

# Tibetan fossil clues to Ice Age giants

It is generally assumed that Ice Age herbivores evolved in response to ice sheet expansion, but a new study of an ancestor of the woolly rhino suggests they were present in Tibet well before climate change occurred

3.2MYA: Modern continents formed – earth cools

2.6MYA: Ice Age begins

2MYA: Species “homo” appears

Modern humans

5 million years ago

4MYA

3MYA

2MYA

1MYA

Pliocene epoch

Pleistocene

Holocene

Extent of ice sheet 20,000 years ago

Sea ice

Maximum distribution of *Coelodonta antiquitatis* during late Pleistocene

Ancestral woolly rhino during mid-Pliocene

**1** 3.6 million years ago: Woolly rhino, *Coelodonta thibetana*, lived in high-altitude Zanda Basin in foothills of Himalayas in Tibet

**2** Early Pleistocene: *C. nihowanensis* found at Gansu, China – previous earliest known woolly rhino

**3** Early Pleistocene: *C. nihowanensis* migration

**4** Mid-Pleistocene: *C. tologojensis* skulls found