

Flat Rocks Site – Part 1

Site #16 on the Strzelecki Taxonomy Map

The Flat Rocks site is the premier fossil locality of the Dinosaur Dreaming Project. Access to the site is from The Caves car park. It is approximately 200 metres left of the beach access and stretches from the base of the cliff out onto the shore platform into the inter-tidal zone. It is a very unobtrusive site, almost completely covered in sand and tidal pools for most of the year, except for the 3-6 weeks during summer when the Dinosaur Dreaming crew are excavating.

The site was discovered in May of 1991 by a group of researchers and volunteers from Monash University and Museum Victoria, who were re-prospecting the area after the recent discovery of some fossil bones at The Caves. As the group spread out across the platform looking for telltale signs of exposed bones they came across a conglomerate layer, four metres wide. Within the space of half an hour, they found more than 20 fossil bones, exposed on the surface of the layer. This discovery caused great excitement as previously, isolated exposed bones elsewhere along the coast had been separated from one another by many metres. Never had so many fossil bones been found within the same fossil layer. The site was documented and mapped, and some of the more complete bones were removed for further study.

Annual excavations since 1994 have demonstrated that this fossil locality is the richest site in the Victorian Early Cretaceous. It represents a small window into the enormous diversity of animals that lived in this unique polar environment more than 120 million years ago.

Although no partial or complete skeletons have yet been found at the Flat Rocks site, some of the isolated bones and teeth that have been found have helped researchers identify the animals that lived at the same time in and around the river system. The diversity of animals makes this site very important in the study of ancient polar environments.

Next month we will discuss the difficulties faced by the diggers at this site.

