Our Local Animals

Ancient Animals

Most of what is now known as Michigan was a large bay of water that spread inland from the ocean. This huge bay geologists now call the Michigan Basin.

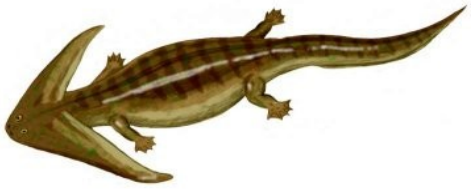
In the seas many kinds of sea life existed similar to animals that live in present warm seas and lakes.

prehistoricf shark

Blowfin

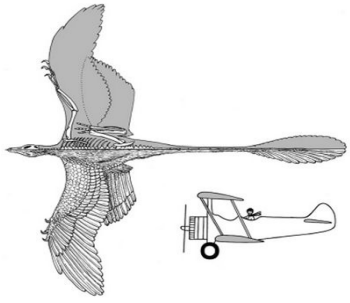
Michigan has a "living fossil" the bowfin. This weird fish can breathe air with its lunglike air sac and this ability to breathe air "straight" allows it live in brackish, deoxygenated water and to survive droughts by burrowing in the mud, a technique called **aestivation**. The bowfin is the only primitive fish to provide parental care for its young. "Bowfin, when caught, should be handled carefully. They are very **pugnacious**, and **consider themselves a match for anything** - including a human being. Once in the boat, they will make every attempt they can at biting the fisherman - and they have a mouthful of very sharp teeth." source http://www.ypsidixit.com/blog/archives/2006/07/meet_michigans.html

During the Pennsylvanian period over 280 million years ago Warren was above the sea while the center of the state was a huge swamp with huge fern like plants (which later formed coal). The cimate was very warm. Thousands of strange animals existed.



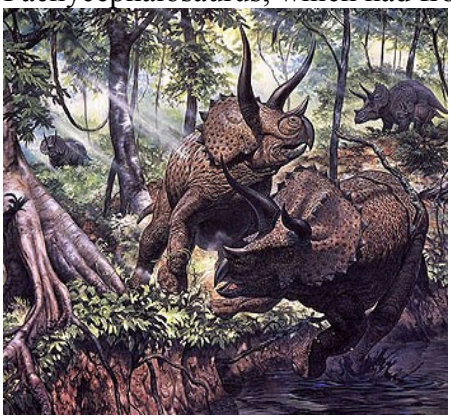
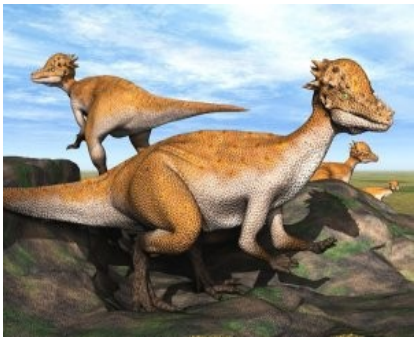
Diploceraspis looked something like a three foot long salamander with a boomerang-shaped head.
Diploceraspis Dimetrodon was a meat-eater with a huge sail on his back let it warm up faster in the morning, so it could kill other primitive reptiles before they had a chance to get going in the morning.

During the Permian period over 220 million years ago the climate of Warren became alternately hot and dry and mild. Michigan had miniature prehistoric horses.



Cretaceous skies were full of creatures big and small. Minuscule moths and small bees shared airspace with enormous pterosaurs, which were warm-blooded flying reptiles related to dinosaurs. The pterosaur Pteranodon, which had a wingspan of up to 33 feet, was one of the biggest of the bunch. It spent much of its

time soaring over water, looking for fish, crabs, insects and mollusks to eat.
Big, small, spiked, fat and more, dinosaurs of all shapes and sizes appeared during the Cretaceous. Since the landmasses were now separated, animals on the distinct continents went their separate evolutionary ways. Beaked, plant-eating dinosaurs known as ceratopsians first appeared at this time. One of the most well-known members of this group was Triceratops, which had three facial horns and a large, bony frill. The so-called "bone-headed" dinosaurs also emerged during the Cretaceous. One of the biggest was Pachycephalosaurus, which had front teeth and might have even enjoyed meat with its plant-based diet.

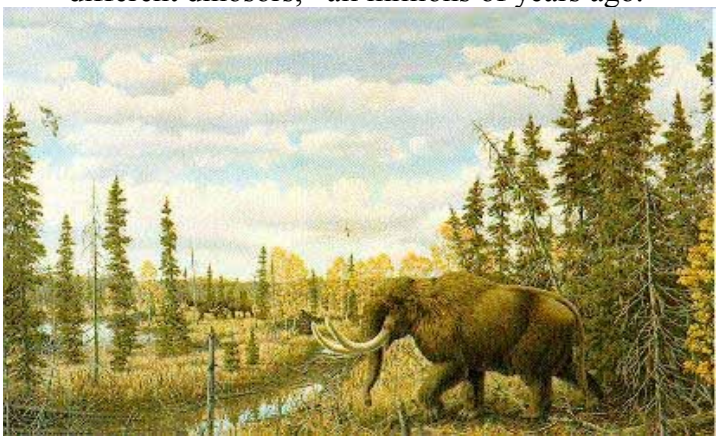




Numerous carnivorous dinosaurs preyed upon the other dino bounty. There was Pelicanimimus, which had more teeth — around 220 — than any other known dinosaur. Afrovenator used its own bladelike teeth to tear at the flesh of prey. Carnotaurus had such short arms that its hands appeared to form out of its elbows, but its clawed feet and sharp teeth could still take down sauropods. Tyrannosaurus rex, however, stood out from the carnivorous dinosaur pack. This 40-foot-long beast was so strong that researchers believe it could shake victims to death, once it had sunk its teeth into their bodies.

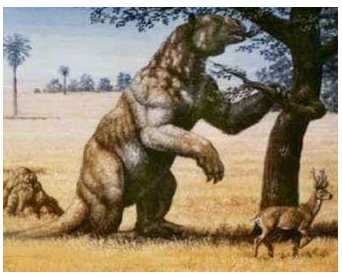


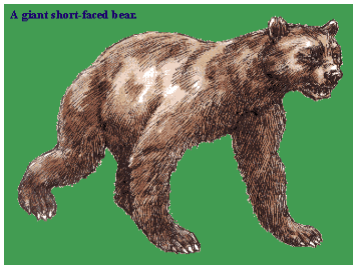
Saber-tooth Cat - Smilodon fatalis was about 4-5 feet long with a one-foot long skull, 2 huge canine teeth and a very strong jaw and neck muscles that ate prehistoric horses, and possibly mastodons and bison.

Our area was also home to the American mastodon, mammoths, saber toothed cats, short legged rhinoceros, long horned bison, giant ground sloth, an early camel, mastodons, whales and walruses, giant beavers, ancient amored fishes, and sharks, Musk Ox, Giant Short-faced Bear, Badger, Cougar, and dozens of different dinosors, all millions of years ago.



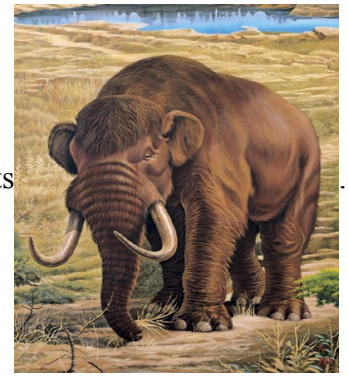
mural by R.G. Larson



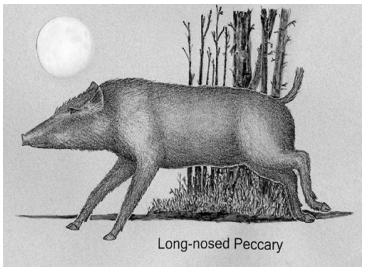


There were several periods of glaciation. Warren thawed out but rested under an expanded Lake St. Clair until about 10,000 years ago. As the lake level declined and the ground rose Warren at first was tundra with arctic plants, then low plants and shrubs, then gradually the following trees became dominant: Spruce, fir, pine, oak, chestnut walnut, sycamore butternut, basswood, elm, beech ash, oak, and pine. Some of the animals that have lived in the area of Warren since the glaciers and lake retreated are: wolf, giant beaver, white-tailed deer, musk ox, mastodon, American elk, Jefferson mammoth, muskrat, moose, short-tailed shrew, woodchuck, eastern chipmunk red squirrel, gray squirrel Canada beaver, white-footed deer mouse, vole, raccoon, martin, red fox and many different species of birds.

The Columbian Mammoth stood from 12' to  14' tall and weighed approximately 10tons. Mammoths were mainly grazers, eating grass, sedges, and birch. The mammoth also had a hump on the back of his neck. He had long black hair with a brown wooly undercoat. These animals became extinct around 8,000 years ago.

Mastodons were shorter and stouter than the mammoth and were more common than mammoths in eastern North America. Mastodons preferred to browse on leaves, twigs and roots  . The seven to nine-foot tall mastodon had seven to ten-foot tusks thrust forward and with an upward curve. His body was covered with a golden brown to black coarse hair and an adult male weighed about 6 tons! The mastodon most likely ate leaves and twigs from trees in the forests. The American mastodon became extinct somewhere after 6,000 years ago. To become extinct means to no longer exist, or be.

Both of the above animals had a **proboscis and tusks.** Mammoths and Mastodons were hunted by Ice Age American Hunters called Clovis Indians.



Bears and cougars often weighed hundreds of pounds and could easily kill humans.

Howling of wolves were frequently heard in the old days. They could attack people singlely or in packs.

This is why early settlers were usually armed at all times. And why a fire was kept going all of the time.

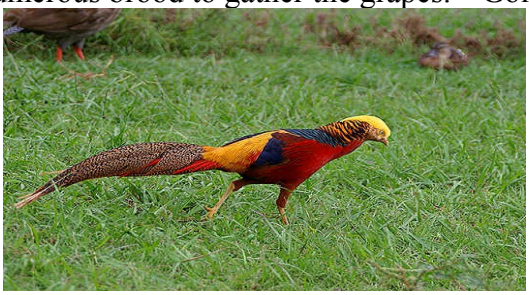
Our area **was** abounding in wildlife

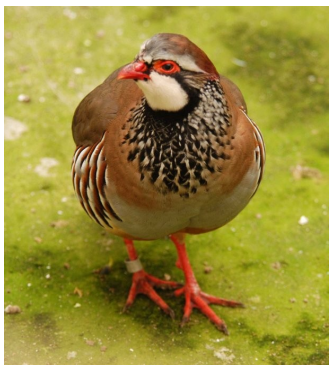


On July 24, 1701, ANTOINE DE LA MOTHE CADILLAC and his command of about one hundred men, which included his nine-year-old son Antoine, landed at the foot of a thirty-foot cliff along the Detroit River. Cadillac built here Fort Pontchartrain du De Troit (the straits), after the French minister of Marine. This later became the city of Detroit.. Madame Cadillac, several months later, traveled one thousand miles by canoe to join her husband, becoming the first European woman in Michigan. Cadillac left Detroit in 1710. The Michigan Historical library states that his settlement had become home to several thousand Native Americans, but only a handful of French Canadians.

What was the area like in 1701 What did Cadillac find?

In 1701 Cadillac wrote that there were forests of full grown trees or walnut, white oak, red oak, ash, pine, whitewood, cottonwood, straight as arrows with no knots and without branches except at the very top. "Under these broad walks one sees hundreds of timid deer and faun, also the squirrel bounding in his eagerness to collect the apples and plums with which the earth is covered. Here the cautious turkey calls and conducts her numerous brood to gather the grapes." Golden pheasants, the quail,



partridge, woodcock, and numerous doves swarm in the woods and in the country which is dotted with thickets." "The fish here are nourished and bathed by living water of crystal clearness and their great abundance renders them none the less delicious." He writes of the prodigious courageous Eagle, "Swans are so numerous that one would take for lilies the reeds in which they are crowded together. Luxuriant grass which fatten woolly buffaloes of magnificent size. Silas Farmer also states that other early accounts tell of elk, moose, wolves, bears, rabbits, otters, lynxes, wildcats, beavers, musk-rats, meadow larks, bobolinks,

robins, and humming birds. Silas states “so numerous and large, indeed, were the wild bisons, that the making of garments from their wool was seriously considered.” He reports that in 1824 myriads of wild pigeons made their roosts in the forests of the country. They were so numerous that hundreds could easily be killed with a walking stick.



(Silas Farmer p11)

Michigan is indeed a water wonder land with the most fresh water in the world.

Under the French the area was exploited for furs along the lakes and streams. Some of the animals that have lived in the area of Warren since the glaciers and lake retreated are: wolf, giant beaver, white-tailed deer, musk ox, mastodon, American elk, Jefferson mammoth, muskrat, moose, short-tailed shrew, woodchuck, eastern chipmunk red squirrel, gray squirrel Canada beaver, white-footed deer mouse, vole, raccoon, martin, red fox bear, wolf, lynx, wild cat, fox, coon, badger, fisher, porcupine, woodchuck, rabbit, mink, and weasel.and 250 species of birds.

The birds common in these early days were the eagle, hawk, turkey-buzzard, raven, owl, crane, turkey, partridge, duck, wild goose, and a variety of the smaller birds.
The wild turkey was very common, and vast flocks of several hundred were frequently to be met with.
The wild turkey is sometimes caught in pens made of poles, some five or six feet in height, and covered over the top to prevent their escape. A covered passage-way is made under the pen large enough for the turkeys to crawl through. Corn or other grain is scattered in the passage-way and inside the pen. The unsuspecting birds, seeing the grain, commence picking it up, and thus one after another crawl through the hole into the pen. " Once in, forever in," for they never think of putting their heads down to crawl out again.

The first public building in Warren was a pound constructed of logs 30 feet square in 1839. It was used to house stray animals and was located on Gabrel Yates’ farm. He held the position of Pound master until 1848.



Wildlife was abundant in the area deer, bear, raccoon, muskrat, beaver, woodchuck, chipmunk, squirrel, elk, bison, porcupine, lemmings, flying squirrels, red wolf, coyote, red and gray foxes, beavers, wapiti, woodchucks, bob cats, mountain lions, badgers, striped skunk, otters, mink, weasel, opossum, bats, birds, and other wildlife.

Gerald Neil also points out that “Wolves, bears, and wandering live-stock were somewhat of a problem, and also crows. Bounties were offered for wolves, bears and crows and were paid regularly by the town Board.”

As more settlers moved in land was converted from mature forest to farms. This caused most of the wildlife to move away. Much wildlife was hunted for food and sometimes for "sport". There were hundreds of different Birds.
Corrupt politicians allowed big companies to pollute the land air and water. The fish became unsafe to eat. Even today mercury levels in Great Lakes fish are at unsafe levels. Today thousands of people and animals are dying from pollution related causes.

Today the animals we have left are robins, blue jays, morning doves, starlings, sparrows, a few other birds, squirrels, a few raccoons, opossums, skunks, rats, moles, mice, worms, spiders and insects. The domesticated animals in the farming days were cows, pigs, chickens, goats, sheep, horses, oxen, turkeys but now all that is left are cats, dogs and some exotic pets.

The greatest numbers of animals in the world are very small. There are millions of different kinds of insects and billions of even smaller animals some so small one needs a microscope to see them. It is fascinating to watch them through a microscope. And there are animals too small to see through common microscopes. Medical scientists are warning us that more medical research needs to be done to find antibiotics against super germs. With the human population soon to be 7 billion our enemies the bacteria and viruses have a huge target population in which to develop mutations. Super germs are increasing at an unprecedented rate and we need to develop antibiotics against them. We had better pay attention to history of epidemics. We need to be observant, informed, and prepared.

Forget the Michigan fish they will make you sick from the pollution they have asorbed.

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More information about fossil finds in Michigan can be found in Michigan's Fossil Vertebrates by J. Alan Holman and illustrated by Merald Clark and Barbra Gudgeon. This bulletin was published by the museum at the Michigan State University, 1975.