

Cave Lion

August 17, 2021

In news- Scientists have discovered a well-preserved Cave Lion cub in Siberia's permafrost that lived 28,000 years ago.

More information-

- The **female cub, named Sparta**, was found at the Semyuelyakh River in **Russia's Yakutia region** in 2018 and a **second lion cub called Boris** was found in 2017.
- The cubs were found 15 metres apart but are not only from different litters but were also born thousands of years apart.
- Boris, the male cub, would have lived around 43,448 years ago.
- The two cubs **aged 1-2 months** were found by mammoth tusk collectors.
- Sparta was so well preserved that it still had its fur, internal organs and skeleton and may even still have traces of its mother's milk in it.
- Two other lion cubs named Uyan and Dina have also been found in the region in recent years.
- **Cave lions have been extinct** for thousands of years.
- The find itself is unique as there was no other such find in Yakutia region.

About Cave Lion-

- **Panthera spelaea**, also known as the Eurasian cave lion, European cave lion or steppe lion, is an extinct Panthera species that most likely evolved in Europe about 600,000 years ago.
- Analysis of fossil bone samples revealed that it was highly distinct and genetically isolated from the modern lion (*Panthera leo*) occurring in Africa and Eurasia.
- *P. spelaea* formed a **contiguous population from Europe to Alaska over the Bering land bridge.**

- The oldest known bone fragments were excavated in Yakutia and radiocarbon dated at least 62,400 years old.
- The youngest known fossils are dated 11,925 years old and originated near Fairbanks, Alaska.
- It **inhabited open environments such as mammoth steppe and boreal forest.**

It was one of the keystone species of the mammoth steppe, being **one of the main apex predators** alongside grey wolf, cave hyena and brown bear and were primarily **consuming reindeer.**