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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alexandria, VA - As we celebrate National Fossil Day, EARTH Magazine brings you a story set in Pleistocene South America, where the climate was warming following an ice age. At this time, Patagonia was home to large megafauna species like giant sloths and saber-toothed cats. There was also a new predator on the block: humans. At some point as the climate warmed and human settlers began hunting, the megafauna living in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego went extinct.

By luck, numerous remains were preserved in cool volcanic and lakeshore caves. The chilled environment spared the DNA from destruction, providing scientists a unique opportunity for study. By sampling mitochondrial DNA from radiocarbon-dated bones and teeth found across the region, the timing of major changes in the diversity of creatures like the giant jaguar, one-ton short-faced bear, and large ground sloths became apparent, helping clarify previous hypotheses about this extinction. The scientists share their findings with EARTH Magazine in the October issue. To find out how long humans and megafauna coexisted go to: <http://bit.ly/2dcGwCS>.

The October issue of EARTH Magazine offers stories you won't find anywhere else, including our cover feature, "Thirsty Business," on water use in the tech industry, a news story on how bad weather may have hampered the Mongol Invasion, and a news story on how a junk gem is yielding information about diamond-forming processes. As always, travel with the EARTH team with this month's Travels in Geology to Guatemala's Vulcan Pacaya and read our review of the book "Alfred Wegener," which we deem the definitive biography of a geoscience star. For these stories and many more, visit www.earthmagazine.org.

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Press Release PDF:



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