

The oldest DNA ever found reveals a snapshot of a vanished world.

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This is the introduction and first section of an article that reports on breakthrough DNA research and historical Greenlandic flora and fauna. The article is descriptive and informative and attempts to create a picture of the context in the reader's mind. The author draws on facts and figures as well as recognisable scientific terms that would be accessible to non-expert readers.

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At the icy northern tip of Greenland, far into the Arctic Circle, a deep bed of sediment beneath the mouth of a fjord has lain frozen and undisturbed for 2 million years.

Known as the Kap København Formation, this relic of a vanished world dates to a period when Earth was much warmer than it is today. The sediment built up in a shallow bay over a period of 20,000 years, before being buried beneath ice and permafrost.

Our team, led by Kurt Kjær, Mikkel Winter Pedersen and Eske Willerslev at Copenhagen University, has extracted and analysed the oldest DNA ever recovered from samples of this Greenlandic sediment. It reveals the plants, animals and microorganisms that thrived in an ecosystem unlike anything in the modern world.

As we report today in Nature, this DNA is more than a million years older than the previous record. We can now recover and directly study molecules that were made inside plants and animals 2 million years ago, opening a new window into the history of life on Earth.

The headline is informative. Emotive, superlative words 'oldest' and 'ever found' add drama to the headline
Author's professional position and affiliation.

A vivid description sets the scene for the story using adjectives and figures. This vivid portrayal hooks the readers' attention effectively.

Experts and university affiliation are introduced. The topic is concisely described and includes some accessible scientific terms 'DNA', 'microorganisms' and 'ecosystem'.

This paragraph describes the value of the discovery and includes some accessible scientific terms 'DNA', 'molecules'.

A snapshot of an extinct ecosystem

Two million years ago, northern Greenland was a very different place. Average winter temperatures were more than 10°C warmer, and there was less carbon dioxide in Earth's atmosphere.

Our study, carried out by more than 40 scientists from Denmark, the UK, France, Sweden, Norway, the USA and Germany, pieced together minuscule fragments of DNA and matched them to sequences of known species. We found genetic traces of ancestors of modern reindeer, hares and lemmings, as well as mastodon – extinct elephant-like creatures which were not previously known to have lived in Greenland.

← Subheading. Indicates content of this section.

← A vivid description incorporating figures adds further context.

← This paragraph concisely describes the methodology and outcomes in plain language that is accessible to non-expert readers. The methodology and outcomes are not written in the style of an academic research paper – only the basic outline is provided. The rest of the article focuses on describing the findings.