Farmer finds fossilised fish

After discovering an ancient crocodile in the mid 1990s, Isisford grazier Ian Duncan has again struck archaeological gold.

A fossil of a large predatory fish was discovered by Mr Duncan encased in a large sandstone boulder.

“I’d been poking around in the creek bed looking for more pieces of the croc when I came across a large bolder,” Mr Duncan said. “There weren’t any bones sticking out, but it had the right kind of look about it, so I thought I’d try and wedge it open with my crowbar.”

The boulder split along the plane of weakness the presence of the skeleton caused, revealing the preserved back of head and front half of the body of the fish.

According to University of Queensland’s Dr Steve Salisbury the newly dubbed Isisford tarpon may have been more than a metre in length.

“This is the first fossil of a bony fish to come from the Winton Formation,” he said.

Member of the research team Rodney Berrell said that the fish, believed to belong to the elopomorph group, was a coastal, freshwater, fish.

“They are typically found in tropical areas, and prefer shallow, sandy habitats around islands and the coast,” he said.

“It’s possible that its marine ancestors became trapped in the inland river systems after the seaway retreated.”

The team believes that the discovery of this fish at Isisford indicates that the river in which it lived was large and fast-moving, perhaps similar to the modern Amazon.

“The environment around Isisford 98-95 million years ago must have quite different to the lakes and billabongs that have produced other fossils from the Winton Formation,” Dr Salisbury said.

A display featuring the Isisford tarpon opened at the Outer Barcoo Interpretation Centre in Isisford on Saturday.