



TASMANIAN DEVILS : FACT SHEET

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT TASSIE DEVILS:

- ❖ The Tasmanian Devil is Australia's largest living marsupial carnivore (and Australia's only specialised mammalian scavenger).
- ❖ The Tasmanian devil resembles a robustly-built, small dog with powerful jaws and a set of large, strong teeth that allow them to eat almost every part of a carcass - including hide and skull.
- ❖ They have a thick-set, squat build, with a relatively large broad head, and short thick tail. They store fat in their tail.
- ❖ They earned their common name because of their blood-curdling nocturnal screams.
- ❖ Devils only live to about 5 years in the wild.
- ❖ Adult males weigh up to 12 kg and stand about 30cm high at the shoulder. They are bigger than adult females.
- ❖ Female devils become fertile by 2 years of age. That means they can only breed twice in their life because they breed at 2 and 4.
- ❖ Because they're a marsupial, female devils have a pouch and can feed up to 4 baby devils at a time.
- ❖ Devils have up to 30 babies - the size of a grain of rice - but only 4 survive as the female only has 4 teats. The ones with the strongest sense of smell find their way to the teats first and survive.
- ❖ Babies spend 3 weeks in the pouch, but another 40 weeks before they are weaned.
- ❖ Devils are solitary - meaning they live by themselves - until mating season when they come together to breed, then the male leaves and the female raises the young alone.
- ❖ They eat any meat available: insects, birds, even beached fish as well as small mammals, such as possums, wallabies and wombats. They also eat rotting fruits and berries.
- ❖ Mostly they scavenge alone for food and rapidly locate dead animals in the bush.



- ❖ Devils can eat up to 10% of their body weight in a day.
- ❖ Their jaws are as powerful as a saltwater crocodile (about 4000 pounds per square inch) - they eat everything including the bones. So you don't want one to bite you.

They do NOT kill farm animals like chickens or lambs. They only eat these animals when they are already dead. They will steal eggs though.

They are NOT fierce. They are very shy and gentle animals. The noise they make is only to keep other devils at a distance. Anything closer than 30cm and they get annoyed.

Devils live in the lowlands in wet sclerophyll forest or woodland in a log, cave or the disused burrow of another animal - but not in alpine regions, rainforest or high mountains. But they live quite close to Hobart - in fact on Mt Wellington which is only about 12km from the centre of the city. But they don't go into backyards unless you live on acreage then they might.

If they are hand reared they can tell if a different hand is patting them. And they don't like it much!

Early European settlers hunted them nearly to extinction as they mistakenly believed they would be capable of killing farm animals. A reward of 25c for males and 35c for females was given for all devils killed.



In 1941 a law was passed protecting them.

They have been extinct on the Australian mainland for what is believed to be about 600 years. Today they are found only on the island State of Tasmania.

There are about 60,000 devils left in the wild - down from about 150,000 ten years ago - and the disease is killing them at a rate estimated at 50% each year. That means it will only be about 5 years before there are no devils left in the wild.

