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EARTH: The Snowmastodon Project - Mammoths and Mastodons Lived the High Life in Colorado

Alexandria, VA - While expanding a reservoir in Snowmass Village, Colorado, workers stumbled upon a big bone. And then another, and another, and another. Realizing they found something special, the workers called in the experts at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science (DMNS), who drove several hours to examine the site. Scientists quickly realized that this was no ordinary boneyard. Work on the reservoir halted, as DMNS scientists called in dozens of volunteers and experts from around the country to help excavate the site before construction continued. In a few weeks of excavating, the scientists and volunteers of the Snowmastodon Project uncovered an entire Pleistocene ecosystem, including fossils of giant ground sloths, long-horned bison, North American camels, mammoths, mastodons, insects and ancient plants.

The dig site was as renowned for its geologically unique setting as the community around it is known for skiing. The setting, an ancient alpine lake on top of a terrestrial high-point, meant that it once attracted animals as a watering hole, but was able to evade the destructive processes associated with glaciations. Learn more about what the site is showing scientists about past glacial and interglacial periods and what the site might suggest for the future, and explore the thousands of bones found at this unique site in the January 2016 EARTH Magazine cover story: <http://bit.ly/1Sy0eue>.

Alongside exclusive features like the Snowmastodon Project, EARTH Magazine continues to bring you unique and groundbreaking stories, such as new research that suggests intentionally burned floors in African huts can record Earth's magnetic field, ongoing research that suggests the Midcontinent Rift may be a hybrid rift-large igneous province, and breaking news indicating that treated water from Southern California is so pure that other, more ominous elements are leaching into it from strata surrounding the aquifer. Don't miss our feature on the great debate about whether mantle plumes exist. All this and more is available at www.earthmagazine.org.

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