



The Last Lost World: Ice Ages, Human Origins, and the Invention of the Pleistocene

Lydia Pyne, Stephen J. Pyne

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An enlightening investigation of the Pleistocene's dual character as a geologic time—and as a cultural idea

The Pleistocene is the epoch of geologic time closest to our own. It's a time of ice ages, global migrations, and mass extinctions—of woolly rhinos, mammoths, giant ground sloths, and not least early species of *Homo*. It's the world that created ours.

But outside that environmental story there exists a parallel narrative that describes how our ideas about the Pleistocene have emerged. This story explains the place of the Pleistocene in shaping intellectual culture, and the role of a rapidly evolving culture in creating the idea of the Pleistocene and in establishing its dimensions. This second story addresses how the epoch, its Earth-shaping events, and its creatures, both those that survived and those that disappeared, helped kindle new sciences and a new origins story as the sciences split from the humanities as a way of looking at the past.

Ultimately, it is the story of how the dominant creature to emerge from the frost-and-fire world of the Pleistocene came to understand its place in the scheme of things. A remarkable synthesis of science and history, *The Last Lost World* describes the world that made our modern one.

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