

Dinosaurs in the Otways

Following the discoveries of dinosaur bones along the Bass Coast in 1978/79, Dr. Tom Rich, Curator of Vertebrate Palaeontology at Museum Victoria, realised that the rocks along the Otway coastline, from Eastern View to beyond Moonlight Head, were also Early Cretaceous sedimentary deposits. He and a group of researchers began to systematically search the Otway shore platforms, looking for similar aged fossils. Travelling southwest from Eastern View, they explored the rocky coast line, looking for exposed fossil bones.

The Otway Group is younger than the Strzelecki Group (Bass Coast) by approximately 10 million years and part of the ongoing research is to compare and contrast the two groups. There are some obvious similarities, particularly among the small ornithopod dinosaurs, but there are also some differences. The most obvious difference is the absence of giant temnospondyl amphibians (such as *Koolasuchus cleelandi* found on the Bass Coast) and the presence of crocodylians in the Otway Group.

A few isolated fossil bones were discovered along the Otway coastline in 1980, including three thumbnail scraps at the base of a cliff in a then un-named cove near Castle Cove. This seemingly minor discovery was to lead to the first dinosaur dig in Victoria and the naming of Dinosaur Cove.

Over the years new fossil localities have been discovered, thanks mainly to Phillip Island geologist Mike Cleeland, who regularly revisits the Otway Coastline in the hope that the constant coastal erosion will uncover new treasures.

The year 2014 will see the Dinosaur Dreaming crew move from the Bass Coast to the Otway Coast as the spotlight shines on the relatively new site at Eric The Red West, near the Cape Otway lighthouse. With the focus of ongoing research moving to the Otway Coast it was decided that we should also focus on the Otway Coast and some of its greatest discoveries over the last 30 years.

We begin with a [map](#) of the fossil localities along the Otway Coast, which indicates the fossils found at each locality. Some localities are represented by a single bone fragment whereas others like Eric The Red West and Dinosaur Cove have yielded quite a diversity of fossil animals.

In the following months we will visit most of these localities and discuss some of the fossils that have been found over the last 30 years. Join us as we travel along the Otway Coast into Victoria's past.