

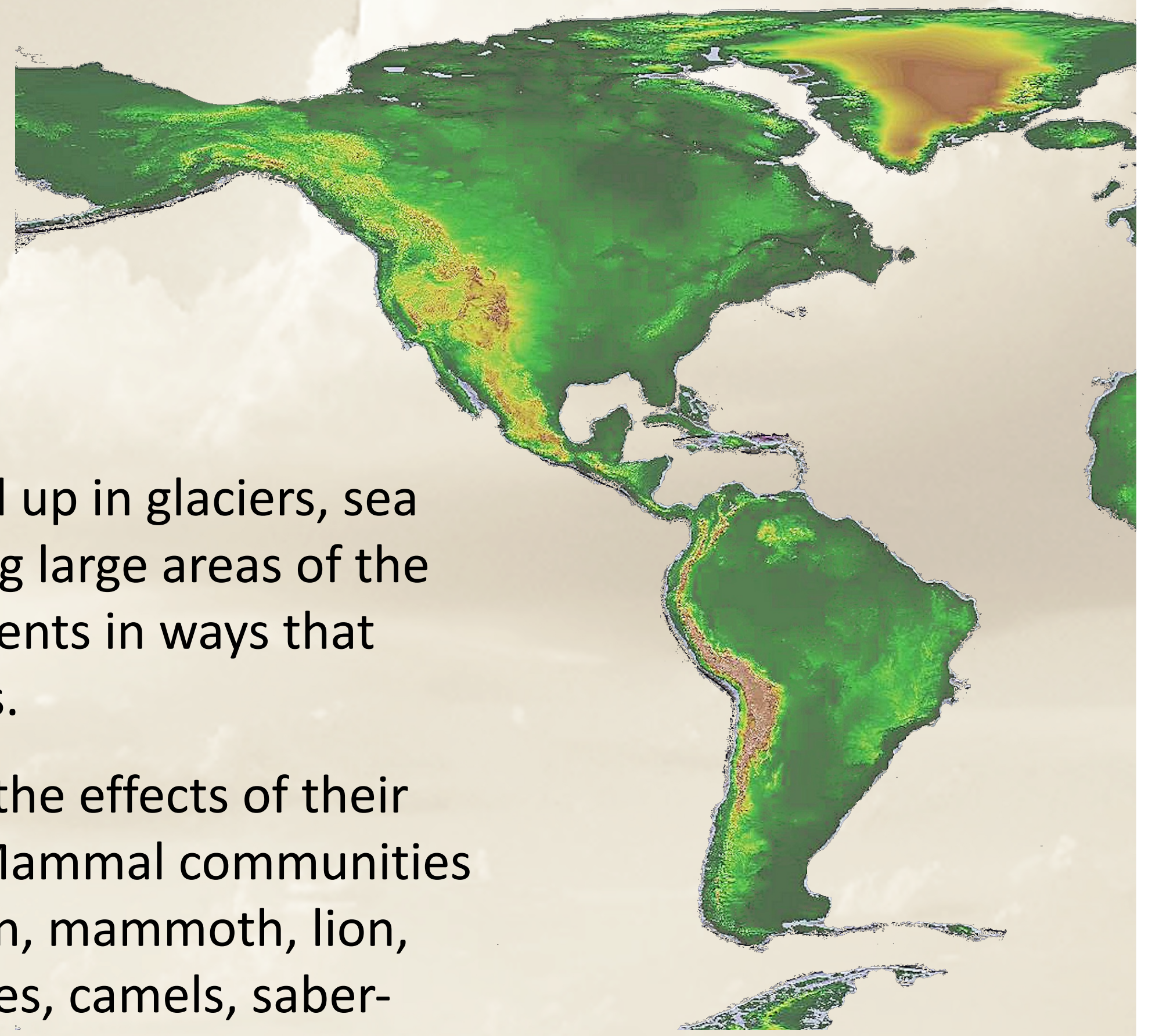
PLEISTOCENE TEXAS

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The **Pleistocene** (often referred to as the Ice Age) lasted from 2.6 million to 11,700 years ago. During that time, numerous cold phases called glacials occurred at intervals of approximately 40,000 to 100,000 years. The last glacial period ended about 10,000 years ago.

In peak glacial periods, with vast amounts of water tied up in glaciers, sea level would have been much lower than today, exposing large areas of the present continental shelf as dry land and linking continents in ways that permitted the migration of species between continents.

Although glaciers did not extend as far south as Texas, the effects of their advance and retreat can be seen in the fossil record. Mammal communities in Texas included immigrants from Eurasia such as bison, mammoth, lion, gray wolf and human beings, as well as our native horses, camels, saber-toothed cats and pronghorns.



Migrant species in both Americas

At times the previously isolated North and South American continents were joined by the Isthmus of Panama, causing a faunal interchange between the two regions

In the image to the left, olive green silhouettes denote North American species with South American ancestors; blue silhouettes denote South American species of North American origin. Sloths, armadillos and glyptodonts, immigrants from South America, were an important component of Texas fauna.



Teeth. Mastodon (top) vs Mammoth



Giant ground sloth with human for scale.



Giant beaver *Castoroides ohioensis* compared to a modern beaver,



Titanis (a species of "terror birds") inhabited the United States during the Pliocene and earliest Pleistocene. *Titanis* had elongated hind limbs and a large skull with a hooked beak. It was estimated to be 4.6 to 6.6 feet in height and over 660 lbs. in weight. This family of birds were ground predators or scavengers, likely apex predators that dominated Cenozoic South America in the absence of placental mammalian predators. Similarly, in North America, while they co-existed with many placental predators, they were likely one of several apex predators in its ecosystem.



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