

Real Ice Ages Longer Than Movie Ice Ages



The movie, *Ice Age 2: The Meltdown*, opens in theaters at the end of March. In the movie, three animal friends learn that their lives will change now that an ice age is ending and most of the snow and ice that covered Earth is melting. In an earlier movie about the friends, the animals had to move because an ice age was just starting. It was getting very cold where they lived.

In real life, though, an ice age takes a long time to get started and can last thousands or millions of years. The same animals could not have been alive at the start and end of an ice age. An ice age is when the Earth's temperature gets much colder for a long period of time. Lakes and ponds that normally would not freeze turn to ice. *Glaciers*, which are mountains of ice, grow bigger.

Scientists say the Earth has had four major ice ages over the past billion years. During those times, animals that liked warmer weather did not survive and new animals came along that could live in colder weather -- animals like the woolly mammoth. In between ice ages, there have been times when Earth has been very warm.

NEWS WORD BOX

survive normal
wooly mammoth
period carved

Did you know that many of the lakes in the U.S. were formed when glaciers, which are very heavy, carved huge holes into the Earth as they moved? When the glaciers melted, the holes filled with water and became lakes.

MORE FACTS ABOUT ICE AGES

- Scientists think changes in the Earth's orbit is one of the causes of ice ages.
- Today, some people worry that air pollution is warming up Earth's atmosphere too much. It is causing glaciers and snow to melt more quickly, they say.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

How would your life be different if you were living during an ice age?