

Big Bone Lick: A Prehistoric Wonderland

Imagine a place where gigantic prehistoric animals once roamed, leaving behind mysterious clues about Earth's distant past. Big Bone Lick, located in northern Kentucky, is exactly such a magical place! Often called the "Birthplace of American Vertebrate Paleontology," this site has fascinated scientists and explorers for hundreds of years.

Thousands of years ago, during the Ice Age, massive animals like woolly mammoths, giant ground sloths, and prehistoric bison gathered around the salt springs at this location. These enormous creatures were drawn to the mineral-rich saltwater pools, creating a natural gathering spot that would later become a treasure trove of scientific discovery. Native Americans knew about these springs, and later, European explorers like William Clark (of Lewis and Clark fame) became intrigued by the massive bones found scattered across the landscape.

The salt springs acted like a natural trap. Animals would come to drink the salty water, and some would become stuck in the muddy ground. Over thousands of years, their bones were preserved in the soft earth, creating an incredible record of prehistoric life that scientists would eventually uncover.

Exciting Questions and Challenges!

Scientific Investigation

1. What might make Big Bone Lick special to paleontologists?

2. Salt Spring Mystery Challenge:

- Imagine you're a pioneer explorer. Write a short diary entry about your journey to the salt springs where you stumble upon bones.

Historical Exploration

3. Native American and Explorer Connection:

- Research how Native American tribes used the salt springs

4. Fossil Detective Activity:

- If you found a massive bone at Big Bone Lick, what scientific questions would you want to answer?
- Below, design a "Fossil Hunter's Field Journal" with sketches and notes about your discoveries