

Putin Shows Interest in Cloning Woolly Mammoths

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President Vladimir Putin, second right, listens to an explanation during a visit to the Mammoth Museum in Yakutsk, Siberia on Monday.

Will woolly mammoths roam among us once again, more than four millennia after they went extinct? President Vladimir Putin would like to know, Gazeta.ru reported Monday.

The Lazarev Mammoth Museum at Northeastern Federal University in the far-northern city of Yakutsk set up a special exhibition featuring rare prehistoric animals for a recent visit by the president, the report said.

Putin was reportedly especially taken with the museum's mammoth exhibit, featuring the world's only known complete mammoth skeleton.

Museum director Semyon Grigoryev told Putin that the university's collection boasts the corpses of more than 4,000 different animals, the bodies of which have been pieced together since 2010 — including the mummy of a dog that died more than 12,000 years ago, according to Gazeta.ru.

During their discussion of the animals on display, Grigoryev told the president that the museum also possesses the shockingly well-preserved remains of a 28,000-year-old mammoth. The mammoth's body still contains soft tissue and even some liquid blood, the report said.

Putin then displayed interest in the potential for cloning woolly mammoths, asking whether the existence of blood and soft tissue rendered such a project feasible.

Grigoryev explained that the museum is currently working with South Korean scientists to determine whether the prehistoric species' re-emergence could be possible.

Earlier this month, regional media reported that experts from the Northeastern Federal University would be working at a new center in Yakutsk to research cloning possibilities for mammoths. The center is expected to begin operations next month.

The Sakha republic, whose capital is Yakutsk, is known to be a goldmine for archeological and paleontological finds, with 80 percent of Russia's mammoth remains having been discovered there.

Woolly mammoths are believed to have gone extinct some 4,500 years ago.

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