The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Woolly Mammoth Research Center to Launch Amid Cloning Efforts

By Gabrielle Tetrault-Farber

August 20, 2014



The Sakha republic is home to the Berelekhskoye Mammoth Cemetery, where 8,500 bones belonging to 140 mammoths were discovered in 1970.

As part of an initiative to clone woolly mammoths, Russian and South Korean scientists will launch a research center next month in the Sakha republic, Interfax reported Wednesday.

Woolly mammoths are believed to have gone extinct some 4,500 years ago. For decades, the Sakha republic has been known as a hotspot for archeological and paleontological finds, including 80 percent of Russia's mammoth remains.

The region is home to the Berelekhskoye Mammoth Cemetery, where 8,500 bones belonging to 140 mammoths were discovered in 1970. More than 98 percent of the bone fragments recovered in the area were from mammoths, according to the Russian magazine Science & Life (Nauka i Zhizn).

During a 200-kilometer expedition across the Sakha republic's barren landscape that ended last week, some 700 kilograms of paleontological material was retrieved and sent to the city of Yakutsk, according to Interfax.

The expedition — in which Russian, American and Moldovan scholars participated — also led to the discovery archeological sites by the Kolyma River where prehistoric humans lived during the Upper Paleolithic era, some 10,000 to 50,000 years ago.

The launch of the research center is part of a joint effort between Yakutsk's Northeastern Federal University and South Korea's Sooam Biotech Research Foundation.

"To send material to our [Korean] colleagues is not so simple," Semyon Grigoryev, head of the mammoth laboratory at Yakutsk's Northeastern Federal University, said in comments carried by Interfax.

"We have to obtain a license for this and the process can take nearly six months. Here at the center, scientists can conduct preliminary research on the spot rather than wait for a permit to export their material. This will make work significantly easier for everybody."

Earlier this month, the skull of an extinct Ice Age cave lion was recovered from the banks of the Buotama River by employees of the Sakha republic's nature preservation ministry.

See also:

Mystery Behind Giant Hole in Siberia Clearer as 2nd Discovered

Contact the author at g.tetraultfarber@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/08/20/woolly-mammoth-research-center-to-launch-amid-cloning-efforts-a38549