

Frozen In Time – Book Review
Chapter 16 – Extinction of the Woolly Mammoth



By Greg Neyman
© Answers In Creation

First Published 7 September 2005
Answers In Creation Website
www.answersincreation.org/frozen_in_time_16.htm

What caused the extinction of the woolly mammoth is really a side issue. Neither secular scientists nor creationists have solid evidence to claim they have the definitive answer.

How Did the Woolly Mammoth Die in Siberia? (Page 157)

Oard finally gets around to mentioning possible scenarios for how the mammoths became frozen in the permafrost. The standard argument is that they became trapped in the bogs. Oard dismisses this, saying that “large animals likely are strong enough to pull themselves out of a shallow bog.” Earlier in the book, he argued that the bogs of Siberia would be considered inhospitable to the mammoth, yet here he says they could easily get out of them, rendering his previous argument useless (see pages 25-26).

Aside from this, he mentions several other scenarios for their death, such as floods and lakes. Overall, nothing of significance is mentioned by Oard.

Mammoths Mostly Buried in Wind-Blown Silt (Page 159)

Oard explains that most mammoths are found buried under wind-blown silt, known as loess. He uses three pages to develop this idea, impressing the young earth reader.

How Did Ice Develop in the Loess? (Page 162)

Oard uses secular research to explain this, and does not dispute it. Nothing of significance here for old earth believers.

How Does the Post-Flood Ice Age Explain the Animals Buried In Loess? (Page 163)

Oard gives an explanation of how his model could produce dust storms to bury the mammoths. If his theory of a single, Flood-related Ice Age were true, this explanation may work, but since the theory is flawed and unworkable, so is this solution. A dry, dusty scenario within the uniformitarian understanding of earth’s history also fits the bill, without the excess baggage of the one ice age theory.

Looking at his explanation, you see words like “likely,” “would have been,” “could have,” “probably.” His model is built purely on conjecture, and not on actual

observational evidence of the actual conditions. Granted, uniformitarian models are also built on conjectures, to an extent, but they accept the raw scientific data, and don't have to twist it as young earth creationists do, to make it fit their model.

Gigantic Dust Storms Explain the Carcass Puzzles (Page 165)

He uses his model to explain that it answers the puzzles mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, such as carcasses in a standing position, suffocated carcasses, animals entombed in permafrost, and broken bones. The strange thing is that since uniformitarian scientists recognize these animals are in the wind-blown loess deposits. There is no difference in the young earth/old earth models (both have wind-blown loess), other than Oard ties his into his failed one ice age theory.

He compares this to the dust bowl era in the United States in the 1930s, and provides a couple of photographs as proof. These reinforce the idea in the young earth readers' mind that Oard is correct. I do not know if a dusty death claim has been proposed by uniformitarian scientists. It does sound logical. Oard says that they are "blind to the possibility of death during a dust storm." I don't know if this is true, and Oard doesn't hint that any secular researchers have come to this conclusion (it would damage the force of his argument if he presented it).

However, one must also remember that we are talking about a relatively small number of mammoths. Only 39 mammoths have been found frozen in permafrost, and only four of those have most of their body parts.¹ This is out of approximately ten million fossil mammoths. Sure there are probably more, but you cannot characterize the extinction of the species on such sketchy evidence.

In the end, whether it was death in a bog, which became permafrost, or death by burial, it makes no difference, since the end result is the same. Either way can be explained by the uniformitarian model.

Time is Not a Side Issue (Page 168)

Oard faults the uniformitarian model for saying the accumulation of loess was slow, at one inch a year (see the quote). He turns around to say that his model reduces this time to a few hundred years or less.

If you recall from page 161, the loess is mostly 30-115 feet thick (but gets up to 160 feet thick near the central Siberia). At an inch a year, you only need 390 years to account for the thin sections, and at 115 feet thick, you only need 1,380 years. This is not a large difference from Oard's model ("several hundred years"). By comparison, with Oard's model, assuming 200 years (page 173), you could get 115 feet by accumulating 6.9 inches per year...not far off the uniformitarian accumulation rate of one inch per year. Oard's model would take 17.39 years to cover a ten foot tall standing frozen mammoth. This does not solve the problem any more than the uniformitarian model, which would take 120 years at one inch per year.

The Explanation for the Broken Bones (Page 168)

Nobody knows why, but it really doesn't matter. We are talking about explaining why two specimens have broken bones. Sure, they could have broken them while trying to free themselves. That's nice to know. That information and a dollar will get you a cup of coffee at McDonalds...

Mass Extinctions at the End of the Ice Age (Page 169)

Oard mostly blames the massive dust storms and drought at the end of his ice age for the extinctions. Sure, dust storms may have played a part, but we will never know. Such data should be proposed by Oard to the secular journals, and peer-review can decide if his evidence is sufficient. It does sound logical that the dust may have been a factor, and I believe Oard should seek publication on this possible scenario. However, since uniformitarian scientists recognize the loess as wind-blown, it is obvious to them that there were dust storms at the end of the ice age, and they can incorporate this into the uniformitarian model without resorting to a one Ice Age model. It works just fine with multiple glaciations over the last two million years.

¹ http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CC/CC361_2.html