



Cave Lion

Why in News

Recently, scientists have found two nearly perfectly preserved **cave lion cubs** which **lived 28,000 years ago**, nicknamed Boris and Sparta.

- They were found in **Siberia's permafrost, Russia**. The cubs were found 15 metres apart but are not only from different litters but **were also born thousands of years apart**.

Key Points

▪ About:

- The Cave Lion (*Panthera spelaea*), often nicknamed the **Mega-Lion**, is a [//](#)



genus of prehistoric lion that originated during the **last Ice Age** (2.6 million years ago to 11,700 years ago) in what is now Europe.

- It is generally placed as a subspecies of the lion.
- It was one of the most common large predators during the last Ice age, with a distribution throughout northern Eurasia and North America. It became **extinct about 14,000 years ago**.

▪ Behaviour & Traits:

- The Cave Lions were **major predators, hunting ice age deer, bison, and other animals**. These lions also were **ambush predators, laying in wait and erupting out of the brush to tackle their prey** with impressive **speed, agility, and strength**.
 - Measuring **3 meters long** and weighing **340 kilos**, this was the largest cat species of all time.
- However, like all cats, the Cave Lion could only **chase prey over a short distance**.
- Despite their size, strength, and relatively long legs, Cave Lions were not **designed for long-distance chases**.

▪ Significance of Finding:

- Similar finds in Russia's vast Siberian region have turned up with increasing regularity. **Climate change is warming the Arctic** at a faster pace than the rest of the world and has **thawed the ground in some areas long locked in permafrost**.

Permafrost

▪ About:

- Permafrost is **any ground that remains completely frozen—32°F (0°C) or colder—for**

at least two years straight.

- It is made of a **combination of soil, rocks and sand that are held together by ice.**
- These permanently frozen grounds are most **common in regions with high mountains and in Earth's higher latitudes**—near the North and South Poles.
- Permafrost covers large regions of the Earth. Almost a quarter of the land area in the Northern Hemisphere has permafrost underneath. Although the ground is frozen, **permafrost regions are not always covered in snow.**
- **Thawing of Permafrost:**
 - **Damage Infrastructure:** Many villages are built on permafrost. When permafrost is frozen, it's harder than concrete. However, **thawing permafrost can destroy houses, roads and other infrastructure.**
 - **Release Greenhouse Gas:** As permafrost thaws, microbes begin decomposing this material. This process **releases greenhouse gases** like carbon dioxide and methane to the atmosphere.
 - **Diseases:** When permafrost thaws, so do ancient bacteria and viruses in the ice and soil. These **newly-unfrozen microbes could make humans and animals very sick.**

[Source: TH](#)

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