

HOT TOPICS

Landscaper unearths ancient bones

Illinois State Museum identifies dinosaur remains.

WADSWORTH, Ill.—Van Zelst Landscaping turned preservation of a wetland area into a national news event when mastodon bones and tusks were discovered in the excavation to expand a small marsh into a larger lake.

The 10,000-year-old bones were discovered along with the remains of an ancient spruce forest which existed on the site during the Ice Age, according to David Van Zelst.

The bones, tusks, shells and spruce tree trunks were found on Van Zelst's property as it was expanding a tree nursery site and excavating a three-acre lake to provide for a continuous source of water.

The first piece of bone excavators came upon was almost four feet long with a cross section of about 4-by-7 inches. What appeared to be a tree stump was the femur (right thigh bone) of a prehistoric American mastodon.

Van Zelst contacted the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. A team of scientists led by Dr. Russell Graham, curator of geology, arrived the next day. Graham identified the bone as part of the beast which stood 10 feet tall at the shoulders and weighed up to six tons.

A section of tusk ivory about 24 inches long was also found, along with the remains of a grove of spruce trees believed to be about 11,000 years old. Tree trunks and white spruce seed cones are neither decomposed nor petrified. After carbon-14 dating and tree ring studies, these specimens are expected to tell the history, climatic and season conditions at the time of growth. Pollen studies are also being made.



Van Zelst with a hunk of a mastodon's thigh bone originally thought to be a tree trunk. He found it in a 15-foot-deep excavation in Wadsworth, Ill.

Ban pesticides in refuges? It's not an issue, say feds

WASHINGTON—Pesticide use could be banned in all of the U.S. National Wildlife Refuge System.

That's one suggestion of several environmental impact "alternatives" being considered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Some of these alternatives will likely be incorporated into a new management plan for the refuge system later this year—but only after the FWS weighs input from a series of public hearings.

Most comment from the public so far has been from hunting, trapping and fishing interests seeking continued access to federal lands.

Pesticide use on federal refuges is, to date, not a burning issue, apparently because of the FWS's use and oft-repeated endorsement of integrated pest management (IPM) practices.

Several FWS "alternatives" would continue to allow pesticide use on national properties, but only in IPM programs.

Actually, pesticide use on national refuge property has dropped dramatically since 1974 anyway—about 40 percent in 20 years, claims the FWS.

In 1989 the FWS says it used pesticides in 61 refuges, on 202,000 of a possible 90 million acres in the national refuge system.

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