



**N** is for Natural History  
and a place where it was possible  
to stop for a drink  
and turn into a fossil.

Located in downtown Los Angeles, the La Brea Tar Pits is one of the world's largest finds of Pleistocene (Ice Age) fossils. Forty thousand years ago you would not have recognized the residents of the area we now call Los Angeles. They were huge tusked mammoths and mastodons, giant ground sloths, long-horned bisons, giant wolves, and saber-toothed cats.

The tar pits are pools where oil has seeped up to the surface and turned into sticky goo. When it rains, the tar is covered with water and the pits look just like watering holes. Animals that came to drink got stuck in the tar.

Until 1901, the bones found at the tar pits were thought to belong to cattle, but once scientists looked more closely, they found the remains of long extinct animals—59 species of mammals and 135 species of birds. Hundreds of thousands of saber-tooth cat bones, the state fossil, have been dug out of the tar.

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