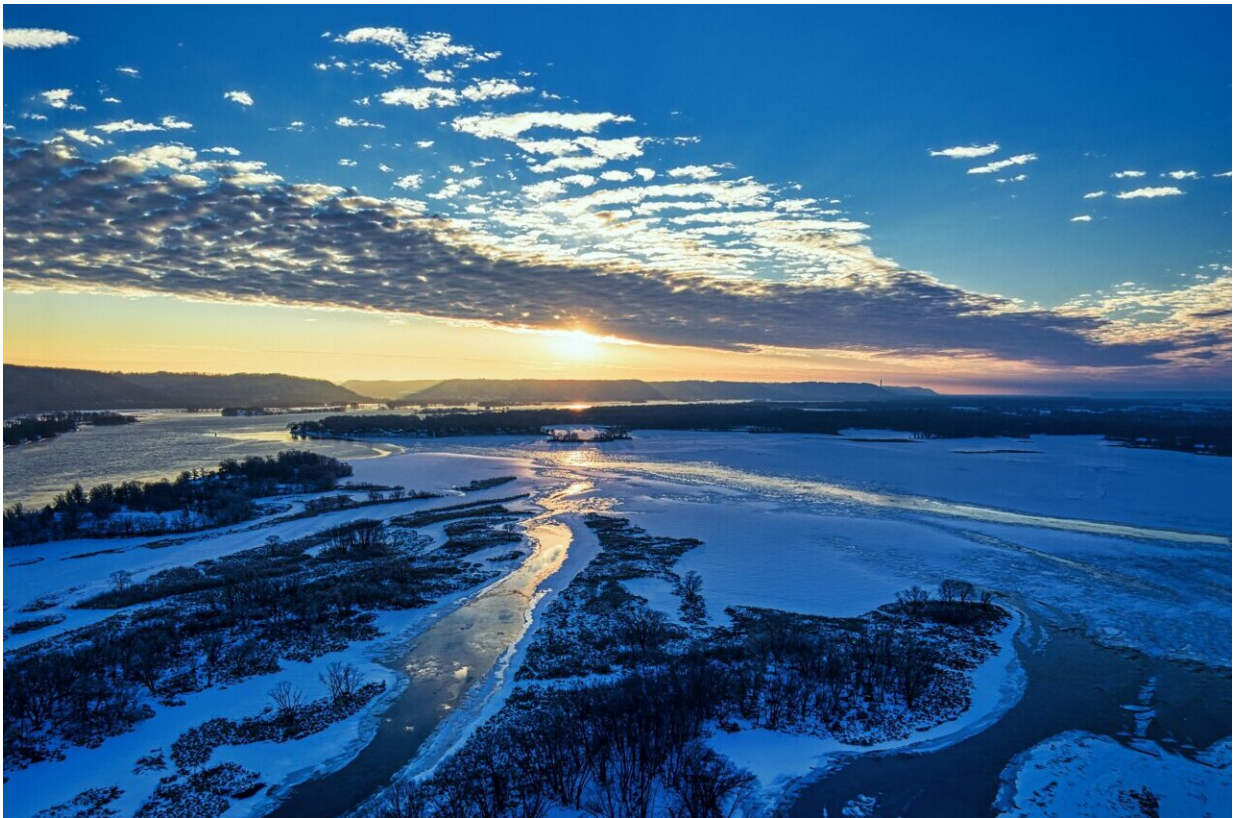


In Mississippi, discovery of elephant fossil from the ice age provides window into the past

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Credit: Tom Fisk from Pexels

Fossil hunter Eddie Templeton was out exploring in Mississippi when he came across a remarkable find in a steep embankment. It appeared to be

part of an ice-age elephant tusk.

The [fossil](#) was intact, making it an "extremely rare find for Mississippi," the state's Department of Environmental Quality announced on its website on Aug. 9.

But the find set off a race to protect the artifact because the Mississippi sun can dry out the fossil and destroy it. When members of the State Survey team arrived, they saw that the fossil tusk was in "amazing condition," the agency said.

"It was suspected based on the strong curvature of the massive tusk that Eddie and the team were dealing with a Columbian mammoth and not that of the more common mastodon," the department said in announcing the discovery. "This would be the first of its kind for the area."

When the team got the fossil back to a laboratory, it "was confirmed by the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science paleontologist as indeed belonging to a Mammoth," the agency said in its statement.

The animal was among a large cast of characters that once roamed the ice-age prairie ecosystem in what is now Mississippi, scientists say. They included herds of now-extinct horses, giant bison, [saber-toothed cats](#), lions, huge ground sloths, [giant tortoises](#) and tapirs.

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