

Hope for the Tassie devil



Reserving devil habitat

Tasmania has already lost an iconic species – the Tasmanian tiger – to extinction. Now, the forest reserves proposed under the Tasmanian Forests Agreement provides an opportunity to help protect the Tasmanian devil from a similar fate.

As part of this process, a group of leading scientists – the Independent Verification Group – has assessed the conservation values of the proposed reserves.

The group found:

- more than half of the proposed reserves are high priority for the protection of Tasmanian devils
- Tasmanian devils are likely to use all of the reserve area at least for movement between high-quality habitat patches.

In summary...

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- Tasmanian devils are likely to use all of the reserve area at least for movement between high-quality habitat patches.

Tasmanian devils are in dire need of this protection because they are under threat of extinction from:

- devil facial tumour disease
- habitat loss
- being hit by road traffic
- feral foxes and cats.



The proposed forest reserves give the Tassie devil a fighting chance for survival. Photo © Ted Mead.

On the brink

Tasmanian devils are in dire need of this protection. The species is listed as endangered at state, federal and international levels. The population has declined dramatically during the past decade due to a fatal, contagious cancer – devil facial tumour disease – which has spread to more than three quarters of the state.

Since European settlement, devil habitat has been lost through clearing for mining, farming, forestry and housing. Devils require large habitat ranges, as they scavenge for food by travelling between habitat patches. This also puts them at risk of becoming roadkill. Feral foxes and cats threaten the devils by acting as predators and competing for resources. Combined, these pressures are putting the species at real risk of extinction.

Devil extinction would have broad implications. As the world's largest carnivorous marsupial, the Tasmanian devil has international significance. Visitors from all over the world come to Tasmania to catch a glimpse of this iconic species. Its extinction would cost the state tourist dollars.

Losing the devil could risk other native forest species. As Tasmania's top predator, the devil protects smaller species by helping to control invasive species, through predation and competition for resources.



Habitat loss is putting the future of Tassie devils at risk. Photo © Martin Wurt

Securing protection

The Independent Verification Group found more than half of the reserves are high priority for the protection of Tasmanian devils and they would likely use all of the reserves to travel between high-quality habitats.

Establishing the reserves as proposed under the intergovernmental agreement would secure habitat for the devils and give them a fighting chance for survival, as highlighted by research cited in the Independent Verification Group's reports:

“The protection of core refuges and strongholds in formal reserves, with connectivity maintained at large landscape scales is vital to maintain viable populations of carnivores (Tasmanian devils, spotted-tail quolls and eastern quolls)” (Soule et al. 2006).

This factsheet summarises important findings from the Independent Verification Group of scientists that investigated conservation values and industry requirements to help achieve a final agreement between conservation groups, forestry workers and industry. Read the reports at <http://is.gd/ivgreports>