News and Highlights

China has Built a Mammoth Museum

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The Tourism Bureau of Heilongjiang Province announces that a paleontological museum devoted to Quaternary fossil mammoths has been built in Qinggang County in that province. This museum, recently officially opened, can be used to exhibit collections and conduct popular science education as well as scientific research (Fig. 1).

This museum has a building area of 1080 m², including 400 m² of exhibition hall area and a 340 m² studio for fossil preparation and repair. They have exhibited ten vertebrate skeletons including mammoths, woolly rhinoceros, Northeast buffalo and Przewalski’s horse, and more than 8000 single pieces of ancient animal fossils with Paleolithic human skull and bones. The integrity of these vertebrate skeletons reaches up to 75% on average.

The Quaternary paleontological fossils in Qinggang County exhibit a wide variety, a large number and a concentrated distribution. Since the first discovery of mammoth incisor fossils in the Hongwei reservoir, Luhe Town, in 1958, many more fossils have been unearthed in more than 40 excavated sites, including Desheng village, Yongfeng Town, Minzheng Town, Luhe Town, Xinghua Town, Laodong Town, Zuoang Town, Yingchun Town and Xincun Village. Among these, there are a total of 32 species including the mammoths and woolly rhinoceros.

An area of 4.29 km² including three towns and four small watersheds has been delineated to be a paleontological fossil reservation park.

In 2015, the Regional Geology Survey Institute of Heilongjiang Province Geology and Mineral Resources Bureau launched a project called “Locality investigation of the Mammuthus ~ Coelodonta fauna fossils in Qinggang County of Heilongjiang Province and their evaluation”. They have completed 330 km of geological survey routes, 1250 m of drilling footage and 7000 m³ of excavated earthwork volume during their geological profile measurement, discovered more than 30 fossil points and collected more than 150 fossil samples (Fig. 2). These fossils are mainly ivory, skull, alveolus, horn, and metacarpus of mammoths, woolly rhinoceros, deer, Przewalski’s horse, the giant buffalo Bubalus wansjocki and antelope, and also testaceans and Coniferae. Among these fossils, there are one mammoth molar fossil, one wooly rhino molar fossil and one antelope horn fossil which have reached a jade degree. This discovery has greatly enriched the collection of this museum.

The Mammuthus ~ Coelodonta fauna is representative of the Quaternary mammals in northern China. The mammoths and woolly rhinoceroses in Qinggang County, Heilongjiang Province, lived in the glacial period about ten to 40 thousand years ago, when there was a lacustrine environment in this area. This fossil coenosis records completely the paleoenvironment and paleoecological

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Fig. 1. Photo showing the mammoth museum in Qinggang County of Heilongjiang Province, China.
information during the Late Pleistocene—Anthropocene, and has thus been regarded as ideal to analyze environmental change. In addition, a large number of well-preserved Paleolithic human fossils were discovered, which will be significant for studying the evolution and distribution of modern Mongoloids. It is generally considered that mammoths and the rhino Coelodonta were among the main prey a subject for human hunting during the late Paleolithic (Fig. 3). The symbiotic relationship between these ancient humans and the Mammutthus—Coelodonta fauna discovered in Heilongjiang is still one of the world’s mystery, which is worthy of being studied further by scientists.

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