

Discovery of an articulated caudal series of Sauropoda (Dinosauria) from the Bajo Barreal Formation, Upper Cretaceous of southern Chubut*

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An articulated series of 18 procoelous caudal vertebrae was discovered from a recently emergent island in Lago Colhué Huapi. It comes from the upper member of the Bajo Barreal Formation. The anterior vertebrae possess short centra, slightly narrower in their ventral portions, and a posterior cone in a central position. In the most anterior vertebra (no. 2?) the neural arch is located in the most anterior part of the vertebral centrum, inclined forward. The prezygapophyses are robust, projected forward and upward (approximately 50°), and with very wide articular facets. The transverse processes are relatively long and directed backward. The neural spine is not preserved. Between the transverse process and the base of the neural spine exists a marked concavity. In the medial part of the prezygapophysis there is a hollow on both sides of the prespinal lamina. The chevrons have separate proximal ends. In vertebra no. 8? the prezygapophyses are long and horizontal. In the middle caudals the centra possess characteristics similar to those described and do not preserve neural arches. The distal vertebrae (no. 20? and 21?) present a short and high neural arch, located in the anterior region and projected vertically with respect to the vertebral body. The postzygapophyses are directed upward with wide articular facets and located in the half of the centrum.

Preliminarily the specimen from Chubut presents characteristics similar in general morphology with *Aeolosaurus*. However, characters are observed that are not recorded in the holotype, such as the presence of cavities in the neural arch in anterior caudals, and the vertical position of the neural arch in the distal vertebrae.

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