

Tasmanian Devils

Australia's Endangered Apex Predator

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What is a Tasmanian Devil?

Tasmanian devils are marsupials that survive on a carnivorous diet in Tasmania, an island in Australia. Devils are related to species such as kangaroos, and are known to have jaws powerful enough to bite through bone. The noises that they make sound like a loud, chilling screech, and they often stay in groups when feeding. Devils have been known to release a pungent odor under stress, and store fat in their tails. If a tasmanian devil has a lot of fat in its tail, that means that it is healthy.

Tasmanian devils mostly live in eucalyptus forests and woodlands, and often shelter in dark places such as burrows, caves, and logs. Though devils are about the size of a small dog, they are the apex predator of Tasmania, and feast off of dead and living creatures. Tasmanian devils usually eat the entirety of a carcass, since their teeth are powerful enough to cut through bone with ease. Devils help the surrounding ecosystem by eating any meat that they come by, no matter its condition.

Why are they Endangered?

Tasmanian devils have faced many different obstacles that have greatly affected their survivability and population. These tragedies have now rendered them endangered, leaving only 25,000 devils left in the wild. The most devastating affliction on the devil population has been the Devil Facial Tumor Disease, which is transferred through biting. Other major issues include habitat destruction and climate change.

The Devil Facial Tumor Disease (DFTD) was first discovered and documented in 1996, and is a contagious cancer that has wiped out 80% of the devil population since. The illness first spread from the northeastern region of Tasmania, and has since become an outbreak.

Tasmanian devils have also been threatened by pollution, climate change, and habitat destruction. For years, humans have slowly populated the areas surrounding devil habitats, and have greatly influenced the sustainability of surrounding resources, such as water and food, for the devil population.

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History

The Origin of the Tasmanian Devil

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The History of the Tasmanian Devil

Before tasmanian devils strictly resided in Tasmania, they were abundant on Australia's mainland. Unfortunately, tasmanian devils living on the mainland went extinct around 3,000 years ago. This extinction is primarily do to the dingo, an australian wild dog that hunted devils to extinction. Tasmanian devils living in Tasmania survived due to the absense of dingoes, until the spread of the Devil Facial Tumor began to wipe out the species.

Prior to the illness, there were around 150,000 devils living in Tasmania. Then, scientists realized a rapid decline in the population in the late 1990's, and began to study the tumors that were forming on the faces of more than 80% of the devil population. They dubbed the illness Devil Facial Tumor Disease, and found that it was nearly 100% lethal and could kill tasmanian devils in a few months.

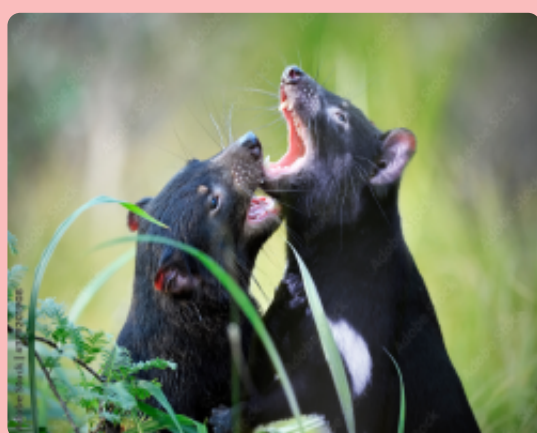
In May 2008, there were only around 2,500 devils left in the wild, putting them on the endangered species list under the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*. Reasons for their listing as described by the act were Devil Facial Tumor Disease, motor vehicles, culling, and habitat modification. Fortunately, since their listing in 2008, the species has since begun to repopulate.

Now, many organizations aim to breed and repopulate the species. Devils are bred, cared for, then reintroduced to the mainland, allowing the population to grow. Today, the tasmanian devil population has grown to around 25,000 devils, and continues to grow as their survivability is aided by scientists and conservationists that seek to fight against the Devil Facial Tumor and preserve the dying species.



The Decline and Revival of the Devil Population

Year	Tassie Devil Population
1996	150,000
2008	2,500
2020	15,000
2023	25,000



Organizations Aiding in Repopulation

Today, many organizations strive to revive the species through population monitoring, research, and the development of an effective cure that will end the spread of the Devil Facial Tumor. A vaccine that will strengthen the devil's immune system and make it less vulnerable to the cancer has been used in trials to immunize devils being released into the mainland, and continues to be in development to this day.



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Diet and Location

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What Do Tasmanian Devils Eat?

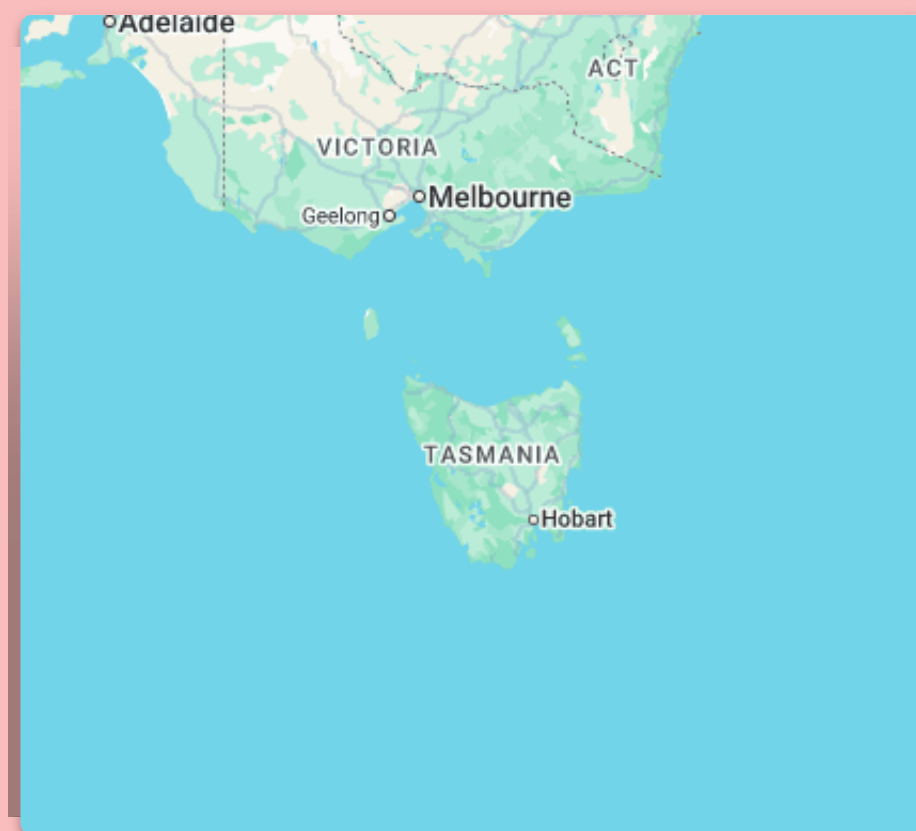
Tasmanian devils are carnivorous, and never waste a single scrap of what they catch or find. Devils are known to eat the organs, intestines, bones, and muscles of their meal, and can do so because of their razor sharp teeth that can cut through bone. They sometimes avoid skulls and skin, but feast on the remaining carcass until there's nothing left.

Tasmanian devils are known to find already dead carcasses to eat, but sometimes hunt small, living creatures including wombats and possums. Sometimes, they also eat invertebrates such as moths. Devils are nocturnal, so they scavenge and hunt during the night, and often eat around 40% of their weight. The Tassie Devils' whiskers allow them to find their way in the dark, and they commonly hunt alone. They rarely hunt in packs, but they frequently eat together.



Where Do They Live?

Tasmanian Devils are found on a small island called Tasmania in Australia, hence the name, "tasmanian devil." They mostly thrive in sclerophyll and eucalyptus forests, and are sometimes found in shrublands. Devils seek shelter in dark places such as burrows, caves, under rocks, and inside of hollow logs. Tassie devils are nocturnal marsupials that roam during the night, and younger devils can even climb trees. Tasmania is the smallest state in Australia, and houses many other species. Surprisingly, the small tasmanian devil is the apex predator of Tasmania.



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Endangerment

Why is the Tasmanian Devil Endangered?

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Reasons for Endangerment

Tasmanian devils have faced many different obstacles that have made living conditions and good health a rare commodity for the species. Many of these lethal changes to the ecosystem and climate are largely due to human interference, and have caused the devil population to drop down to only about 25,000 devils. The primary causes for their endangerment are climate change, pollution, and the Devil Facial Tumor Disease (DFTD).

The tasmanian devil population only began declining in 1996 when an outbreak of a new cancer spread from the northeastern region of Tasmania. Devil Facial Tumor Disease was the name given to the cancerous tumor that is contracted when devils bite each other, which is a common occurrence during mating. Though this illness has been the primary reason for the devils' endangerment, there are other factors that have contributed to their decline.

Human industries have been the source of the water pollution and air pollution that have rendered tasmanian devil habitats unlivable. Likewise, as humans continue to populate the area, and deforestation occurs, devils are forced out of the area.

Devil Facial Tumor Disease

When tasmanian devils mate, they become aggressive and frequently bite each other. Scientists have determined that mating and sexual aggression is one of the biggest reasons for the rapid spread of the Devil Facial Tumor Disease (DFTD), which spread through Tasmania in the late 1990's. This disease has wiped out about 85% of the devil population.

The disease is nearly 100% fatal, and causes tumours to spread on the face and mouth of infected devils. There are two types of the disease: DFT1, which has had the biggest impact across the entirety of Tasmania, and DFT2, which primarily resides in southeast Tasmania.



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Donations

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Why Should I Donate?

Donations can help to provide habitats, support conservation efforts, aid in the preservation and protection of ecosystems, ensure safety for the species, and much more. Most importantly, the majority of donations go towards the research of Devil Tumour Disease and how to reverse its devastation on the tasmanian devil population. Fortunately, there are many sites that offer different options, benefits, and ways to support, even if you have little money to do so!

Trustworthy Sites to Donate To!

World Wildlife Fund

Your WWF donation supports conservation efforts and saves endangered wildlife. Also, you can receive an adoption certificate for a tasmanian devil!

University of Tasmania

The University of Tasmania has created the "Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal." Donations to this cause aid in the research and conservation of tasmanian devils.

Bush Heritage Australia

Donations to Bush Heritage aid in habitat conservation and species protection. This includes tasmanian devils.

Wildcare Tasmania

Donations support the fight against devil facial tumor disease.

References

A majority of the information shared on this site can be contributed back to other sites that aim to inform the public on the endangered tasmanian devil. Listed below are these sites:

- [**Bush Heritage Australia**](#)
- [**National Geographic**](#)
- [**Science Direct**](#)
- [**Britannica.com**](#)
- [**Australian Museum**](#)
- [**Science.org**](#)
- [**Our Tasmania**](#)
- [**Zoos Victoria**](#)

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About Me

Tyler Peebles: The Designer Behind the Page

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Who Am I?

My name is Tyler Peebles, and I am a Computing in the Arts major at the College of Charleston. My passions include graphic design, literature, and exploring new interests. I especially love horror media and animals, and always aim to explore these two genres when writing and designing. I also aim to do my part in helping people and species in need. I am especially passionate about the tasmanian devil. In learning about the devil facial tumor that has devastated the devil population, I wanted to devise ways to spread this information and garner support.

By creating this website, I aimed to inform my audience on the tasmanian devil, its endangerment, and what can be done to help. I have always loved tasmanian devils, and their rapid decline towards extinction gave me the exigency to urge others in aiding in their revival. It is important that habitats are constructed, ecosystems are conserved, and research is done in order to save this dying species.

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