



ART BY MAURICIO ANTON

Mammoths walk in the background at the La Brea Tar Pits area while a dire wolf howls in the foreground. Early illustrations created by Mauricio Anton show dire wolves very similar to gray wolves.



Angeles area, but the region was not covered in ice.

The Last Ice Age, some 15,000 to 10,000 years ago also known as the late Pleistocene, was the last time when some of the animals found in the area today co-existed with the megafauna—large animals now extinct.

“[Pleistocene] It set the stage for the period we are living in,” Balisi said. “There was a time when dire wolves were running around with our gray foxes, our coyotes, striped skunks, and bobcats. We lost the larger animals from back then.”

The dire wolves coexisted with other large carnivores like saber-tooth cats –*Smilodon fatalis*–, short-faced bears–*Arctodus simus*–, the American lion–*Panthera atrox*–, a cousin of the African lion, and the gray wolves –*Canis lupus*–.

“This is interesting because there are five species of large carnivores which is more than what we

usually have in ecosystems today,” Balisi said. “In North America, our closest comparison might be Yellowstone National Park which has only two species of large carnivores today: the gray wolf and the mountain lion.”

Pleistocene Southern California was also home to several species of herbivores: the Columbian mammoth–*Mammuthus columbi*–, the American mastodon– *Mammot americanum*–, the Western horse–*Equus occidentalis*–, yesterday’s camel–*Camelops hesternus*– and the antique bison–*Bison antiquus*– among others.

No woolly mammoths roamed the La Brea corridor during the Last Ice Age.

Balisi says that North America was, millions of years ago, the place of origin and evolution for horses, camels and dogs. Fossil evidence shows that some migrated to other regions, while the ones who stood their ground went extinct.

“‘LORD STARK,’ JOHN SAID. ... ‘THERE ARE FIVE PUPS,’ HE TOLD FATHER. ‘THREE MALE, TWO FEMALE.’ ... ‘YOU HAVE FIVE TRUEBORN CHILDREN,’ JOHN SAID. ‘THREE SONS, TWO DAUGHTERS. THE DIREWOLF IS THE SIGIL OF YOUR HOUSE. YOUR CHILDREN WERE MEANT TO HAVE THESE PUPS, MY LORD.’”

George R.R. Martin - "A Game of Thrones"

“All the horses that we have today are imports. However, the Western horse evolved in this region,” Balisi said. “Horses, camels and dogs, all originated on this continent. With climate change, geographic change and tectonic change