

# Thylacines... Hunted to extinction.



# *Tasmanian Tigers... a bad reputation.*

The thylacine, otherwise known as the Tasmanian Tiger or the Tasmanian wolf, had a fierce reputation in Tasmania in the early 1800s.

European settlers had first arrived in Tasmania in 1803. By 1924 the first sheep had been brought to Tasmania, to expand Australia's burgeoning wool industry. Roads and towns were being built and land clearing provided space for farming. These actions, however, destroyed the habitat of many native species.

Farmers reported a number of attacks on their sheep. These were blamed on the thylacine, a carnivorous marsupial that was rarely seen as it was nocturnal and hunted at night. Farmers feared the thylacine and set about killing them to protect their flocks.



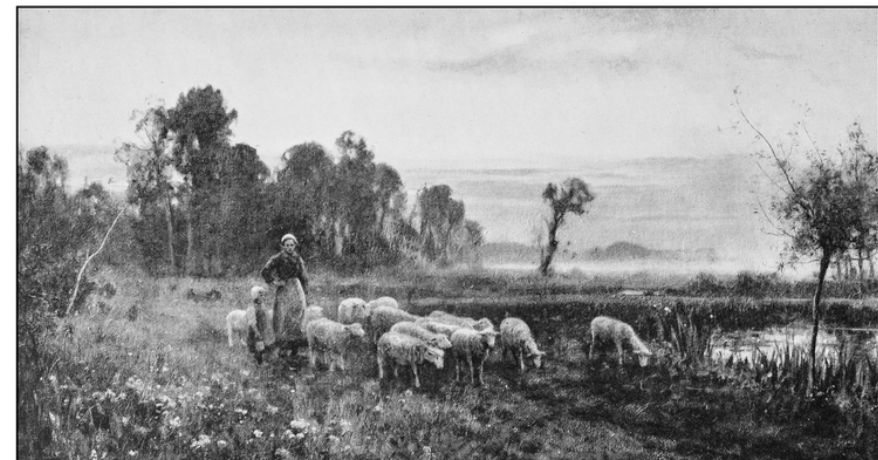
# Van Dieman's Land Company... protecting sheep

A group of London merchants set up the Van Dieman's Land Company in 1824. They planned to supply the British textile industry with wool.

They were granted 250 000 acres (1000km<sup>2</sup>) in north west Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) for their farming venture in 1825.

In 1830, seeing the Tasmanian tiger as a threat to their growing industry, the Van Dieman's Land Company offered a bounty for each Tasmanian tiger that could be killed.

The bounty was paid out of money pooled by the local farming community in order to protect their interests in the wool industry. Eventually they lobbied the government to take action to eradicate the animals that were considered pests.



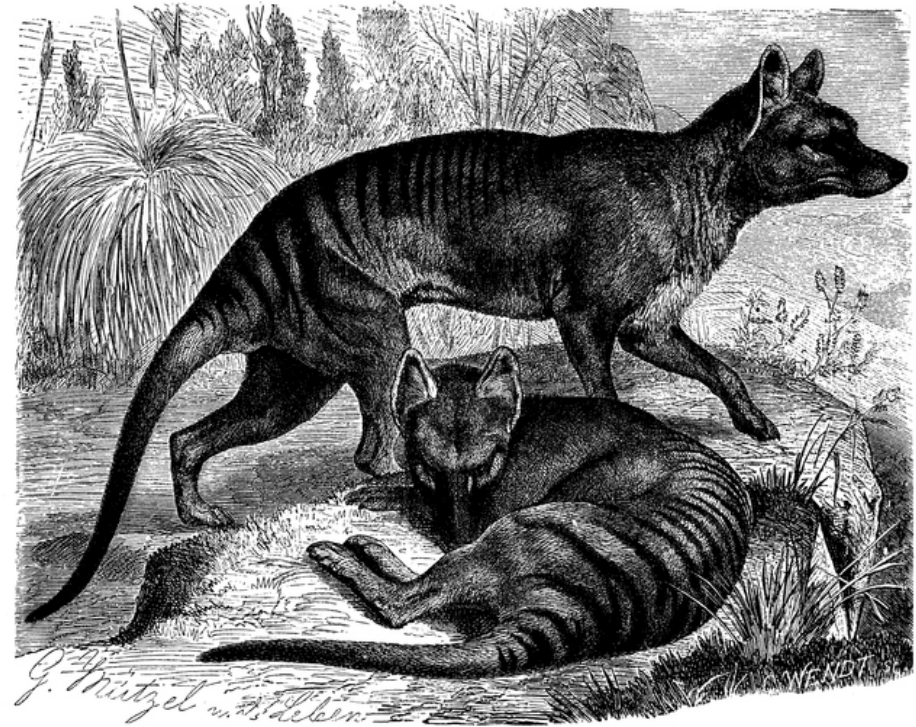
# ***Government Action...*** £1 bounty (about AU\$130 in today's money)

In 1888 the Tasmanian Government offered a bounty of £1 per adult and 10 shillings per juvenile thylacine killed in order to eradicate the tiger which was considered a pest.

The bounty program ended in 1909 after awarding 2184 bounties.

The thylacine population in Tasmania is thought to have been around 5000 at the time of European settlement. It is estimated that at least 3500 thylacines were hunted in the bounty program between 1830 and 1920.

When the bounty program ended there was a sudden, rapid decline in the remaining thylacine population. Some concerned people began to lobby the government to take action to protect the remaining population.



Poor understanding of the Australian climate and terrain led to a large amount of stock loss in the early days of the wool industry. Stock loss was also caused by dogs that had been introduced into the area. However, much of the stock loss was blamed on the thylacine.

# *The Last Thylacine...*

By 1910 thylacines were quite rare and sought after by zoos around the world.

In the 1920s a disease (likened to distemper) affected much of the remaining population of thylacines. Habitat loss and competition from dogs also played a part in their rapid decline.

The last thylacine was captured in 1933 and sold to Hobart Zoo where it was on display in a concrete enclosure for three years. The Tasmanian government finally introduced a protection order for the thylacine on the 10th of July 1936. However, this was far too late.

On the 7th of September 1936, the last thylacine died of exposure. The accepted story is that the day shift keeper forgot to lock the thylacine in its shelter and it was left overnight in freezing conditions.

The thylacine was officially declared extinct by international standards in 1986. (No evidence of existence 50 years after its last sighting.)

The anniversary of the last thylacine's death is National Threatened Species Day in Australia.

