



Dinosaur Cove is a notoriously difficult dig site which has reluctantly surrendered its amazing finds

An earth-shattering find

MOTHER Nature held her rich cargo of dinosaur secrets safe for more than a hundred million years embedded in what became the Otway coastline, and she had no intention of surrendering them without a fight.

Dozens of scientists and more than 700 volunteers jackhammered, blasted, and mined tunnels into the base of the Dinosaur Cove sea-cliffs, just west of Cape Otway, in their quest for information on creatures which lived in polar Victoria 150 - 120 million years ago.

Apart from the daily grind of descending the 90m sheer cliff to get to work they had a seemingly never-ending series of natural and logistical challenges to overcome. The relentless Southern Ocean challenged their personal safety, inundating and washing away their equipment, and filling the dig sites with sea, rock and sand.

The first on-site excavation at Dinosaur Cove in 1984 employed sledgehammers, rock breakers and rock drills. Progress was slow but by the end of the dig they had a tantalising glimpse of the dinosaur fauna that had inhabited South Eastern Australia.

When the team decided to tunnel above the fossiliferous layer and work down to it, using explosives was their only option. On the 50th day of the 1987 dig fossils were suddenly in abundance and they found a beautifully preserved 51mm long dinosaur skull. Analysis revealed two new finds including *Leaellynasaura amicagraphica*.

In 1991 they discovered one of the largest fossils recovered from Dinosaur Cove – a 43cm long femur. This ornithomimosaur (Ostrich-like) dinosaur was named *Timimus hermani* for Tom and Pat Rich's son Tim, celebrated scientist Tim Flannery, and volunteer John Herman. It is now considered a relative of *T.rex*.

Research results on *Timimus* and *Leaellynasaura* set the scientific world on fire - these dinosaurs were highly adapted and thrived in freezing conditions.

The past & its future

THIS polar dinosaur display has been brought to you by Otway Dinosaurs and Cape Otway Lightstation with a view to finding a permanent home for the full exhibition, put together over a lifetime by Professor Pat Vickers-Rich and her husband Dr Tom Rich.

They have been assisted by 700 volunteers, local families including the Denneys and the Evans, with cooperation from Parks & Wildlife of Victoria. Their research, funded by institutions including the National Geographic Society and the Australian Research Council, has produced the greatest diversity of polar dinosaur fossils in the world.

Otway Dinosaurs is working to create a permanent interpretation centre showcasing the history and evolution of our coastline.

To keep up to date with our quest, become a Friend of Otway Dinosaurs on Facebook. For more information on this fascinating story visit www.lightstation.com and follow the links to Otway Dinosaurs.



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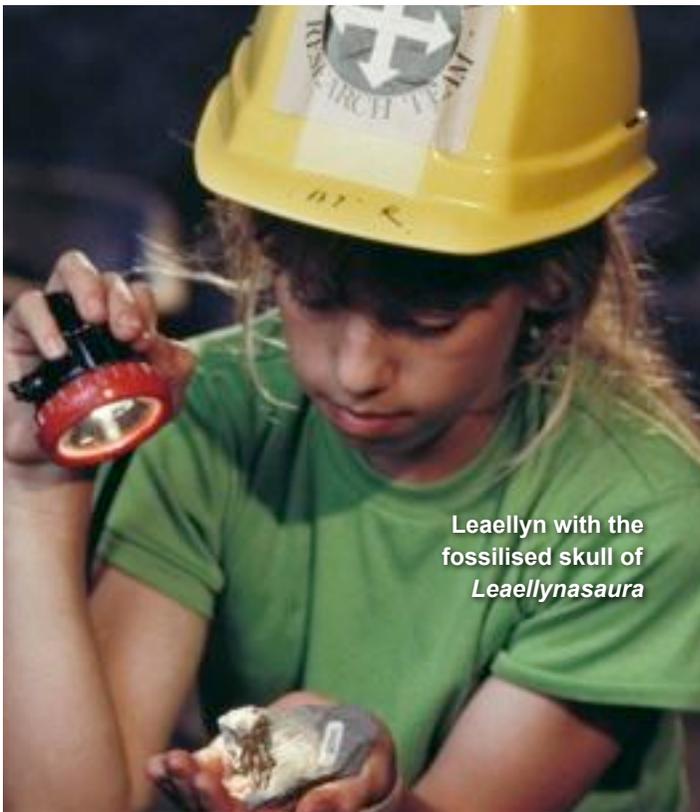


Australia's Dinosaur Era stamps, 1993;
Designer: Peter Trusler; © Australian Postal Commission



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Leaellyn with the fossilised skull of *Leaellynasaura*

'My little dino'

LEAELLYN Rich always wanted her very own dinosaur, then her parents found one, deep in the Otways coast.

Leaellyn spent many summers on digs where her palaeontologist parents Dr Tom Rich and Pat Vickers-Rich headed up the Dinosaur Cove research in the Eighties.

As a three year old Leaellyn's favourite book was *My Little Dinosaur*, about a boy who found a live dinosaur near his home. Leaellyn challenged her dad to find her a dinosaur, suggesting Christmas would be a good time.

Leaellyn, now in her thirties, was at school one day when her dad rang to say volunteers had found a skull which he thought was from an unknown dinosaur. Further finds and analysis led to the naming of *Leaellynasaura* - a chicken-sized, fascinating creature.



Designer: Peter Trusler; © Australian Postal Commission

Poster girl of the dinosaur world welcomed home

CAPE Otway Lightstation has brought *Leaellynasaura*, a tiny polar dinosaur, home.

Leaellynasaura, the pin-up girl of the dinosaur world who rewrote the world's pre-history books, is back on her stomping ground.

The remarkable little dinosaur, discovered during digs in the 1980s, is on display at the Lightstation until April in an exciting exhibition created by palaeontologists who have made a string of internationally important discoveries on the coast immediately east and west of the iconic lighthouse.

Monash University's Emeritus Professor of Geosciences Pat Vickers-Rich, who was part of the team that discovered *Leaellynasaura*, said the exhibition represented some of the rich finds in the region and was of great interest to those fascinated by life on Earth dating back more than 100 million years.

Professor Vickers-Rich said *Leaellynasaura* changed the world's understanding of dinosaurs - it's likely she was warm blooded, and had huge eyes so she could see in the long, polar winters.

Professor Vickers-Rich said palaeontologists continued to work the Otways coast and were looking forward to making more finds this summer at sites near the Lightstation.

"Every time we have a dig we find something - we've literally got a treasure trove here," Professor Vickers-Rich said.

"It's not easy work, but it's worth it. All the way along this Otways coast is scientifically very important, because it has the most biodiverse polar dinosaur fauna on the planet.

"The exhibition here at the Lighthouse is a taster for what a lot of us are trying to grow into a proper and permanent display down here."

Lightstation manager Paul Thompson said showcasing the creatures that roamed the Cape in prehistoric times was an exciting new addition to the heritage precinct.

"We're all about history at the Lightstation - indigenous culture and stories, our rich maritime history, our active role in guarding the coast in World War Two, and now we're travelling way, way back in time to meet our local stars of prehistory," Mr Thompson said.

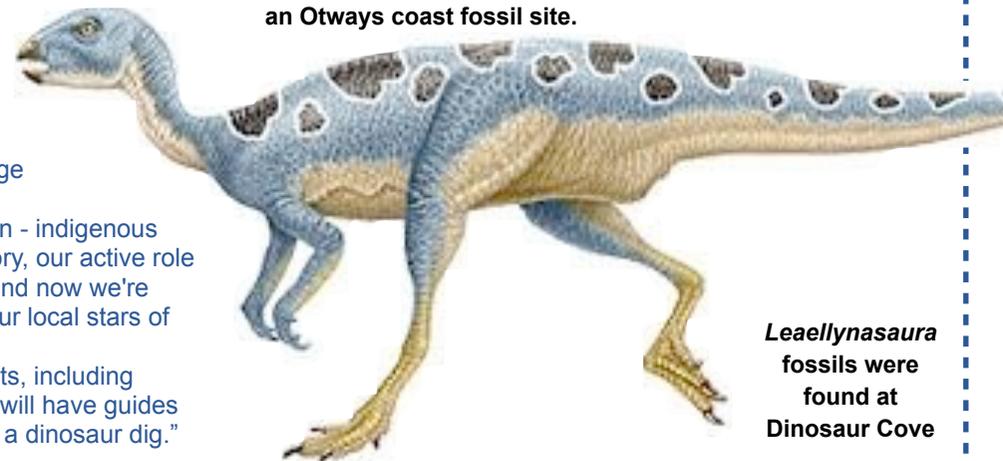
"Apart from the museum standard exhibits, including fascinating fossils and dinosaur eggs, we will have guides and activities for young people - including a dinosaur dig."



Professor Pat Vickers-Rich with *Leaellynasaura*, and a 1993 Time Magazine cover featuring Peter Trusler's image of one of the tiny polar dinosaurs hatching.



Ichtnologist Tony Martin lowers himself down a rock face to an Otways coast fossil site.



Leaellynasaura fossils were found at Dinosaur Cove