

# Rowell's Beach

Site #3 on the Strzelecki Taxonomy Map

Rowell's Beach is a local name given to a small beach situated halfway between Potter's Hill Road and The Punchbowl. Access to the site is via the Potter's Hill Road entrance and by walking east along the shore platform. It can only be accessed at low tide and care should be taken not to be cut off by the incoming tide.

This small, unassuming beach has produced some of the best examples of Early Cretaceous temnospondyl amphibian bones in the world.

A pair of lower jaws belonging to a giant temnospondyl amphibian, which would have been about the size of a salt water crocodile, was found by Mike Cleeland in 1990. The jaws were partly exposed and gave no hint as to how large they were. It took four people to carry the block containing the jaws up the steep access track and many months of preparation before the jaws were finally released from their rocky tomb.

Later a partial skull of a temnospondyl amphibian was found by Andrew Ruffin in 1996. This partial skull was encased in a concretion; a small area of rock, that is much harder than the surrounding rock. As the concretion is tougher than the surrounding rock, it was more resistant to erosion. As a result the concretion stood out in relief, exposed as a lump on the shore platform. Andrew spotted the partial skull in the concretion and called for backup from the excavation team. The skull was carefully removed in three sections and the initial preparation began shortly after. The back of the skull was the first part to be prepared, which confirmed that the skull was a temnospondyl amphibian. The fragile skull roof was far more difficult to prepare due to the hardness of the rock and the thinness of the skull. The skull is still being prepared at Museum Victoria and will hopefully be the centre piece of a future exhibition on these ancient giant amphibians.

After careful study, it was revealed that these bones represent a species new to science and which has been named *Koolasuchus cleelandi*, in honour of two local researchers – Lesley Kool and Michael Cleeland.



photo - Lesley Kool