

Australian Age of
Dinosaurs

museum
newsletter

September 2017, Issue 23



IS THIS THE MOST
COMPLETE
SAUROPOD IN
AUSTRALIA?

ISSUE 23, SEPTEMBER 2017

NEWS FROM THE JUMP-UP

CAMERA TRAP TALES by Daniel Farrelly

"Hey, do you have any camera traps set up here?". It was an innocuous question, put to me during one of my tours at Dinosaur Canyon. "No," I replied, "but we really ought to." A camera trap is exactly what it sounds like: a camera that can be set up to take pictures when it detects motion, such as when an animal walks past. They can be used to estimate animal population sizes and species richness, and do so without disturbing the animals. With all the different species on The Jump-Up, I knew we'd get something.

So one day, my head full of thoughts of night parrots and the other rare fauna I was sure to capture with my traps, I approached Trish with the idea. I gave her my pitch, then waited with baited breath for her response: "if you want, you can just use the one in the cupboard". Slightly taken aback, I opened the cupboard and pulled out a scouting camera. It looked practically new! I took the camera trap to Dinosaur Stampede and set it up at the dam. Over the next few days we managed to capture wallaroos, birds and even a dunnart. Only time will reveal what we capture next...



Kangaroo



Kangaroo and joey

NEWS FROM THE JUMP-UP

KARL STEFANOVIC by Travis Bridle

The afternoon before the airing of the *Today* show in Winton, TV presenter Karl Stefanovic, along with his mother and children, visited the Museum. Upon their arrival at the Reception Centre it was obvious they were all very enthusiastic to see the Museum and the dinosaurs.

After walking over to the Lab they joined a public tour to see the fossils. The entire family enjoyed the Lab tour and were blown away with the dedication of the volunteers, the fossils and, especially, being able to touch a real dinosaur fossil.

The family then returned to the Reception Centre for the Collection Room tour. Here, they enjoyed seeing the holotype specimens of Banjo, Matilda and Wade. They had many questions and really put me to the test! Unfortunately, the family had to leave before seeing Dinosaur Canyon, but there is always next time.

DINOSAURS FIGHT TO SURVIVE

Rose Siva, author of *Dinosaurs Fight to Survive*, *Banjo Bounces into Bother*, *Matilda Faces her Worst Fear* and *Clancy Gets Stuck*, visited Australian Age of Dinosaurs in June for a book signing. Caleb Stephenson (aged seven) was very excited to be the first to get his book signed by the author.



Caleb and Rose

I must add on a personal note that there was nothing "Hollywood" about this visit. I feel they appreciated the genuine Australian Age of Dinosaurs fair dinkum hospitality. It was an honour to take the family with such a keen interest in the natural world through our remarkable facilities. I hope to finish showing you around in the future!

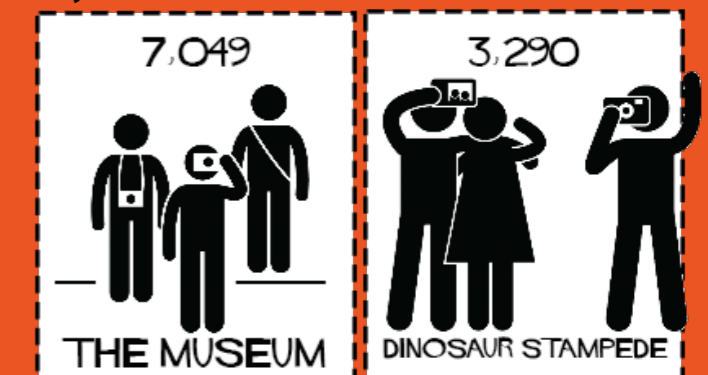


Karl and me

A RECORD-BREAKING JULY

The Museum and Dinosaur Stampede have broken their previous visitor records for the month of July by 10%! And, incredibly, despite Dinosaur Canyon only opening in April this year, over 60% of all visitors to the Museum have toured the new addition.

July visitor numbers



FROM DUGGER TO TOUR GUIDE



By Sarah Wright

I've always been a history nut

I was about six or seven when I discovered my grandmother's *Reader's Digest* documentary collection and, amongst other things, it included ancient Egypt – a topic that started my life-long interest in the ancient world. I remember being fascinated by the way archaeologists could just dig up artefacts before interpreting and dating them. As I grew older artefacts, mummies and mythology continued to be of interest, so much so that, whenever I was asked about my career aspirations or future plans, I would answer "archaeology" every time.

Eventually I was given the opportunity to pursue my dream. While it wasn't related to archaeology, how could I resist dinosaurs? A family friend who had been on a trip through the Central West, mentioned a museum that preserved and displayed real Aussie dinosaurs in the town of Winton. Of course, that got my attention. Dinosaurs? Winton? I'd never even heard of it. Some quick

research led me to apply and be accepted as a volunteer digger. I was so excited.

It felt like home

I arrived in Winton in May 2015 and instantly fell in love with it. The first person I met was the wonderful Dig Co-ordinator, Judy. (Judy and her husband David Elliott are the founders of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum.) It felt like I had known her forever. My fellow diggers were also fantastic, and all as excited as I was to be there at the forefront of science and discovery.

I was in the right place – the dig hadn't even begun and I already knew I'd found something incredible

The next two days were spent on the Jenna site, digging around a large rock. Trish Sloan the Operations Manager and Dr Stephen Poropat were convinced that dinosaur fossils would be found. At the end of the third day we broke the large rock open to reveal... plant matter. It was disappointing as it wasn't the dinosaur fossils we had hoped for but still

extraordinary and, on the upside, we did discover a potential sauropod rib fragment. (This fragment was covered in plaster and now sits on a shelf in the Lab.)

We changed sites several times looking for dinosaurs

Each site presented us with good surface material but not much more. It wasn't until the last day at the Ian site that we finally struck bones: a scapula and coracoid. It was worth all the hard work to see the look of excitement spread throughout our group. Everyone worked until sun set, and even then Trish and Stephen had to drag us from the pit. I had never experienced anything like this in my life. It was awesome. I definitely now had dinosaurs on the brain!

I returned in 2016, this time as a 'Dugger'

I felt like an old hand at this now that the newbie jitters had disappeared and, once again, I found myself in the midst of a group of incredible people. This time we were separated into two groups and two sites, Mikey and Mogsey, to cover more ground. It didn't take long for a competition to start, especially considering the teams were lead by Trish and George (Laboratory Co-ordinator).

On the third day Team Mogsey struck bone and everyone came together at the site to dig. I got my first taste of puzzling and successfully put a few fragments back together, with the assistance of puzzle-master Judy. All in all it had been another fantastic experience. I had already begun making plans for the next year's dig when I found out that there was a job opening at the Museum. Me? Work at the Museum!? Was it even possible? I applied as fast as I could get my paperwork together.

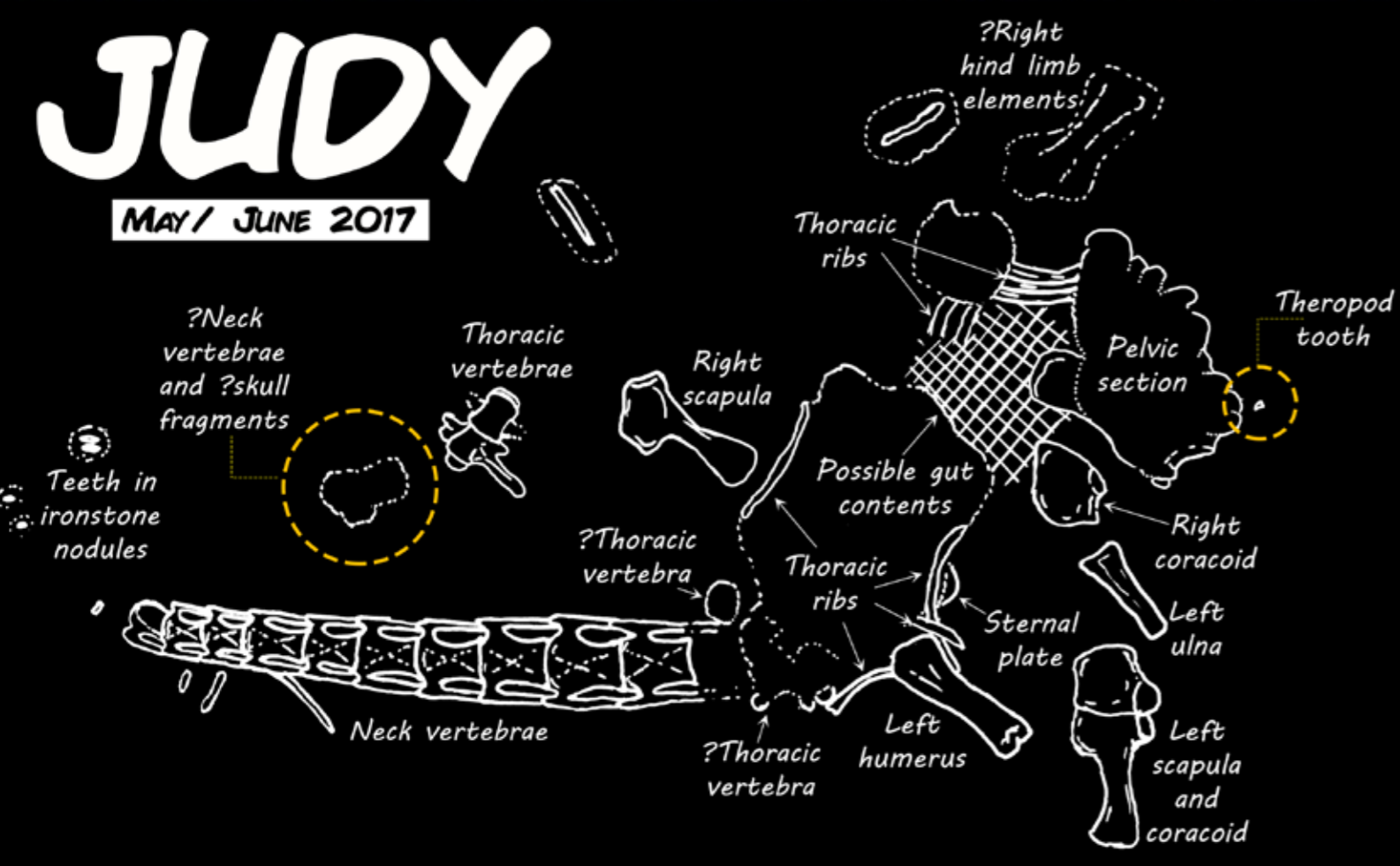
I was shortlisted for an interview and suddenly the day was upon me. I nervously answered the questions posed, despite becoming somewhat stuck for words.

My heart skipped a beat

After what seemed like a lifetime, Trish called to say I had been successful. I was going to be a 2017 Museum Tour Guide! I couldn't believe it. Tears streamed down my cheeks and I laughed and cried simultaneously for at least twenty minutes.

I have now been working as a Museum Tour Guide for four months. I love my job and have found where I belong.



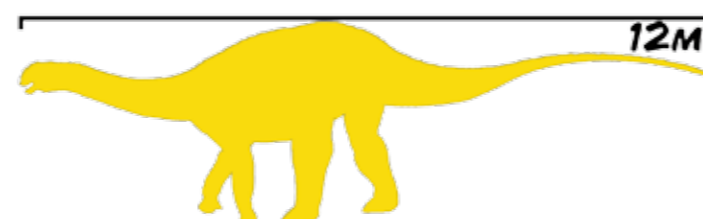


Is this the most **COMPLETE SAUROPOD** ever found in Australia?

On 27 June the Museum announced the discovery of significant dinosaur remains following the recent excavations on a property north-east of Winton. The site, which was discovered in 2015 by local grazier **Bob Elliott**, has produced the fossilised remains of a subadult sauropod dinosaur that comprises the most complete fore-section of a sauropod dinosaur yet discovered in Australia.

Once excavations are complete it is expected that the new dinosaur, nicknamed Judy, will become the country's most complete sauropod dinosaur skeleton.

After three weeks of digging the Museum has recovered numerous bones from Judy including several teeth, possible skull fragments and at least ten cervical (neck) vertebrae interconnected in life position. At



Ten neck vertebrae still interconnected



Diggers at the Judy site

around four metres long, it was necessary for the articulated neck of the animal to be encased in a two-tonne steel-reinforced plaster jacket so that it could be removed in one piece by Museum staff and volunteers. A large adjoining three-metre-wide section containing rib bones, more vertebrae and limb bones needed to be separated from Judy's neck in order to be jacketed for removal.

Dr Stephen Poropat said that the discovery is likely to become the most complete sauropod ever found in Australia. "The previous record holder, the Jurassic-aged *Rhoetosaurus brownei* from Roma, is represented by about 25% of a skeleton," said Dr Poropat.

"Even with the site only partially excavated, it is expected that Judy will exceed this!"

Dr Poropat said that at approximately 12 metres long, Judy is one of the smaller sauropod specimens found in the Winton Formation to date. "This animal appears not to have been fully mature when it died since neither of the shoulder girdles are fused, as is common in older animals," he said. Dr Poropat said that Judy is special for a number of reasons: "The neck of this sauropod is at least 65% complete and is in life position. Sauropod cervical vertebrae are relatively rare in Australia and the cervical ribs that attach to them are even rarer". According to Dr Poropat, the next best, a *Diamantinasaurus*

nicknamed Alex that was excavated nearby in 2004, includes seven partial vertebrae but no complete cervical ribs.

"To have ten cervical vertebrae articulated with cervical ribs preserved on both sides is exceptional, even by world standards."

Mr Elliott and Dr Poropat are excited that comparing the bones of Judy with those of holotype specimens recovered from the Winton district in recent years, and held at the Museum, will provide a wealth of information about Australian Cretaceous sauropods. "This specimen can be compared against all of its contemporaries, enabling us to work out whether Judy represents a new species (or genus) or, more likely, a new specimen of an existing species or genus," Dr Poropat said.

The Museum resumed excavations in mid-August and preparation of the specimen will begin in 2018. According to Mr Elliott plans are underway for a major exhibition of the new dinosaur to be included in the Museum's third stage of development.



The neck arrives on The Jump-Up!

OF THE **15 YEARS** WE HAVE BEEN DIGGING, THIS IS BY FAR THE MOST COMPLEX DINOSAUR SKELETON WE HAVE UNCOVERED, AND RELATIVELY UNDISTURBED SINCE DEATH. TO FIND A NEAR-COMPLETE NECK AND PRESERVED REMAINS OF A COLLAPSED RIB CAGE BESIDE WHAT APPEARS TO BE THE **GUT CONTENTS** OF THE ANIMAL IS **INCREDIBLE**, AND THE INFORMATION THAT CAN BE GLEANED FROM THIS SITE BY **PALAEONTOLOGISTS** IS **EXTRAORDINARY!**
DAVID ELLIOTT, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN



NOBLE EXPRESS SHUTTLE

The Noble Express shuttle buses arrived in June. The two-carriage transportation shuttles run on clean energy (electric and solar powered) and can seat 27 visitors each. The Noble Express takes visitors from the Reception Centre to Dinosaur Canyon via Britton Way.

The 15-minute trip includes commentary on the biodiversity of The Jump-Up and provides awesome photo opportunities along the way. In August the Noble Express shuttles were named You Bewdy and Lil Ripper, and it goes without saying that these shuttles are Maroons' supporters!



VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE ATTRACTION

PEOPLE'S CHOICE CATEGORY

Win a \$5,000* RACQ travel voucher!

Vote for your favourite nominee from the 2017 Queensland Tourism Awards.

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Voting closes 17 Sept 2017

*T&Cs apply.

2017 QUEENSLAND tourism awards

Queensland Awards

QUEENSLAND TOURISM INDUSTRY COUNCIL

AUSTRALIAN AGE OF DINOSAURS

FOSSIL HUNTERS

SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM SEPTEMBER 2017

Saturday Storytime (16, 23 and 30 Sept)

Ages: 2 to 7 years
Venue: Reception Centre
Time: 9.30am-10.30am

FREE

Storytime at the Museum. Listen to Aussie dinosaur-themed books and how they relate to prehistoric life 95 million years ago.
Note: Children must be supervised at all times by a guardian or parent.

Tuesday Fossil Hunters (19 and 26 Sept)

Ages: 4 to 12 years
Venue: Reception Centre
Time: 9.30am-11am

\$5 per child

Make your own mini dig kit and assemble your very own dinosaur with the help of a Museum guide. Learn how palaeontologists interpret fossils and gather facts.
Note: Children must be supervised at all times by a guardian or parent.

Friday Fossil Hunters (22 and 29 Sept)

Ages: 4 to 12 years
Venue: Reception Centre
Time: 9.30am-11am

\$5 per child

Build your own *Serendipaceratops* and then assemble your very own dig kit, including bucket, screwdriver, brush and explorer hat.
Note: Children must be supervised at all times by a guardian or parent.

Wednesday Fossil Hunters' Club (20 and 27 Sept)

Ages: 4 to 12 years
Venue: Reception Centre
Time: 9.30am-1.45pm
Max: 12 children per session

\$35 per child*

9am	Check in at the Reception Centre
9.30am	Guided tour of the Laboratory
10.30am	Guided tour of the Collection Room
11am	Explorers' morning tea
11.30am	Make a telescope, safari hat and map
12.15pm	All aboard the Noble Express shuttle to Dinosaur Canyon
12.30pm	Explore Dinosaur Canyon
1.30pm	Take the Noble Express shuttle back to the Reception Centre
1.45pm	Club members' farewell

This program includes a group guide and morning tea (juice and apple). All children must be supervised at all times by a parent or guardian.

*Pricing: \$35 per child and \$50 per parent or guardian

For more information or to book your program visit:

australianageofdinosaurs.com

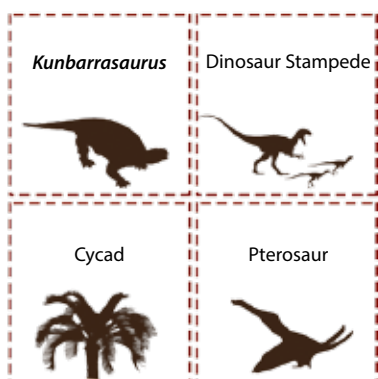


PALAEO PETE FUN

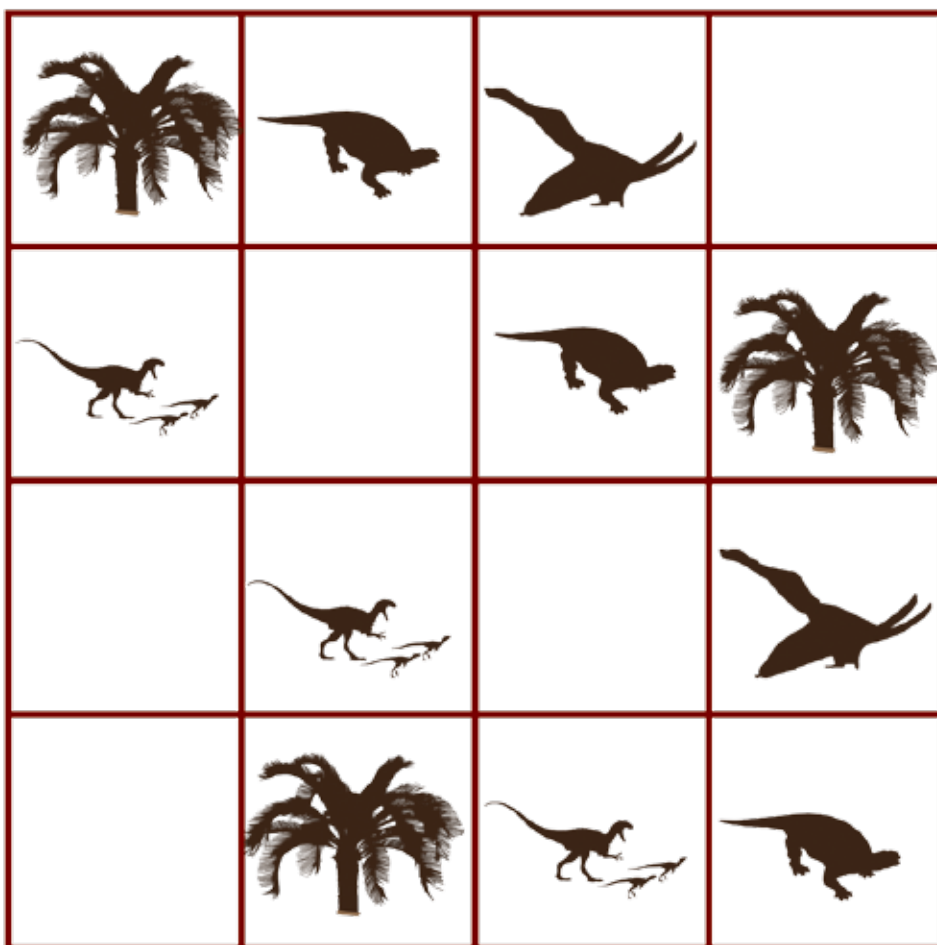


Dinosaur Canyon Sudoku

To complete the puzzle cut along the dotted lines and place these pictures in the appropriate boxes. Each image must appear only once in each row and column.



Good luck!



KIDS' GUIDE TO DINOSAUR CANYON

Visiting Dinosaur Canyon has never been more fun! Explore Dinosaur Canyon with Palaeo Pete and take home a unique souvenir plaque tracing of each exhibit. *This 20-page guide is included with every child's ticket to Dinosaur Canyon.*



INCLUDES
scavenger hunt map,
plaque tracing pages,
Jump-Up comic,
activities, fun facts
and much more!