchers suspect the animal may have died of starvation due to a lack of fat around the abdomen. Olga Potapova, of the Mammoth Site in South Dakota, said further examination of the carcass may shed light on the behavior of the species and what led to its extinction just after the end of the Ice Age. "The next steps to be done include further examination of the bison`s gross anatomy, and other detailed studies on its histology, parasites, and bones and teeth," she said. The Yukagir bison mummy, estimated to have lived approximately 9,300 years ago, is one of four intact Steppe bison carcasses to have been found, but it is only one of two adult specimens which are being kept preserved with internal organs and stored in frozen conditions, making this find "one of high importance," Potapova said. Discoveries of complete carcasses in the past have prompted speculation about the possibility of bringing them back to life. Australian scientists revealed in October 2012 that bonds in a DNA strand can survive no more than 6.8 million years under ideal conditions, suggesting that extinct animals from the more recent past, such as woolly mammoths and saber-toothed tigers, may one day be cloned. The discovery in 2012 also ruled out the possibility of one day cloning dinosaurs as was shown in the popular film "Jurassic Park," as the youngest dinosaur fossils ever found are about 65 million years old. The film features a billionaire businessman whose team is able to clone dinosaurs through DNA extracted from mosquitoes which were preserved in prehistoric amber. The current record for the oldest authentic DNA sequence is between 450,000 and 800,000-year-old DNA from Greenlandic ice cores.

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