

# Thylacine

The name thylacine roughly translates (from the Greek via Latin) as 'dog-headed pouched one'. The world's largest marsupial carnivore, the thylacine was commonly known as the Tasmanian tiger, due to the distinctive stripes on its back. Despite its fierce reputation, the tiger was semi-nocturnal and was described as quite shy, usually avoiding contact with humans.

thylacine, Tasmanian wolf, Tasmanian tiger  
(*Thylacinus cynocephalus*)

30 cm  
12 inches



© Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

## Extinction of Thylacine

The fossilised remains of thylacines have been found in Papua New Guinea, throughout the Australian mainland and Tasmania. A number of factors, including the introduction of the dingo, led to the extinction of the thylacine in all areas except Tasmania about 2000 years ago.

At the time of European settlement in Tasmania the population was estimated at about 5000. However, excessive hunting, combined with factors such as habitat destruction and introduced disease, led to the rapid extinction of the Thylacine. On 7 September 1936 only two months after the species was granted protected status, 'Benjamin', the last known thylacine, died from exposure at the Beaumaris Zoo in Hobart.

## Cloning the Thylacine

The Australian Museum in Sydney began a project in 1999 reminiscent of the science fiction movie Jurassic Park. The goal is to use genetic material from specimens taken and preserved in the early 20th century to clone new individuals and revive the species from extinction. In late 2002 the researchers had some success as they were able to extract usable DNA from the specimens. Although later tests showed the specimens' DNA had been too badly degraded for the research to continue.

## Thylacine

### Questions

1. The name Thylacine roughly translates (from the Greek via Latin) as 'dog-headed pouched one'.

True / False

2. At the time of European settlement in Tasmania how many Thylacines were there? (Circle the answer)

500 / 5000 / 50 000

3. They Thylacine once lived on mainland Australia. How do they know this?

---

---

4. The Thylacine wasn't afraid of humans. True / False

5. Why did the Thylacine become extinct?

---

---

6. They have attempted to clone the Thylacine using DNA.

True / False

7. When did the last known Thylacine die in Tasmania?

---