

Other sites within Dinosaur Cove

During the second week of excavations at Dinosaur Cove in 1984, a second site was discovered by Professor Patricia Vickers-Rich and her daughter Leaelynn. Dinosaur Cove is a classic cove, comprising a wide embayment bordered by high cliffs on the west, north and east sides. The main excavation in 1984 took place on the east side of the cove and was eventually referred to as "**Dinosaur Cove East**". Pat visited the excavations during the second week with Leaelynn and decided to check out the opposite side of the cove. It didn't take her long to spot some bones exposed in a low ledge of fossiliferous rock at the base of the cliff, which led to the discovery of "**Dinosaur Cove West**". While the majority of the volunteers worked away with jackhammers and drill at Dinosaur Cove East, a handful of people moved over to the more accessible Dinosaur Cove West and began to excavate that layer.

By the end of the first dig more than 200 fossil bones and teeth had been recovered from both sites and despite the devastating king tide, which almost wiped out most of the equipment, Tom Rich realised that he had to return to Dinosaur Cove.

In 1985 excavations continued at Dinosaur Cove West and a new fossiliferous layer was discovered at Dinosaur Cove East, on the shore platform in front of the excavation site. Realising that they were standing on a fossil layer the diggers abandoned their efforts to extend the tunnel further eastward and started the much easier task of digging downward. Tom Rich estimated that there was at least 35 square metres of fossiliferous rock to be excavated on the shore platform alone at Dinosaur Cove East. In subsequent field seasons at Dinosaur Cove, this site became so deep that it took a couple of hours each day to pump out the water from the previous high tide. It was also a great spot to cool off in on a hot day and was given the name "**Lake Copco**", after the mining company Atlas Copco who donated much of the excavation equipment.

By studying the cross-section of rock exposed in the Dinosaur Cove East and West sites, Tom Rich and his colleagues realised that they might be able to trace this layer in the cliff and find additional sites. In Tom's 1985 Dinosaur Cove Annual Report he states, "Using this clue, a third site was found at Dinosaur Cove within half an hour of starting the search. After another half an hour of digging there, three bone fragments had been found. For the first time, a fossil tetrapod site was found in the Victorian Cretaceous where no bones had been seen initially on the surface. Dubbed "**Slippery Rock site**" because of the algae covering much of the locality, it warrants future investigation".

The Slippery Rock site turned out to be the most productive of all the sites in Dinosaur Cove, producing two partial dinosaur skeletons and the first evidence of Cretaceous mammals in Victoria. Several tunnels were excavated at the Slippery Rock site over a number of field seasons. More details about the tunnels in the next episode, so stay tuned.



View of Dinosaur Cove from the top of the cliff, with Dinosaur Cove West at the furthest end of the cove. Courtesy of T.H. Rich Collection



The start of Lake Copco site, using plugs and feathers to break the rock. Courtesy of T.H. Rich Collection.