

## Eric the Red West Locality

The Eric the Red West fossil locality is situated approximately 300m west of the Eric the Red anchor at the bottom of the access track to Point Franklin, on the Otway coast. The site was discovered by Dinosaur Dreaming team member Mike Cleeland and three other prospectors, George Caspar, Malcolm and Dierdre Carkeek, in November 2005. What they originally thought were a couple of teeth turned out to be the posterior end of a small dinosaur; only the third articulated dinosaur to be found in Victoria.

That same day George found an unusual vertebra, which once prepared, was identified as belonging to a group of dinosaurs previously unknown in Australia, called spinosaurs.

Eric the Red West got its name because of its close proximity to the original Eric the Red fossil locality, only a few hundred metres away. Shortly after its discovery it was referred to as "Eric the Crayfish" as it is located between Eric the Red and Crayfish Bay, but the name was later changed to reflect its close geological affinities with the Eric the Red site.

The discovery of the articulated skeleton and spinosaur vertebra prompted Museum Victoria's Vertebrate Palaeontology Collections Manager, David Pickering to organise a number of short field trips, usually following the annual Inverloch field trips. It gradually became obvious that the site had huge potential and so it was decided in 2013 to suspend further fieldtrips to Inverloch and to concentrate more fully on the Eric the Red West site.

The first major fieldtrip to the site took place in February 2014 and the results justified the decision to move the Dinosaur Dreaming project to the Otways. A total of more than 400 fossil bones were collected over the three week field season, including some well preserved theropod and ornithopod dinosaur bones and a large dinosaur claw, which is very similar to the claws of the Queensland theropod dinosaur *Australovenator wintonensis*.

Plans are currently underway for a return to the Eric the Red West site in February 2015, where the crew will continue where they left off this year.



Photo: The Eric the Red West site looking east towards Eric the Red and Point Franklin. George Caspar excavating the dinosaur skeleton in the foreground. Photographer: Mike Cleeland. Nov. 2005.