

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



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OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Notes: Sources included the American Museum of Natural History, <http://www.amnh.org/science/biodiversity/extinction/Intro/GiantBeasts.html> (click on "What happened to all these mammals?"); *Ice Age Mammals of North America* by Ian Lange (2002, Mountain Press Publishing Company); *Twilight of the Mammoths* by Paul S. Martin (2005, University of California Press); *Mammal Evolution* by R.J.G. Savage and M.R. Long (1986, Facts on File); *The Call of Distant Mammoths* by Peter Douglas Ward (Copernicus, 1997); and the BBC DVD "Walking with Prehistoric Beasts."

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Q. Dear Twig: Go on. What else might have made those great big Ice Age mammals go extinct?

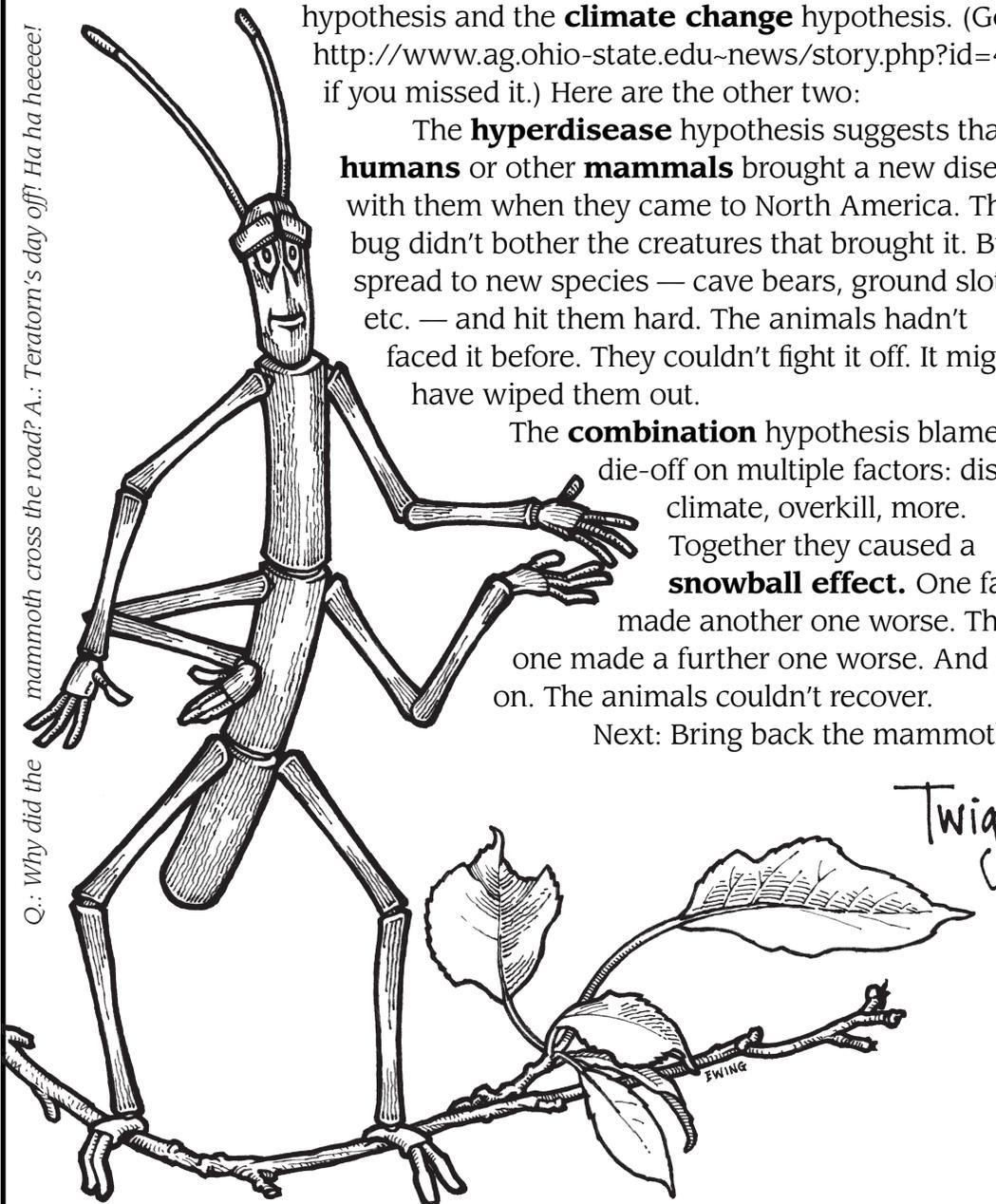
A.: OK. Last week we looked at two of the four main ideas: the **overkill** hypothesis and the **climate change** hypothesis. (Go to <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu-news/story.php?id=4272> if you missed it.) Here are the other two:

The **hyperdisease** hypothesis suggests that **humans** or other **mammals** brought a new disease with them when they came to North America. The bug didn't bother the creatures that brought it. But it spread to new species — cave bears, ground sloths, etc. — and hit them hard. The animals hadn't faced it before. They couldn't fight it off. It might have wiped them out.

The **combination** hypothesis blames the die-off on multiple factors: disease, climate, overkill, more. Together they caused a **snowball effect**. One factor made another one worse. That one made a further one worse. And so on. The animals couldn't recover.

Next: Bring back the mammoth?

Q.: Why did the mammoth cross the road? A.: Teratorm's day off! Ha ha heceeee!



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