

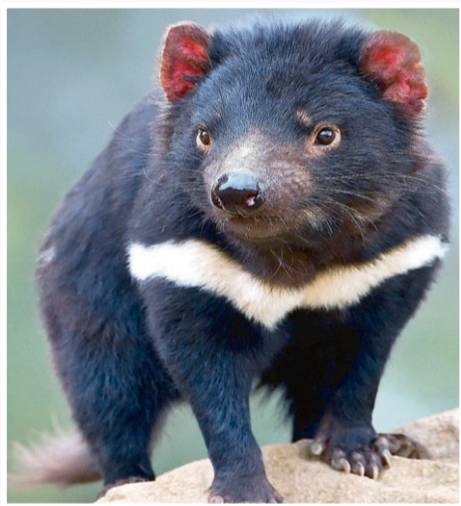


Artwork by Ron Brooks from *The Dream of the Thylacine*, by Margaret Wild.

Threatened species

EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY

THREATENED Species Day 2011 (September 7) marks 75 years since the death of the last known thylacine — our own Tasmanian tiger. Compounded by ongoing news of lost species in other parts of the world, it's easy to feel powerless. If this continues we may lose a great many of the world's species and some of the ecosystems of which they are a key part. It can be hard to see what we can do to turn things around.



Young Tasmanian devil.

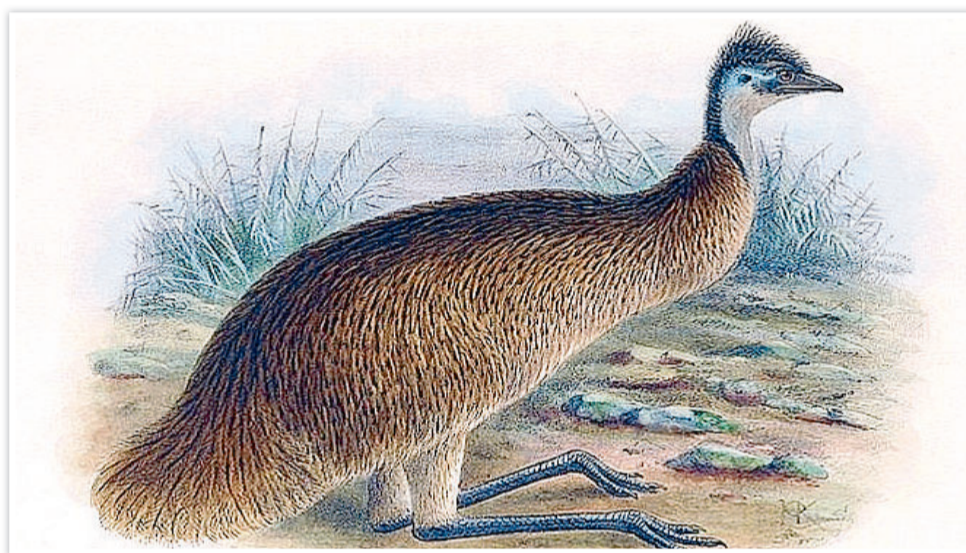
Picture: Iain D. Williams, Anaspides Photography.

It's a daunting thought to change the world, but for starters Tasmanians can change the situation for threatened species on our own patch — more than we might first realise. Tasmania has 684 threatened species on its current list, and what surprises many people is that these aren't just confined to a far-off rainforest or a national park. There could easily be a significant proportion of the world's population of a particular threatened species living near you — even on your property.



A swift parrot at home in a tree hollow.
Picture: Dejan Stojanovic.

It can be difficult to realise what's threatened. Some species may be quite numerous within their natural habitat, but this might be confined to one small patch — as is the case for many plants. Others, such as wedge-tailed eagles and spotted-tailed quolls, are easy to see and travel widely, so



The Tasmanian emu, presumed extinct. Artwork: John Gerrard Keulemans (1842-1912).

they may appear to be more abundant than they really are.

The most significant thing you can do to help threatened species is to find out what might live in your area, get the latest information on what might be needed to assist in its survival, and then do what you can to meet those needs. Once you have this information it also means you can better plan for any potentially threatening activities — like building a house or cutting vegetation — well in advance of any serious commitments such as drawing up architectural and development plans.

There's half a million people scattered across the state and most of us are lucky to live near — and appreciate — the bush, so we really can make a difference.

What we've lost

THE death of the last known thylacine in 1936 marks a sad anniversary in a world of significant species loss. Misplaced fear and an irrational perception of this magnificent marsupial as a threat to the early European farm settlers, resulted in a bounty driven war against the species.

Thousands of thylacines were destroyed during the 19th and early 20th centuries. When finally it was realised that they posed no threat, they had been hunted nearly to extinction. From the mistakes of yesterday we all must learn the lessons of tomorrow.

We can make a difference and everyone has a part to play in protecting and preserving our threatened species.

Tasmania is known to have lost 29 species since European settlement in 1803. Some, like the Tasmanian emu (pictured) and the King Island emu are lost to the world.

Plants can be threatened or become extinct too. The Alpine mintbush appears to be extinct in Tasmania but still flourishes in sub-alpine heath and shrubland in Victoria and New South Wales.

Under threat

IN Tasmania the so-called grey goshawk is a stunningly beautiful white bird of prey. It is threatened due to loss of its wet forest habitat (particularly blackwood swamp), compounded by deliberate shooting and accidental collisions with structures such as power lines.



The threatened grey goshawk.
Picture: Nick Mooney.

Much of the habitat of the pretty little ptunarra brown butterfly has been lost as large areas of native grassland and grassy woodland have been converted to pasture or cleared for other reasons. However, private property owners have recently preserved some of the remaining areas.

Older trees are especially valuable for biodiversity. Just one can provide food and shelter for a huge number of different species. Up to five species of parrot, including the threatened swift parrot, have been observed nesting in the same hollow tree. Other threatened species such as the masked owl, the forty-spotted pardalote and the spotted-tailed quoll also depend on tree hollows. Once that tree has fallen, the resulting logs can be used by yet more species, including threatened frogs, stag beetles and velvet worms.

Save the Tasmanian Devil

THE Save the Tasmanian Devil Program's roadkill project was launched in 2009 to determine the effect of the loss of road-killed Tasmanian devils on devil populations — particularly in areas affected by Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) — and to educate the public about simple measures to reduce the likelihood of roadkill.

The roadkill project continues to monitor the extent and geographic patterns of devil roadkill deaths, and also to gather information on the spread of DFTD. Most importantly, the project hopes to reduce the number of Tasmanian devils dying on our roads.

Devils are the most difficult animals to see on the road at night because of their dark colouring. Studies suggest that to be able to see a devil and stop in time a driver would need to be doing no more than 40km/h. Most people travel about twice that speed on our country roads.

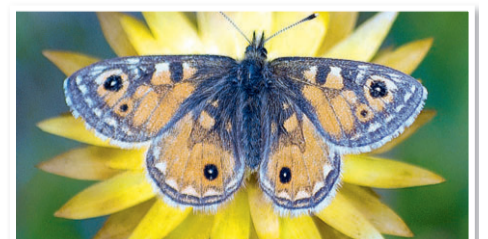
Drivers can help by slowing down on Tasmanian roads between dusk and dawn.

November to March is the worst time on the roads for Tasmanian devils because this is when the juveniles leave home to find a den of their own. The mobile devil population swells considerably and this means more devils are on the roads during the Tasmanian holiday season. At all other times of the year, females are either carrying pouch young or have dependent young in the den. If a female devil is killed on the road during this period it could potentially mean the loss of her young as well.

How you can help

ANY information you provide helps us in our efforts to reduce road-killed Tasmanian devils and to monitor the spread of Devil Facial Tumour Disease.

- Slow down on the road between dusk and dawn
- Report sightings of road-killed Tasmanian devils (pick up a form from national parks and Service Tasmania offices or visit www.tassiedevil.com.au)
- Safety first: never put yourself in danger and never handle Tasmanian devils



The threatened ptunarra brown butterfly.
Picture: Simon de Salis.