SMILODON.FOSSILS.IM

Three species

An older, slighter cat, and two later ones — officially kept distinct.

"The ancestor of Smilodon evolved in Eurasia and entered North America approximately 5 million years ago." Official wording then names three species, in order, and does not flatten them into one animal.

The official story	Official wording
S. gracilis	"The oldest Smilodon is called Smilodon gracilis, which lived 2.5 million years ago and was a smaller and less robust species."
S. fatalis	After the Isthmus of Panama, "roughly 2 million years ago," came "the North American Smilodon fatalis." First North American fossils from a Texas cave, named by Joseph Leidy in 1869. Thousands from Rancho La Brea, "and thus is the California state fossil."
S. populator	"The larger South American Smilodon populator." First fossils "in the 1830's in Brazil," named by Peter Wilhem Lund in 1842 — official spelling kept as written.
Two official endings	NPS: both species "went extinct roughly 10,000 years ago." A Natural History Museum page gives a range for Smilodon "between 2.5 million and 12,000 years ago." Both wordings are kept.

A short quiz

1. Which official species is the oldest, and the slightest?
2. Who named S. populator, and in which year?
3. Do official pages give only one ending for Smilodon?

Answers. Smilodon gracilis, 2.5 million years ago. Peter Wilhem Lund, in 1842. No — official pages give "roughly 10,000 years ago" and a range ending 12,000 years ago, and this sheet keeps both.

Wording from the U.S. National Park Service, "The Big Cats," Tule Springs Fossil Beds, last updated 12 October 2021, and the Natural History Museum, "One of the earliest sabre-toothed mammals discovered in the USA," by James Ashworth, 15 March 2022. Checked 18 November 2026. smilodon.fossils.im is independent of both. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.