

THE REMARKABLE TASMANIAN DEVIL

Learning program

Teacher Guide

Centre for Learning and Discovery



TASMANIAN	
MUSEUM	&
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THE REMARKABLE TASMANIAN DEVIL



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Contents

Introduction	1
Pre-Exhibition Visit	2
Descriptors of the Devil	2
At the Exhibition	4
Gallery 1: Perceptions	4
Gallery 2: Ecology	5
Gallery 3: Survival	5
Post-Exhibition Visit	6
Appendix 1	7
Appendix 2	8
Appendix 3	9
Appendix 4	10
Useful Links	12

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Introduction

The Tasmanian devil, *Sarcophilus harrisii* (Boitard, 1841) is the largest remaining Australian marsupial carnivore. It is a unique species that occurs naturally only in Tasmania, is Tasmania's official animal emblem and has become an unofficial trademark for all things Tasmanian.


Australia has had more mammal extinctions than anywhere else in the world. Twenty-seven species have gone extinct since Europeans arrived in 1803. To date, Tasmanian devils have survived.

The Remarkable Tasmanian Devil exhibition, developed and presented by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), explores aspects of Tasmanian devil history, reveals the nature of human and devil interactions and how the devil has survived persecution, habitat alteration and a disease that has decimated the population. The exhibition draws on the expertise of farmers, zoo keepers, scientists and the public, to explore the biology and ecology of this maligned and misunderstood animal as well as the nature of our own perceptions of the species.

This Teacher Guide has been created to give educators on a self-guided visit the opportunity to explore the exhibition through suggested activities before, during and after a class visit. Whilst the guide is focused towards an upper primary audience, the ideas can be developed for students at any stage.

The guide has been organised with 'Pre exhibition visit', 'At the exhibition' and 'Post exhibition visit' activities which reflect the three distinct thematic areas of the exhibition across its three galleries: Perception, Devil Ecology, and Survival. The suggested activities encourage students to experience, explore and engage with the exhibition. They involve group discussions and questioning to enable students to work at their level to guide their learning. The aim is for students to question and develop a deeper understanding rather than seeking answers.

Examples of exhibition curriculum links for upper primary can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

 A brief video walk through of the exhibition can be found [here](#).

A teacher backpack focused on the exhibition is available to borrow for self-guided visits. Please reserve the backpack when booking a class visit.



Notes:

The exhibition activities are based around a class spending about 20 minutes in each of the three galleries.

If possible, organise students into smaller groups, with adult supervision, during a visit to the exhibition.

The exhibition has low light levels.

A **Devil Diary (Appendix 4)** has been included as a suggested way for students to record their ideas and learning, individually or in a small group. **Please only use grey pencils and clipboards to lean on in the exhibition.**

The exhibition links to the Australian Curriculum across several areas, particularly science and history. The Teacher Guide also provides ways of understanding the exhibition through other areas of the curriculum such as literacy and the arts.

If possible, it is recommended that teachers visit the exhibition before bringing a class to ensure a clear understanding of the exhibition content and layout. Please complete the booking enquiry form for your visit at least two weeks in advance by going to the TMAG website [here](#).



Pre-Exhibition Visit

Descriptors of the Devil

This activity encourages students to get into the mindset of early Europeans' perceptions of the Tasmanian devil. As most students will probably have preconceived ideas and knowledge about the devil, it is important that the students don't know that this activity relates to the devil until the end of the activity. Until then simply refer to the devil as 'the creature'.

To begin, ask students to imagine that they are hearing about a wild and newly discovered creature from a friend who has discovered it on a faraway island.

Read the statements below to students:

"They appear to be untameably savage." – G P Harris, 1808

"They cracked the largest bone with ease asunder." – G P Harris, 1808

"An exceedingly fierce and disgusting looking creature." – J West, 1852

"Very ugly and savage beats, destitute of brains, with tails like pieces of wood and with large powerful teeth." – Louisa Anne Meredith, 1852

"...dismal look about them terribly suggestive of the abode of darkness." – The Tasmanian newspaper, 1890

A) Become the creature

Ask students to:

- Move like the creature you are describing around the room
- Demonstrate what sounds this creature makes (for example, when it's eating, running, fighting, sleeping)
- Describe how you think the creature looks to a partner. Have the partner report back to the group.

B) Draw the creature

Ask students to draw (or use another medium) this creature and to give it a name.

Ask them to share their creature with a partner, and ask them to respond to these questions about the creature:

- What does this creature eat?
- What kind of habitat does it live in?
- How does it raise its young?
- What real life creature is this creature closest related to?

Discussion topics:

- › What would you do if you found this creature living near your house?
- › Is this a real or mythical creature?



C) Another perspective

After completing one of the above activities, read these more positive descriptions to students.

"They respond to kindness and certainly show affection and pleasure when I approach them." – zookeeper Mary Roberts, 1915

"One of the quaintest beasts in the Zoological Gardens." – The News (Adelaide), 1926

"The main predation on these animals is humans." – E Guiler, 1970

"The farmer is being assisted by (them), although the price may be some hens devoured." – E Guiler, 1964

"Communal feeding sets them apart from other carnivores." – D Owen, 2005

Discussion topics:

- › How do these new descriptions change your view on the creature?
- › Does the creature you have created fit these new descriptions?
- › Can any of the students think of a real creature that fits these descriptions?
- › Provide a picture of a devil to show students the creature that has been described.
- › Discuss how perceptions can change depending on information.

First Encounter

This activity is designed to transport students into the mindset of someone encountering a Tasmanian devil for the first time and having no prior knowledge of the animal.

For the best experience, dim the lights in the room and explain to students they are going to be using their imagination to create the scene from the story you are about to tell. ([Appendix 2](#))

Ask students to find a comfortable spot in the room, where they can relax, listen and close their eyes.

After the story encourage students to describe and discuss what they imagined.

Discussion topics:

- › After this night would you continue on your journey through the bush? How would you describe what happened to you, when you got home?
- › Play the sounds of other Tasmanian animals to students. What do you think they are communicating?

Further Ideas

1. Graphing

Create a series of questions for students to take home to family and friends.

Questions can relate to people's perceptions of the Tasmanian devil. The class can graph the data and discuss the results.

2. Tasmanian devil threats

What current threats to survival does the Tasmanian devil face? Which of these threats come from the human world?

3. Parts of the devil

In small groups students locate a photo or scientific drawing about one part or feature of the devil (for example, colouring, whiskers, jaw, pouch or claws).

Students discuss how these features help the devil survive in its Tasmanian habitat.

4. Ancestral paths

Where else have Tasmanian devils and their ancestors lived? Why do you think they are now only found in Tasmania?

5. Carnivore research

Students complete a report on a Tasmanian carnivorous animal, for example see [Appendix 3](#).



At the Exhibition

Gallery 1: Perceptions

Tasmania's Carnivores 1803 Display (towards the back of the gallery)

Give students time to look at all the animals in the display carefully, considering one question at a time.

- What do all or most of these animals share in common?
For example, looks, behaviours or abilities. Students can record their thoughts using the **Devil Diary**.
- How is the Tasmanian devil different to other animals in the display?
- Do you think carnivorous animals are necessary in Tasmania? What role do they play in the environment?
- What are some of the impacts human behaviour has had on some of these animals since 1803?

Devil Perceptions

Encourage students to explore the rest of the gallery with this question in mind:

- Why do you think this animal is called a 'devil'?
Record responses in the **Devil Diary**.

Students can watch the *Devil May Hare* video featuring the cartoon character Taz:

- What do you think the makers of the cartoon were trying to get us to think about Tasmanian devils?
- Do you think Taz has changed people's perceptions of the Tasmanian devil?
- Complete the *see, think, wonder* section of the **Devil Diary**.

Have students look at two different artworks of a Tasmanian devil and ask them:

- What do you notice about each depiction of the Tasmanian devil?
- Consider what the artist was trying to show.
- How is a drawing, painting or sculpture different to a photograph?

Bring students back into a group to share their ideas.

These suggested activities encourage students to experience, explore and engage in the exhibits. All of the activities involve group discussions and questioning so students can work at their own level to guide their learning. The aim is not for students to hunt for answers but to develop questions and deeper understanding.

Note: The activities are based around a class spending 20 minutes in each gallery (10 minutes at each point).



Gallery 2: Ecology

Devil Dens Display

Look at the two Tasmanian devil dens, the bush den and the under-house den. Encourage students to consider these questions:

- Why do you think Tasmanian devils live in a den?
- What are some of the problems/dangers with living in a den?
- Why do you think some devils make dens under houses?
- How would you know if a Tasmanian devil was living under your house?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of living under a house?
- Where else in human-made environments might Tasmanian devils live?
- If you were a Tasmanian devil where would you choose to live and why?

Students can complete the Venn diagram in the **Devil Diary**.



Night time Interactive (towards the back of the gallery)

Walk through the space in small groups. Encourage the students to move slowly and take their time with each part.

At the end ask them what were:

- four things you could see?
- three things you could hear?
- two things you could feel (touch)?
- one thing you could smell if you were in the bush at night?

Students can record their responses in their **Devil Diary**.

Discuss how the senses the students experienced relate to the life of the Tasmanian devil.

Gallery 3: Survival

Will the Tasmanian Devil Survive? (Part 1)

This activity is designed to be completed in two parts. The first is gathering information at the exhibition to support one side of a debate. The second (back at school) is refining the information and conducting the debate.

Encourage students to explore the displays and videos about Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) and roadkill to gather information for the classroom debate.

Divide into two groups:

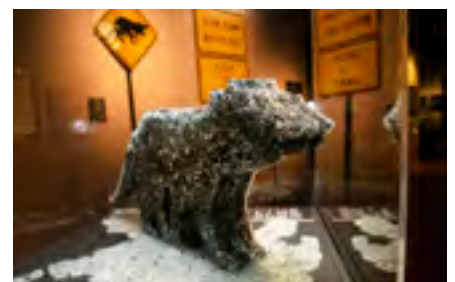
- › Group 1 gathers information to support the view that *Tasmanian devils will survive*.
- › Group 2 gathers information to support the view that *Tasmanian devils will become extinct*.
- › Each group can be given prompts to help support their arguments.
- › After 5 minutes or so bring the group back to enable them to consolidate their findings.

Students should be able to reference the displays where they found information and can record this information in the **Devil Diary**.

Tasmania's Carnivores – Today Display

Give students time to look at the list of animals with one question in mind at a time.

- What has changed on this wall since the arrival of Europeans in 1803?
- How do you think these changes have affected the Tasmanian devil?
- What could people do to prevent native animals becoming extinct?



Post-Exhibition Visit



Devil Debate: Will the Tasmanian Devil Survive? (Part 2)

Pair students up with someone from their group to compare the information they gathered from the museum. Students can then work in small groups to refine this information into debating points and arguments.

Conduct a whole class or smaller group debates on the question of 'will the Tasmanian devil survive?'

At the end of the debate students have a chance to share their own view, based on the evidence they have seen.

Diary of a Devil

Read Jackie French's *Diary of a Wombat* to students.

Discuss how the author really gets inside the mind of the wombat to tell the story from its point of view. She describes what the wombat can, see, smell, taste and feel to really bring the character to life.

Students could retell the same story (or parts of it) with a Tasmanian devil as the main character or students could write and illustrate a completely original story told from the point of view of a devil.

Present the story as a short play or act out scenes with a narrator.

Devil Rebranded

This activity is designed to enable students to show their understanding and knowledge of the Tasmanian devil in a practical way.

This 'rebranding' will encourage students to promote a more positive perception of the Tasmanian devil, countering some of the negative perceptions people have.

Sporting teams, community groups and even countries often have animal mascots. They use the characteristics and behaviours of the animals to reflect their own values such as:

- **West Coast Eagles:**
"We're the big birds, Kings of the big game. We're the Eagles, we're flying high."
- **Brisbane Lions:**
"Go Lions, Brisbane Lions we'll kick the winning score, you'll hear our mighty roar."
- **Australian Coat of Arms:**
The kangaroo and emu were chosen to symbolise a nation moving forward, based on the fact that neither animal can move backwards easily –therefore symbolising progress.

If the Tasmanian devil was the symbol of a sporting team or organisation, what qualities do you think the group might highlight?

Create:

- A new Coat of Arms for Tasmania, incorporating the Tasmanian devil
- Lyrics to a club song of a chosen sporting team called the 'Devils'
- A Tasmanian devil mascot for a company, with a short explanation of why the Tasmanian devil is a good choice for that company
- A more scientifically accurate version of Taz for a new Warner Brothers Movie

Other Ideas

Write a letter to a friend overseas, describing the Tasmanian devil to someone who has never seen or heard of one before.

Create a model of an 'ideal' Tasmanian devil enclosure for a zoo or wildlife park.

Prevent loss of life. Students are reminded of some of the ways Tasmanian devils are dying. Students can work together in teams to come up with solutions to help the devils.

Write a guide for what to do if you found an injured Tasmanian devil on the side of the road (it could be given to tourists and Tasmanians).

Create a 'Tasmanian Devil Food Guide'. Write some gross recipes based on foods that devils eat.

Borrow an animal specimen from TMAG's loan service to begin researching other animals. Click [here](#) for more information



Appendix 1



Australian Curriculum Links for *The Remarkable Tasmanian Devil*

Science

Year 3: Living things can be grouped on the basis of observable features and can be distinguished from non-living things ([ACSSU044](#))

Year 4: Living things depend on each other and the environment to survive ([ACSSU073](#))

Year 5: Living things have structural features and adaptations that help them to survive in their environment ([ACSSU043](#))

Year 6: The growth and survival of living things are affected by physical conditions of their environment ([ACSSU094](#))

HASS (Geography)

Year 4: The importance of environments, including natural vegetation, to animals and people ([ACHASSK088](#))

Year 5: The influence of people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, on the environmental characteristics of Australian places ([ACHASSK112](#))

Visual Arts

Year 3 and 4: Identify intended purposes and meanings of artworks using visual arts terminology to compare artworks, starting with visual artworks in Australia including visual artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples ([ACAVAR113](#))

Year 5 and 6: Explain how visual arts conventions communicate meaning by comparing artworks from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks ([ACAVAR117](#))

Appendix 2

Night Time Narrative

Imagine yourself at a small campsite in the Tasmanian bush. The fledgling campfire is slowly cooking your dinner of sausages and damper, while providing much needed warmth as the sun sets on a cold and windy autumn day. Your camp is located in a small clearing and you have set up your simple canvas tent stretched out between two trees.

You take off your boots after a hard long day walking through the dense, damp and largely unmapped forest. Your whole body seems to ache but it feels good to know that for now all you need is food, drink and a good night's sleep. You lie down in the tent for a quick rest before dinner and quickly fall into a deep slumber.

Hours later you awake to a startling screech. (Devil growls and screams). You quickly crawl out of the tent to see that the world has turned dark. Your fire has burnt out, the sun has set and a damp chill fills the small clearing. Even the full moon seems to shed only a dim light as it pokes through the canopy. While you struggle to regain your senses the screech comes again followed by a number of low growls. (Devil growl)

Your eyes dart quickly across the landscape but it's too dark to see anything beyond the clearing. Panicking you grasp at a stick to hold as your only defense but really you know it will do little to fend off whatever monster is out there. You stand waiting, watching, heart pumping for what feels like hours, but is probably only minutes. The noises don't return.

Growing slightly in confidence you relight your fire and throw the burnt damper and sausages into the bush. The warmth and light of the fire does much to abate your fears and you start believing maybe, somehow it was the wind or your tired mind playing tricks on you.

Then the screeching comes again and this time it has multiplied tenfold (Devil group feeding sounds) Scurrying feet and snapping twigs accompany the cries and screams coming from across the fire.



Then you see it or them. Across the clearing a mass of black with flashes of white sprints out from the bush. Though their size is smaller than expected their sharp teeth multiply your fears. One of the creatures seems to look straight at you before it turns its head and runs back into the bush where the racket of noise grows louder.

Not daring to move you stand as close to the fire as possible as though somehow its light and warmth can protect you from them.

Suddenly it's over. With one last cry and scream the creatures can be heard moving on. Soon all that can be heard is a gentle wind in the high leaves and the occasional crack of the fire. You do not sleep again that night and instead wait for the sun to hopefully clear away the torment of the night and the devils that lurk in it.

Appendix 3

Tasmanian carnivore report - Example

Animal Research Report by: _____	
Animal Name: _____	
This animal is a: <input type="radio"/> Amphibian <input type="radio"/> Bird <input type="radio"/> Fish <input type="radio"/> Insect <input type="radio"/> Mammal <input type="radio"/> Reptile	
Here is a picture of my animal.	Animal Facts
	Height/Size: _____
	Weight: _____
	Color: _____
	It has fur/feathers/skin: _____
	What it eats: _____
	Where it lives: _____
	Predators: _____
	Lifespan: _____
My animal's habitat is...	Three Interesting Facts About My Animal:
	1. _____
	2. _____
	3. _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Animal Research Report Template
My animal is a _____ . It is a _____ .
Its habitat is a _____ .
It eats _____ .
It looks like _____ .

It moves by _____ .
Some interesting facts about this animal are

I chose this animal because

Appendix 4

Gallery 1: Perceptions

Common carnivore attributes

.....

.....

.....

Draw an attribute that two carnivores have in common

Watch the short animation 'Devil may Hare' and record your ideas below

See	
Think	
Wonder	

Why do you think it's called a devil?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Gallery 2: Ecology

Walk through the 'night time' interactive and think about your four senses to fill in the boxes below

See

.....

.....

.....

.....

Hear

.....

.....

.....

Touch

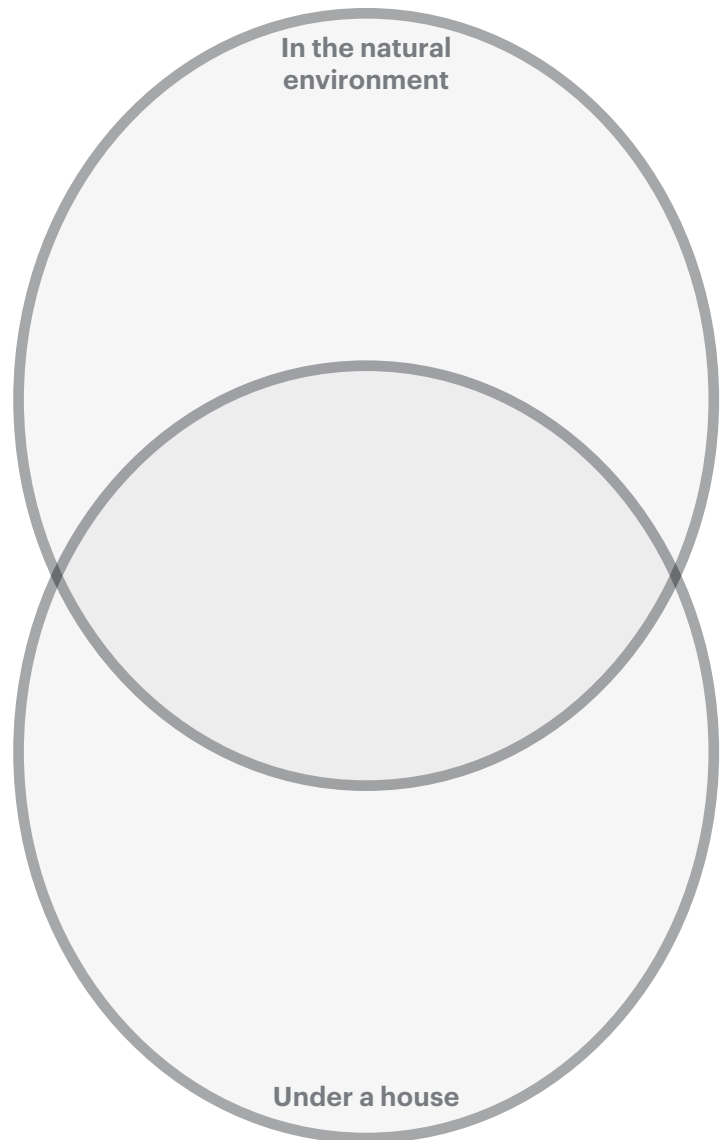
.....

.....

Smell - what you could smell in the bush

.....

Complete the Venn diagram below to show the similarities and differences between the two Tasmanian devil dens.



Gallery 3: Survival

Will the Tasmanian devil survive?

YES NO

Reference 1.

Reference 2.

Reference 3.

Useful Links

Educational Resources

- Scootle <https://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/p/home>
 - Animal Weapons: Tasmanian Devil
 - Devil in the Detail
- Your Genome <https://www.yourgenome.org/interactives/saving-the-devil>
- Splash <http://splash.abc.net.au/home#!/home>
 - <http://splash.abc.net.au/home#!/media/2691447/meet-some-tasmanian-wildlife>
 - <http://splash.abc.net.au/home#!/media/2435425/saving-the-tasmanian-devils>

General Information on the Tasmanian Devil

- Parks and Wildlife Services <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/?base=387>
- Department of Energy and the Environment http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=299&usg=AFQjCNEuR16_VQSUptTsF3WPCcqt_7P45Kw&sa=X&ei=DtpsTfCSG9Gftge0sb3fBQ&ved=0CHIQyqQwGA
- Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tasmanian_devil
- IUCN Red list <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/40540/0>
- Devil Ark Education Resources <http://www.devilark.org.au/tasmanian-devil/educational-resources/>
- Atlas of Living Australia <http://bie.ala.org.au/species/urn:lsid:biodiversity.org.au:afd.taxon:dd25b072-9f1e-4f62-a095-f6f118915035>
- Simple Wikipedia https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tasmanian_devil

Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD)

- Save the Tasmanian Devil <http://www.tassiedevil.com.au/tasdevil.nsf>
- University of Cambridge <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/tasmanian-devils-and-the-transmissible-cancer-that-threatens-their-extinction>
- Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devil_facial_tumour_disease
- ABC News <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-31/tasmanian-devils-developing-cancer-resistance/7798338>
- ABC News <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-09/scientists-successfully-treat-devils-for-tumour-disease/8339630>
- ABC News <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-02/ups-and-downs-for-tasmanian-devils-in-2017/9111106>

Artistic Representations

- Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/index.php/collection/C1176962>
- Trove Images
 - Museums Victoria <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/534748179821f420f8c03a54>
 - National Library of Australia <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-143813720/view?searchTerm=tasmanian+devil#search/tasmanian%20devil>
 - State Library of Victoria <http://trove.nla.gov.au/goto?i=picture&w=167542173&d=http%3A%2F%2Fhandle.slv.vic.gov.au%2F10381%2F141256&s=3nAT5qOY%2Bk%2BBQoubTGfZzdeJTP0%2FEgME6cOO5V4frNo%3D>
 - State Library of Victoria <http://trove.nla.gov.au/goto?i=picture&w=167573443&d=http%3A%2F%2Fhandle.slv.vic.gov.au%2F10381%2F183934&s=b6pvqRyepsMhTz%2BkPVskzRxN8s7oN4lh9aE8yjjgES0%3D>
 - Museum Victoria <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/207482871?q=tasmanian+devil&l-availability=y&l-australian=y&c=picture#tabs207482871=1>