

## Interpreting Fossil Records



### Links with Dinosaur Dreaming Site:

The fossilized remains of several different dinosaurs have been found at the Dinosaur Dreaming dig site but most have been identified from isolated bones. The environment here was a vast flood plain crossed by fast-flowing river channels. This has meant the bones from skeletons have been scattered and this has made it unlikely to find complete skeletons. This has also created a challenge for paleontologists since they have had to work with limited material, for example a claw or a jaw bone and compare these findings with similar fossils found in other parts of the world. Comparisons are also made with modern day skeletons.

The first dinosaur bone found in Australia was discovered in Victoria in 1903. A geologist, W.H. Ferguson found a single dinosaur toe bone (claw) 53 mm long near Cape Paterson. This dinosaur specimen is referred to as the Cape Paterson Claw.



*The specimen was sent to England and described by A. Smith Woodward of what is today the Natural History Museum, London, who assigned it to the long-established English genus Megalosaurus.*

Source: Rich, TH and Vickers-Rich, P 2000.  
*Dinosaurs of Darkness*, Allen & Unwin, Australia.

### Links with the Curriculum:

This activity encourages students to think about how fossil finds can be interpreted. The activity links with the Thinking, Mathematics, Arts and Science domains of VELS.

### Procedure:

1. Examine the photo above of the fossilized Cape Paterson claw.
2. Draw a picture to scale of the claw to show the actual size of the claw
3. How big do you think this animal would have been if the claw was this size?
4. Do you think an animal with such large claws would have eaten plants or animals?
5. Make a sketch showing what you think this dinosaur might have looked like based on the size of the claw and what you think it might have eaten.
6. Using the internet see what a *Megalosaurus* looked like. Compare this with your sketch.