

Zoos Victoria's Priority Species

TASMANIAN DEVIL

Sarcophilus harrisii

Endangered



The survival of Tasmanian Devils is seriously threatened by Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD). The disease is now found across ~ 97% of Tasmania, sightings of devils have declined by over 80% since 1996, and the species is listed as Endangered with a decreasing population trend. DFTD causes tumours which generally appear around the mouth, face and neck of devils. The disease develops rapidly and is fatal: affected animals usually die within three to twelve

months of the lesions first appearing. Through captive-breeding, improved husbandry and research, Zoos Victoria is committed to saving the Tasmanian Devil. We have already established one of the largest captive insurance populations and, although further research is critical to save this iconic species from extinction, we are ready for the fight.

ZOOS
VICTORIA
Fighting Extinction

Zoos Victoria is committed to Fighting Extinction

We are focused on working with partners to secure the survival of our priority species before it is too late.



Tasmanian Devils are the world's largest living carnivorous marsupial and are endemic to the state of Tasmania. A significant proportion of wild Tasmanian Devils are suffering from Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD). The fatal disease presents itself as cancerous tumours and is transmitted between individuals by biting during social interactions, feeding and mating. Zoos Victoria has established a substantial insurance population of Tasmanian Devils, and is working to ensure that the fitness, health and genetic diversity of the species is maintained for the future.

KEY PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- Breed and manage a captive insurance population.
- Support wild populations and research.
- Conduct further research into captive breeding and management techniques.
- Increase community awareness and support for the Tasmanian Devil.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Increased breeding success, with over 150 young produced since intensive management of the captive population began in 2009.
- Releases of captive devils to a DFTD-free island and peninsulas in 2013, 2015 and 2017.
- Established specialised breeding and free-range enclosures to house captive individuals.
- Conducted cutting edge research to improve reproductive success whilst maintaining natural behaviours, social structures, diet and morphology and managing populations long-term.
- Worked with partners on new technology including Crittercam collars to unravel the devil's wild secrets.
- Supported partners investigating possible disease resistance or tolerance evolving in wild devils.

THE SPECIES

Although often a solitary animal, Tasmanian Devils can be raucous communal feeders when chancing upon the same meal. The haunting noises they make in such situations resulted in the species being named 'devils' by European settlers in Tasmania. Individuals will regularly show aggression towards each other for dominance over food and breeding partners. It is this behaviour that has contributed to the devastating spread of DFTD.

Since DFTD was first observed in 1996, sightings of Tasmanian Devils have declined by over 80% across Tasmania, with some populations losing up to 97% of devils. The disease is now found across ~97% of Tasmania and is moving in a north-westerly direction across the state.

The second biggest killer of devils is road mortality; an increasing threat to small populations. Not only do the disease and roads threaten the long-term survival of Devils, but the decline of this carnivorous marsupial may have severe ecological impacts. If populations of Tasmanian Devils are reduced, feral predators such as foxes and cats may have more opportunities to establish, with drastic impacts on native Tasmanian fauna including bandicoots, quolls, and New Holland Mice.

THE PLAN

The following critical next steps will enable Zoos Victoria, along with our partners, to move forward knowing that we are doing everything we can to prevent the extinction of this species:

New intensive breeding enclosures.	\$650,000
Installing virtual road fences with the Save the Tasmanian Devil program.	\$300,000
Molecular research into resistance and tolerance to Devil Facial Tumour Disease.	\$30,000
Invest in new Crittercam Camera and drone technology.	\$120,000
Research and management of Devils in mainland free-ranging enclosures.	\$420,000
Collecting new Devils from the wild.	\$30,000
Constructing new large group enclosure.	\$300,000
Understanding the endocrinology of Devil breeding and lactation.	\$45,000
Maintaining Zoos Victoria's Tasmanian Devil captive breeding efforts and displays.	\$2,300,000
Installing signage and providing support to assist in road kill hotspots with new virtual fencing.	\$30,000
Activations at our zoos and online that aim to increase community care and knowledge.	\$20,000
Total cost over five years	\$4,245,000

How can I help?

We are working on conducting further research to support our wild and captive populations, but we still need all the support we can get. You can support our Wildlife Conservation Master Plan 2019-2024 by donating at: zoo.org.au/donate

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Aussie Ark
aussieark.org.au

Deakin University
deakin.edu.au

National Geographic
nationalgeographic.com

Save the Tasmanian Devil Program
tassiedevil.com.au

The Carnivore Conservancy
carnivores.com

University of Sydney
sydney.edu.au

University of Tasmania
utas.edu.au

Victoria University
vu.edu.au

Zoo & Aquarium Association and numerous Zoo and Sanctuary partners supporting the captive insurance program
zooaquarium.org.au