

Mom, son find woolly mammoth tusks 22 years apart (Update)

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In this photo taken Sunday, Aug. 10, 2014, and provided by Andrew Harrelson, is Andrew Harrelson posing with a 12-foot fossilized tusk that he found in a bend of the Fish River near the village of White Mountain, about 63 miles east of Nome, Alaska. Harrelson, who was having little luck catching salmon decided to look for fossils over the weekend and found a woolly mammoth tusk in the same Alaska location where his mother found one 22 years ago. Tusks of the extinct woolly mammoth range from 12,000 to 400,000 years old. (AP Photo/Andrew Harrelson)

A man who was having little luck catching salmon decided to look for fossils over the weekend and found a woolly mammoth tusk in the same Alaska location where his mother found one 22 years ago.

Andrew Harrelson found the 12-foot (nearly 4-meter) fossilized tusk on Sunday in a bend of the Fish River near his home village of White Mountain, the Alaska Dispatch News reported Wednesday.

Harrelson was 3 in 1992 when his mother, Luann Harrelson, spotted a 79-pound (36-kilogram) mammoth tusk fossil in the muck of the river. His father pulled it from the water and Andrew posed for a picture with it.

"This big, old log-looking thing," he said. "I had no clue what it was until they told me."

Harrelson's father, Daniel Harrelson, said villagers previously found mammoth teeth at the site.

"I think at one point, thousands of years ago, it must have been a mud hole or something that animals got stuck in and then died in it," Daniel Harrelson said. "Everything froze in there and then slowly, over time, thaws out a little bit year by year."

On Sunday, Andrew Harrelson was fishing with his fiancée and two children in the river. He had caught just one coho salmon in two hours so he decided to look for tusks.



This photo taken in 1992 and provided by Luann Harrelson, shows Harrelson posing with her three-year-old son Andrew after finding a woolly mammoth tusk on the Fish River near the village of White Mountain, Alaska. On Sunday Aug. 10, 2014, Andrew Harrelson, who was having little luck catching salmon, decided to look for fossils over the weekend and found a woolly mammoth tusk in the same Alaska location where his mother found one 22 years ago. Tusks of the extinct woolly mammoth range from 12,000 to 400,000 years old. (AP Photo/Luann Harrelson)

They arrived at the bend where his mother had found the tusk. Almost immediately, Harrelson saw the base of another tusk, covered by a stump. His fiancée, Renee Parker, looked on the other side of the boat and saw the tip of the fossil.

Harrelson drove his family back to White Mountain and returned with a relative. Together, they pried out the fossil. Back at White Mountain, he

weighed it on a bathroom scale and it registered 162 pounds (73 kilograms).

Tusks of woolly mammoth range in age from 12,000 to 400,000 years old.

Dale Guthrie, a Quaternary Period paleontologist who retired from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, said the last glacial period in Alaska was about 18,000 years ago. Mainland mammoths died off by about 12,000 years ago, he said.

"The (White Mountain) tusks could be that young or they could be when mammoths first arrived here, which is 300,000 to 400,000 years ago," Guthrie said. "You'd have to radio carbon date it to see its age."

They can fetch as much as \$75 per pound.

Prospective buyers have been calling Harrelson to inquire about the tusk. The couple want to buy a home.

"I'm pretty sure he's going to try to use the money for down payment for a house," Daniel Harrelson said.

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