

# Journey into the Kingdom of Glaciers and Beavers

Just imagine—

A 200-pound beaver, a shaggy-haired creature the size of a black bear with six-inch-long incisors and a narrow tail. These creatures were very real and thrived in Midwestern landscapes until a layer of ice taller than a skyscraper carved and crushed the land leaving the “footprints” of hills and lakes that remain today.

As the earth slowly warmed at the end of the Pleistocene epoch, the lives of Native Americans, mastodons and giant beavers were briefly intertwined—right where you stand today.



The megafauna of the last ice age went extinct with that cataclysmic climate change. As the great sheet of ice retreated, creating hills and ridges (glacial moraines) in Oakland County, one block of ice broke free. The enormous weight of that partially buried block created this ‘kettle lake’.

Kettle lakes are common in the county and attractive to wildlife and waterfowl.



**Stag-Moose**  
The Stag-Moose (*Cervalces scottii*) resembled cross between a moose and a deer. It roamed American Midwest wetlands and at least as far as south of Kentucky before becoming extinct at the end of the last ice age. Perhaps one of these mysterious Pleistocene epoch beasts with very complex antlers and stilt-like legs stood right where you are at this very moment.

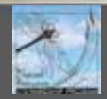


**Mastodon**  
Michigan's State Fossil, the American Mastodon, roamed North America for more than 3 million years before becoming extinct 14,000 years ago. Skeletons of this once omnipresent shaggy-haired browsing creature that stood 10 feet tall and weighed up to six tons have been found in Oakland County.

Modern day beavers are masters of reengineering landscapes. And what better place for setting up wetland housekeeping than in a 10,000-year-old kettle lake. A secluded lake surrounded by abundant food eliminates the need to build a dam.

Beavers may be secretive and chiefly nocturnal but forensic evidence tells their story. Under the cover of darkness they waddle ashore and use their strong chisel-like teeth to gnaw and fell trees, leaving sharply pointed stumps in the woods. Twigs and inner bark are food. Tree limbs are for lodge construction.

If threatened during clandestine logging expeditions they hurry back to the water. Their large webbed rear feet and a paddle-like tail aid their swim to safety and the beaver enters the lodge from a hidden underwater tunnel. But first a sharp crack of the tail on the lake's surface warns other beavers danger is near.



The sense of something extraordinary comes to life in this kingdom of glacial history and beavers and the ever changing raw radiance of nature's way. Visit [DestinationOakland.com](http://DestinationOakland.com) for a preview of all parks and trails.

**OAKLAND COUNTY PARKS**

