

## SPECIES MANAGEMENT PROFILE

*Sarcophilus harrisii* Tasmanian Devil

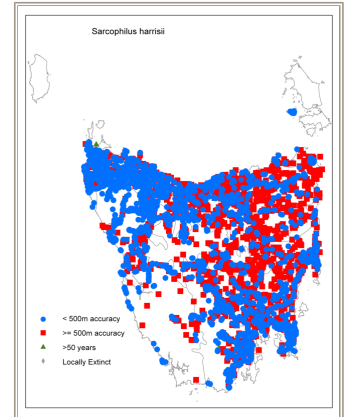
**Group:** Chordata (vertebrates), Mammalia (mammals), Dasyuromorphia, Dasyuridae (marsupial mice)

**Status:** *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995:* **endangered**  
*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999:* **Endangered**

**Endemic Status:** Found only in Tasmania



*Sarcophilus harrisii* (Tasmanian Devil) is a marsupial mammal the size of a small terrier dog, found only on mainland Tasmania. It lives in a wide range of habitats across Tasmania, especially in landscapes with a mosaic of pasture and woodland. The population has declined by more than 80% since the mid 1990s, when the infectious cancer Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) was first detected. DFTD has now spread across much of Tasmania. The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program is coordinating substantial effort to reduce the risk of this disease driving the species to extinction. The reduced population is also likely to be more sensitive to additional threats such as death by roadkill, competition with cats and foxes, and loss or disturbance of areas surrounding traditional dens where young are raised.



### Key Points

- **Important:** Is this species in your area? Do you need a permit? Ensure you've covered all the issues by checking the Planning Ahead page.
- **Important:** Different threatened species may have different requirements. For any activity you are considering, read the Activity Advice pages for background information and important advice about managing around the needs of multiple threatened species.

### Habitat

- 'Habitat' refers to both known habitat for the species (i.e. in or near habitat where the species has been recorded) and potential habitat (i.e. areas of habitat with appropriate characteristics for the species and within the species potential range which have not yet been adequately surveyed).
- If in doubt about whether a site represents potential habitat for this species, contact the Threatened Species Section for further advice.
- The range of the Tasmanian devil covers the whole of the Tasmanian mainland from the coast to the Central Highlands (including Robbins Island).
- Habitat includes the following elements contained across an area of several square kilometres: denning habitat for daytime shelter (e.g. dense vegetation, hollow logs, burrows or caves); hunting habitat (open understorey mixed with patches of dense vegetation); breeding den habitat (areas of burrowable, well-drained soil or sheltered overhangs such as cliffs, rocky outcrops, knolls, caves and earth banks, free from risk of flooding; windrows and log piles may also be used).

### What to avoid

- Spreading Devil Facial Tumour Disease (e.g. by moving devils, dead or alive)
- Destroying dens or potential denning habitat, especially traditionally used clusters of breeding dens
- Disturbing breeding (e.g. with noise, smell)
- Killing devils (e.g. through road collisions)

### Surveying

Key	Survey reliability more info
M	Peak survey period
M	Potential survey period
M	Non-survey period

To ensure you follow the law - check whether your survey requires a permit. Always report any new records to the Natural Values Atlas, or send the information direct to the Threatened Species Section. Refer to the Activity Advice: Surveying page for background information.

<i>Sarcophilus harrisii</i>	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Tasmanian devil	S S O O N N	D D J J F F	M M A A M M	J J J J A A

- As with most animal species, it is nearly impossible to prove devils are absent from an area. High confidence in local absence can only be obtained from intensive surveys. Devils are least likely to occur in urban areas.
- To detect Tasmanian Devil presence quickly - search for scats at any time of year. Only expert analysis of hair or DNA can definitively confirm devil scats, however examination of the outer appearance of scats can reveal external features consistent with devil scats including large lumps of bone and fur.
- Remote cameras combined with a meat-like attractant are an effective way to confirm the presence of Tasmanian devils.
- Devil dens are an essential habitat component, and the presence of a confirmed Tasmanian Devil den can be taken as a confirmation that the species is present at a site.
- A den can be a general or shelter den site (not in current use for breeding), or a maternal den site (in current use for breeding). Note that a den site can be both, where it is used outside the breeding season and as a maternal den during the breeding season. General den sites can be surveyed at any time of year. Survey for maternal dens during the breeding season is discussed in detail below.
- When surveying for shelter den sites, look for dense vegetation, hollow logs, burrows or caves. If a den site is detected establish a buffer of sheltering vegetation around the den that cannot be disturbed (preferably allowing at least for a tree length if the activity may involve falling trees, and a distance of tens of metres for underground burrows, which can be extensive). An additional substantial buffer against noise, smell and other disturbance may be appropriate.

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<i>Sarcophilus harrisii</i>	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Tasmanian devil dens	S S O O N N	D D J J F F	M M A A M M	J J J J A A

- In diseased areas, denning can occur at any time of year, although it is most likely to occur between July and December, and least likely during April.
- Remember! A den activity check is only of value if it is less likely to disturb breeding than a proposed activity.
- To survey for Tasmanian Devil maternal dens, search well-drained areas with burrowable soil or the potential for sheltered overhangs, especially cliffs, rocky outcrops, knolls, caves and earth banks. Den entrances are large enough to fit an adult Tasmanian devil. Wombat burrows and other ground cavities (e.g. left by fallen trees) may be used. Wood log piles may also be used.
- Maternal dens may have no detectable sign of activity (e.g. scats), so if in doubt, it is safest to assume that the den is active. Dens are not always in use, and activity could change from week to week.
- Cobwebs or vegetation across the entrance suggest a currently inactive den.
- Factors which can indicate that a den might be particularly significant (i.e. frequently used, or used by multiple individuals) include:
  - indication of regular use in the form of fresh footprints or other signs;
  - existing within a cluster of dens;
  - few other potential dens within several square kilometres which is a typical home range for a devil.
- To detect current devil activity at a den – use of non-invasive methods such as remote cameras are recommended. Remote cameras can be inconspicuously placed such that they face all potential den entrances. To reliably detect maternal den use, the survey should take place over at least 7 consecutive nights. To minimise disturbance, place cameras during daylight hours and avoid approaching den entrances; if this is necessary, a single person should do so briefly, avoiding repetition, and minimising sound, especially sniffing.
- Please report confirmed Tasmanian Devil dens for recording on the Natural Values Atlas. Reports of dens of unknown species may also be stored in the Natural Values Atlas.

## Helping the species

- Important! Always report any observations of the species to the NRE Natural Values Atlas, or else provide the data direct to the Threatened Species Section. Records stored on the NVA are a permanent record and are accessible to other people interested in this species.\*
- Consider the needs of the whole habitat. Preserving a threatened species' habitat is the best way to manage both the species and the environment in which it lives.
- For long-term protection of traditionally used breeding dens on private land – consider protection through a vegetation management agreement or conservation covenant. See the NRE Private Land Conservation Program for more details.
- To reduce risk of roadkill - drive slowly at night-time in rural areas.
- To reduce the risk of cars killing Tasmanian Devils as they feed on roadkill - move roadkills off the road where safe to do so.
- To avoid spreading disease - do not move devil roadkill carcasses to other areas.
- To assist the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program - report sick, injured or dead Tasmanian Devils (including roadkills) and where safe to do so check carcasses for disease (see Save the Tasmanian Devil Program for more information). Do not touch devils - they may be diseased even if tumours aren't visible. **If you see a dead Tasmanian Devil west of the Murchison Highway call or SMS 0427 733 511 immediately.**

- To help reduce additional potential threats to devils - assist Tasmania's efforts to eradicate foxes. See Foxes in Tasmania for more information.

### Cutting or clearing trees or vegetation

- To avoid loss of breeding den sites - leave a vegetation buffer around potential dens and denning habitat, sufficient to shelter emerging young; do not remove native vegetation within this buffer area.
- To avoid loss of Tasmanian Devil shelter dens - leave hollow logs where possible, especially if availability of logs and breeding den habitat is limited.
- To avoid loss of Tasmanian Devil habitat - maintain forest/woodland remnants to retain vegetation corridors and form a mosaic with other land use.
- To avoid breeding den loss (potentially contributing to local population loss in heavily diseased areas) - avoid blocking or crushing potential dens, especially those used regularly.
- The fewer and more clustered the dens present within a home range (i.e. several square kilometres), the more likely their disturbance will affect the population.
- To avoid disruption to breeding, which could contribute to local population loss in heavily diseased areas - avoid activities which could be clearly heard, smelt or seen by devils at a potentially active breeding den site.

### Burning

- To avoid disruption to breeding, which could contribute to local population loss in heavily diseased areas - avoid activities which could be clearly heard, smelt or seen by devils at a potentially active breeding den site.
- To avoid damage to den sites and devils, avoid burning around potential den sites, especially in heavily diseased areas.
- To avoid disruption to breeding - do not move or burn wood log piles or windrows during peak breeding season (July - January).
- To avoid obstructing lactating females returning to dens, in heavily diseased and/or high quality habitat - burn only at low intensity during the least active breeding period (around April).

### Agriculture

- To avoid breeding den loss (potentially contributing to local population loss in heavily diseased areas), avoid blocking or crushing potential dens, especially those used regularly.
- The fewer and more clustered the dens present within a home range (i.e. several square kilometres), the more likely their disturbance will affect the population.
- To avoid disruption to breeding, and thereby potential local population loss in heavily diseased areas - avoid activities which could be clearly heard, smelt or seen by Tasmanian Devils at a potentially active breeding den site.
- To avoid risk of Tasmanian Devil deaths - ensure shooters on your property do not disturb Tasmanian Devils.
- To learn about dealing with any risks of Tasmanian Devils to livestock - see Living with Tasmanian Devils and Quolls.

### Devils around houses

- To avoid disruption of breeding and potentially deaths of young Tasmanian Devils under houses - do not block up entrances under the house unless no devils are currently within the building, and young Tasmanian Devils are old enough to leave the den permanently.
- To avoid risk of Tasmanian Devil death - prevent your dog from roaming at night.
- For further advice - see Living with Tasmanian Devils and Quolls. For additional enquiries contact the Wildlife Management Branch on ph: 03 6233 6556.

### Construction

- To avoid breeding den loss (and thereby potentially local population loss in heavily diseased areas) - avoid blocking or crushing known or potential breeding dens.
- Den disturbance is more likely to affect a local population if dens are more clustered, fewer within a home range (i.e. several square kilometres), and/or known to be regularly used breeding dens.
- To avoid disruption to breeding, which could contribute to local population loss in heavily diseased areas - do not carry out activities which could be clearly heard, smelt or seen by Tasmanian Devils at a potentially active breeding den site.
- To reduce risk of roadkill (both of Tasmanian Devils directly, and of deaths of other species thereby attracting Tasmanian Devils to roads) - design roads to leave buffers around den sites, limit night driving speed and trial educational measures to encourage drivers to avoid collisions with Tasmanian Devils and other wildlife. Note that Tasmanian Devils are active throughout the night, not just at dusk and dawn.
- To reduce risk of roadkill (both of Tasmanian Devils directly, and of deaths of other species thereby attracting devils to roads) - do not design roads to cross narrow corridors of forest within open landscapes.
- To respond to any changing levels of roadkill, and to assist the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program - report Tasmanian Devil roadkills (see the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program for more information on contact details).
- To potentially improve the chances of drivers seeing and avoiding Tasmanian Devils before collision - trial application of a pale road surface and measure its effectiveness.

### Subdivision

- To prevent disruption to breeding, which could contribute to local population loss in heavily diseased areas - avoid developments such as subdivisions where this could result in activities which could be clearly heard, smelt or seen by Tasmanian Devils at a potentially active breeding den site.

## Earthworks

- To avoid breeding den loss (potentially contributing to local population loss in heavily diseased areas) - avoid blocking or crushing potential dens, especially those used regularly. The fewer and more clustered the dens present within a home range (i.e. several square kilometres), the more likely their disturbance will affect the population.
- To avoid disruption to breeding, which could contribute to local population loss in heavily diseased areas - avoid activities which could be clearly heard, smelt or seen by Tasmanian Devils at a potentially active breeding den site.

## Use of chemicals

- Agricultural chemicals intended to poison other wildlife can kill Tasmanian Devils, as it is difficult to control which animals take baits or feed on poisoned carcasses.
- To prevent direct poisoning of Tasmanian Devils - avoid using chemicals in devil denning and foraging habitat.
- To prevent secondary poisoning of Tasmanian Devils – where possible avoid using single-dose rat poisons in denning and foraging habitat.

## Recreation

- To avoid disruption to breeding Tasmanian Devils by bushwalkers and cyclists - plan tracks and campsites far from established clusters of devil breeding dens. Include features which discourage visitors from travelling off-road towards such dens.

## Tourism

- Those considering providing food to wild Tasmanian Devils (e.g. for tourist viewing purposes) may need a permit, e.g. to disturb devils, or move dead animals. This practice, if not carried out appropriately, can bring about over-dependence on a single food source, and potential human-Tasmanian Devil conflicts.
- For advice on appropriate management of Tasmanian Devil-viewing tourism and related activities - contact the Threatened Species Section.

## Further information

Check also for listing statement or notesheet pdf above (below the species image).

Save the Tasmanian Devil Program

Conservation Advice

**Cite as:** Threatened Species Section (2023). *Tasmanian Devil (Sarcophilus harrisii): Species Management Profile for Tasmania's Threatened Species Link*. <https://www.threatenedspecieslink.tas.gov.au/Pages/Tasmanian-Devil.aspx> Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania. Accessed on 30/3/2023.

**Contact details:** Threatened Species Section, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, GPO Box 44, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, 7001. Phone (1300 368 550).

**Permit:** A permit is required under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* to 'take' (which includes kill, injure, catch, damage, destroy and collect), keep, trade in or process any specimen or products of a listed species. Additional permits may also be required under other Acts or regulations to take, disturb or interfere with any form of wildlife or its products, (e.g. dens, nests, bones). This may also depend on the tenure of the land and other agreements relating to its management.