



These maps show the maximum extent of glacial ice during the last glaciation about 18,000 years ago.



Did you know that the front of a glacier is called the snout? Above we see the snout of a glacier in Antarctica. This ice mass is flowing from the mountain seen in the background.

The story of the glacier

The Earth's climate has gone through regular cycles of warming and cooling during the past 2.5 million years. For much of the past 1 million years, these cycles have been about 100,000 years long. During the cool parts of these cycles, large glaciers expanded to cover much of northern North America, Europe, and Asia. About 26,000 years ago, the most recent of these great glaciers, the Laurentide Ice Sheet, flowed southward through the Lake Superior and Lake Michigan basins and into Wisconsin.

By about 10,000 years ago, the ice had melted back into the Lake Superior basin. Although glaciers have covered parts of south-central Wisconsin several times, here at the park evidence has been recognized for only the most recent glaciation.