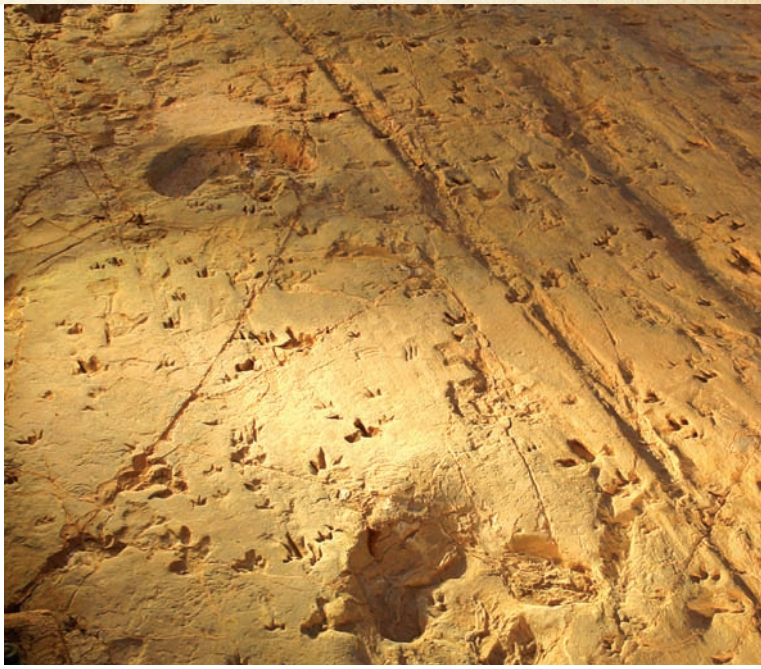
Dinosaur Stampede National Monument, Lark Quarry

QUEENSLAND



About 95 million years ago in central Queensland several moments of frantic activity were preserved in stone.

Located at Lark Quarry Conservation Park, 110 kilometres south-west of Winton in central Queensland, the Dinosaur Stampede National Monument features unique evidence of a dinosaur stampede with almost 4000 dinosaur footprints clearly visible in an area of just 210 square metres. The footprints and their interpretation provide scientific underpinning for the famous stampede scenes in Steven Spielberg's 1993 blockbuster *Jurassic Park* and the BBC's award-winning series, *Walking with Dinosaurs* (1999).

A mixed group of perhaps 180 chicken-size carnivorous theropods known as Coelurosaurs (*Skartopus* species) and Bantam to emu-sized herbivorous ornithopods (*Wintonopus* species) were distributed by the arrival of a single much larger carnivore: a theropod, named *Tyrannosauropus*, which may have been as much as 10 metres long with 50 centimetre footprints.

Fleeing the larger dinosaur, the *Skartopus* and *Wintonopus* are thought to have stampeded past *Tyrannosauropus*, leaving thousands of footprints in the surrounding mudflat.

Not long after the incident, the water level began to rise, covering the tracks with sandy sediments before the mud had dried.

Over time, the footprints were buried beneath sand and mud as the lake and river levels continued to rise and fall. Over thousands of millennia, this rich river plain with its sandy channels, swamps and lush lowland forest dried up. The sediment covering the footprints was compressed to form rock.

Today, Lark Quarry is a dry landscape of spinifex and lancewood dotted across gullies and steep escarpments. In the 1960s while fossicking for opals, a local station manager, Glen Seymour, discovered what he thought were fossilised bird tracks, but it wasn't until scientists visited the area in 1971 that the footprints began to reveal their true story.

It is a rare snapshot of a few seconds of activity during the age of the dinosaurs preserved against all probability for 95 million years, which has become the benchmark for study of dinosaur footprints and behaviour. The arid setting where we find these sediments, reveal lowland riparian forests of the past and evoke thousands of millennia of landscape evolution in Australia.

Today this outstanding site is covered by a modern centre which was completed in 2002 as a Centenary of Federation project.

The new building features ecologically sustainable design elements and protects the main collection of footprints from damage by stabilising temperature and humidity fluctuations, stopping water running over the footprints and keeping people and wildlife off the footprints.

National Heritage List: 20 July 2004