



Vanished Giants: The Lost World of the Ice Age

Anthony J. Stuart

University of Chicago Press (Nov 27, 2020)

Hardcover \$45.00 (288pp)

978-0-226-43284-7

Deft and entertaining, Anthony J. Stuart's *Vanished Giants* reveals the "hugest, fiercest, and strangest" Ice Age animals—mastodons, saber-toothed cats, immense ground sloths, and other odd, extinct creatures.

Relaying research in an accessible way and with informative illustrations, this enthralling paleontology text discusses megafauna in order of geographic regions and in the context of disparate climates, habitats, and human settlements. Extinct species are described and contrasted with contemporary, often endangered examples, like lions, elephants, and Earth's deadliest apex predator, *Homo sapiens*. The size and forms of the vanished species are best shown in group silhouettes, underscoring Stuart's characterization of our present, more "zoologically impoverished world."

By examining fossil evidence and existing extinction hypotheses, Stuart's book answers questions about how, why, and when giant animals went extinct. The most abundant remains and fossil areas lie in North Eurasia and North America, where Stuart begins his documentation of an impressive variety of wild deer, cave bears, and armored glyptodonts, the automobile-sized cousins of today's insect-eating armadillos. No less wonderful are New Zealand's gargantuan moas, Madagascar's giant lemurs, and Australia's rhino-sized marsupials.

Each geographical chapter contains diverting descriptions and photographs of skeletons and fossils, as well as historical anecdotes about fossil discoveries by scientists and collectors, including Thomas Jefferson, Charles Darwin, and contemporary finds at the La Brea Tar Pits. There's valuable information in the appendix about a range of methods for assessing accurate dates for bones, sediment, and other fossil material; this communicates complex concepts well for a popular science audience.

Stuart's conclusions about global extinction patterns are as fascinating and complex as the species he examines themselves, and his reflections about how similar forces threaten so many large animals today makes this an important and captivating book.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (November / December 2020)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.