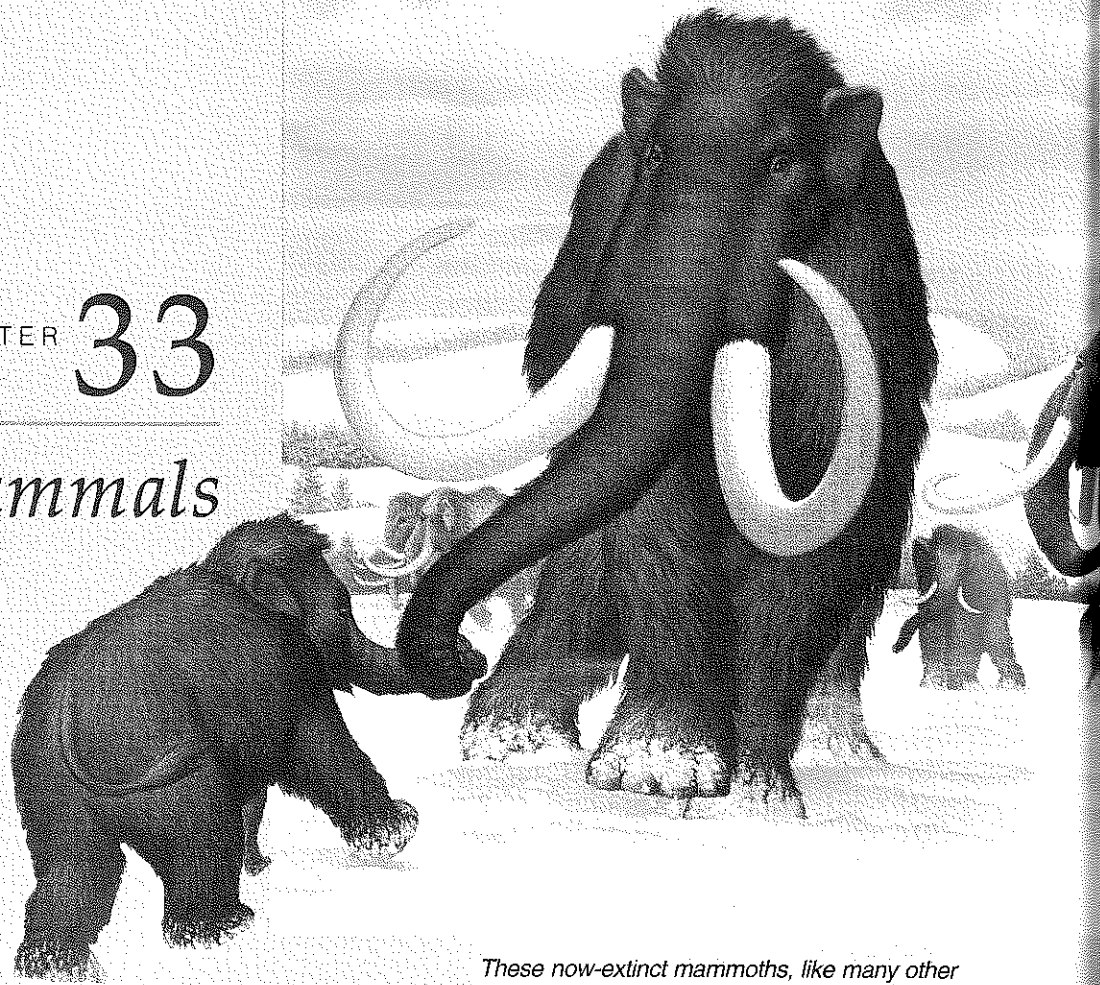


CHAPTER 33

Mammals



These now-extinct mammoths, like many other mammals, evolved layers of fat and thick fur coats, which served them well during ice ages. Today, mammals include some of the largest and most intelligent animals that have ever lived.

*Read for
Q. 3 of 321
↓*

Around the end of the Cretaceous Period, Earth's climate changed dramatically. The Rocky Mountains and other large mountain ranges arose, blocking the flow of warm, moist air from the oceans over the continent. Inland seas and swamps on the side of the mountain ranges away from the ocean dried up, winters became colder, and summers became hotter and drier.

These conditions proved lucky for mammals, whose small ancestors had spent millions of years scrambling around in the shadow of the giant dinosaurs. As mammals evolved, they became accomplished endotherms that could survive cooler and more variable climates. So as dinosaurs vanished, the great mammalian radiation began. In this chapter you will see how successful mammals have been and examine some of the adaptations that make them so fascinating.