

Program: Ice Age in Indiana Exhibit

Speakers: Susannah Koerbor, PhD, Chief Curator and Research Officer, Indiana State Museum & Historic Sites

Introduced by: Steve Springer

Guests: Meissa Murphy, Jim Stohler, Bill Allen, Sharon Brant, David Hood, Heather Woock

Attendance: 125

Scribe: Bill Elliott

Editor: Bonnie Carter

Today's very interesting talk was given by Susannah Koerbor, Chief Curator and Research Officer, Indiana State Museum & Historic Sites. She discussed the Indiana State Museum exhibition entitled "Frozen Reign -- The New Ice Age Gallery at the Indiana State Museum and the Research Behind It."

The Indiana State Museum was constituted in 1869 when the State Geologist was directed to create a cabinet of objects. The museum began scientific excavations in Indiana in 1933 with its first excavation of a mastodon in Garrett, Indiana. Indiana was a particularly good site for mastodon bones, as mastodons preferred wooded regions which Indiana had in abundance. The woolly mammoth preferred grasslands and those fossils are found elsewhere, although a few have been found in Indiana. Excavations were started in earnest in 1950 by Ron Richards, Senior Research Curator of Paleobiology. These specimens have been stored at the museum.

Much of Indiana's geology in the northern two thirds of the state was wiped away by the glaciers of the preceding ice ages. Therefore a gap exists in the fossil record from 300,000,000 to 700,000 years ago. The southern one third of the state has a complete geological record going back to the dawn of multi-celled organisms and before.

Excavations are ongoing yearly at Magenity Cave. Careful excavation of this cave is saving everything from pollen grains to small rodents, shrews, peccaries, and larger animals in order to determine the various climate changes and the accompanying changes in the Indiana flora and fauna. Other sites include the Pipe Creek sink hole where the specimens were spared from the glaciers, Harrodsburg Crevice where many peccary fossils are found perhaps as old as 150,000 years, as well as sites uncovered by construction equipment which usually are the source of mastodon skeletal remains.

Materials uncovered and studied by the museum are on display in the exhibit. These exhibits contain many aids for impaired individuals including tactile aids in the form of statues of the animals, maps of Indiana and fossils which can be handled.

Many thanks to Dr. Koerber for this interesting and informative talk.

Ed. note: read more at <https://www.indianamuseum.org/about>



Dr. Koerber