CHAPTER 1 - Case for Continued Existence

Does the Tasmanian tiger still exist? Of course it does.

I jump straight to this because from the very beginning you should forget any notion that the Tasmanian tiger is extinct. It is almost extinct, but not quite. I know that because I have seen two of them. I have seen them just as surely and certainly as I see anything else in this world.

If you and others accept the thylacine exists then change can come for the better. But how can that happen without irrefutable proof? Many people want to believe the Tasmanian tiger still exists, and if you are one of those then I can help you. A lot of people already know it exists either because they have seen thylacines themselves, or have seen enough sub-proof evidence to make that reasonable conclusion. If you know the Tasmanian tiger still exists then I urge you not to keep it secret.

Many "authorities" are somehow certain the Tasmanian tiger is extinct, and will probably see this book as a further attempt by the few to create mystique, an income, or a public name. Perhaps they will even see the book as an egotistical waste of time. Those individuals will have something to answer for if the thylacine is rediscovered; they have discounted the sighting testimonies of hundreds of honest people with no reason to lie, as well as various forms of sub-proof evidence, and the positive opinions of true experts who have devoted their lives to search for the species.

I do not need to create mystique around the Tasmanian tiger, it is there already, and the intention is that no-one will receive any income from the contents of this book. I also write the book anonymously, with no desire for notoriety. I do not seek donations, only your patience.

Of course the thylacine may never be rediscovered. It does exist now, but only just, and could die out completely at any time. Imagine if this magnificent animal persisted today, against so many historical odds, only to die out quietly in the bush tomorrow - before its incredible survival story is told.

Structure of case for continued existence:

A) Experts aren't necessarily experts.
Who is it that says the tiger is extinct?
B) Conflict of opinion among sceptics.
Sceptics contradict themselves
C) Main cause of extinction belief.
The fundamental reason why most people think the Tasmanian tiger is extinct
D) Understanding how the tiger did it.
Explanation of why that reason is not good enough
E) Example of sub-proof evidence; Location X.
Photographs of footprints, kill pattern, scat samples and more

A) Experts aren't necessarily experts.

So who is it that claims the thylacine to be extinct? Are these people experts? The answer to that is almost always no. Read the books and you will see that virtually every person who has physically walked the bush looking for thylacines believes they still exist. If not then those people do not deny the possibility.

Reading the history then making a judgment is not enough for someone to claim expertise on this subject. There is not a great deal of primary history recorded on the thylacine, and all of that is now summarised in just four main books. If you read those four books, then you will effectively know as much as any academic or scientist. People assume trained biologists or museum curators have some automatic expertise on the thylacine, however this species is totally unique, separated from all others by 30 million years of evolution, so training based on other species is largely irrelevant. The only way for an "expert" to build knowledge beyond a literature review is to physically walk the bush looking for the tiger, and to gain original information of their own.

In other words field workers, thylacine searchers, "true believers", are better qualified than academics to say whether the species is extinct or not. We have all read the same four books. Of the four writers themselves, one says the thylacine is definitely extinct, and the others say maybe, maybe not.

The four main books I refer to are Guiler (1998) *The Thylacine - A Lesson to be Learnt*, Paddle (2000) *History and Extinction of the Thylacine*, Owen (2002) *Thylacine - The Tragic Tale of the Tasmanian Tiger*, and Smith (1981) *The Tasmanian Tiger - 1980. A report on the current status of thylacine Thylacinus cynocephalus, funded by the World Wildlife Fund Australia.* Full reference details are in the bibliography, and I will hereafter refer to the books respectively as "Guiler", "Paddle", "Owen" or "Smith". There are other books and a multitude of newspaper snippets etc., but effectively all known information (or locations of) is included in these four main texts.

I will therefore not recount the history or biology of the Tasmanian tiger, as I have nothing to add. Instead I will use my own information to discuss the thylacine as it is today, with reference to those four texts. This will help you understand the species, relevant subtleties of Tasmanian life, and thus how it is possible, how it is, that the enduring thylacine still exists today.

B) Conflict of opinion among sceptics.

As the most recent word on the subject, Owen does not present a clear opinion on whether the thylacine exists or not, but he does find authority in the comments of David Pemberton, zoology curator of the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery. These concluding comments on the last page of Owen demonstrate the clear and ubiquitous conflict of opinion in the minds of sceptics..."they were in that area in the fifties; they were there".

Most "experts" who say the tiger is now extinct, or probably now extinct, also say that it did exist into the fifties or sixties. But on what do they base that conclusion? What evidence did these people require to conclude the thylacine lived into the fifties or sixties? Sightings, footprints? Sub-proof evidence is no different today from what it was in the fifties & sixties. New cast footprints and sightings are made every year, which surely means anyone who believes the species survived past 1936 (the year the last specimen died in captivity), then must also accept that it could be living today.

The Tasmanian National Parks & Wildlife Service operates an Internet website to inform the public of the nature and status of native Tasmanian wildlife. This is the official government stance, the "final word", and what should be the most "expert" opinion on the status of the thylacine. Text from the website ("Tasmanian Tiger" 23/4/2004) reads as follows. The same text was also published in the Sunday Examiner Magazine (2002); see bibliography for both. Then a couple of paragraphs down the same page:

"Since 1936, no conclusive evidence of a thylacine has been found. However, the incidence of reported thylacine sightings has continued. Most sightings occur at night, in the north of the State, in or near areas where suitable habitat is still available. Although the species is now considered to be 'probably extinct', these sightings provide some hope that the thylacine may still exist."

This is the government authority we are all looking toward for guidance. Do they think the thylacine is extinct or not? And if not, then why aren't they taking a more pro-active stance? If the TNPWS believes there is even a slight chance of continued existence of the Tasmanian tiger, then why not project greater respect toward private individuals who are actually trying to do something about it? Surely they recognise the potential value of this species.

The Tasmanian National Parks & Wildlife Service is not one entity, but a body of many individuals and sections, each with different attitudes and backgrounds; all bound by often cumbersome policy from above (according to a Parks employee). Thylacine matters are routinely kept secret, presumably because many personalities within the service consider that the thylacine probably does still exist, and they take the position that it is better to leave the species alone to "breed in peace".

In other words the Tasmanian National Parks & Wildlife Service, supposedly the most expert authority, does not present a clear stance on whether the thylacine is extinct or not. I believe the TNPWS is incapable of projecting a unified opinion on status of the thylacine, and incapable of taking worthwhile action until the species is proven to exist.

The term "probably extinct" is most widely used by scientific sceptics and others in positions of authority. This would seem reasonable, and is certainly a safe resting place; which does not expose them to ridicule, or oblige them to take any action, yet still means they would be right if the thylacine was to be rediscovered.

The only well informed person who has presented a solid extinction line is Robert Paddle, author of the book referred to above as "Paddle". The strength of Paddle's extinction claim should be considered here, as this man is the champion of sceptics, and the book has a lot of influence. Bob Paddle was the first, and still the only major author to claim the thylacine is definitely extinct. Furthermore he boldly and arrogantly claims the species became extinct in 1936 with the death of the last zoo captive. Paddle presents a lot of well researched information, but none of that supports definite extinction of the thylacine.

Few if any scientific commentators other than Paddle believe the thylacine became extinct in 1936, which alone suggests Paddle's firm extinction line is not based on scientific logic. Even the front cover says the thylacine is extinct, which it is not, and so the book is fundamentally flawed from that point onward. Here is a classic example of good academia which falls over for lack of field work.

In other words there are varying opinions within the academic community, and so it also does not present a clear stance on whether the thylacine is extinct or not.

Finally I touch again on the astonishing contradiction apparent in the minds of most people who consider the thylacine issue. This is the notion that if the species does still exist, then the best thing for it is to be left alone to "breed in peace". Surely anything deeper than a surface consideration must demonstrate the urgency of the thylacine's position; blind Freddie can see that peace was shattered for that animal a long time ago. There cannot be more than a few hundred thylacines in existence today. If there were only a few hundred Tasmanian devils in existence, nobody would say that is not urgent.

4

And yet it appears true that most "experts", including the few people in the TNPWS with direct authority to help the thylacine, take the view that secrecy is the best policy, and/or that the species is best left alone to breed in peace. Thylacine policy, and even the collective view of the otherwise uninformed general public, is thus at the mercy of what a few individuals think is best.

If those same individuals decide it is better to promote the "probably extinct" line, even though the authorities themselves are quite sure of the thylacine's continued existence, then suddenly the term "sceptics" becomes very clouded indeed. Isn't it common knowledge that wildlife authorities in Tasmania know more about the thylacine than they say?

I tell you there is a cover-up at the government level, and that it is happening now. The urgent problem being of course, that secrecy is now the thylacine's greatest enemy. Habitat loss, invasion by introduced animals, and weakened genetics from inbreeding are all affecting the thylacine now. The thylacine species has never been so low, and yet society will not act to protect an animal it thinks is extinct. From the same page of the TNPWS website:

"Even if there did exist a few remaining individuals, it is unlikely that such a tiny population would be able to maintain a sufficient genetic diversity to allow for the viable perpetuation of the species in the long-term."

Look at what this says. "We can't be sure if it exists or not, but even if it does, we might as well not bother trying to find it". The Tasmanian National Parks & Wildlife Service, and the Australian scientific community, have given up on this incredibly important species - how dare they patronise private searchers who have not.

With all of the above in mind it can be said that authorities, government experts, scientists, people society looks toward for guidance, publicly cannot decide if the thylacine is extinct or not. They promote multiple stances which continually contradict each other. Negative public opinion is being created by some authorities who purposely suppress information because they mistakenly believe that secrecy is the best policy for the thylacine.

So now, even at this early stage of the book, you start to see the subtle complexities of the thylacine issue, and how it actually could be that this magnificent species not only exists when the rest of the world thinks it is extinct, but is now being smothered by secrecy.

The term "sceptic" logically means someone who has given up on the Tasmanian tiger. A lot of people will have a lot to answer for if the thylacine is rediscovered.

C) Main cause of extinction belief.

There is no proof that the Tasmanian tiger does not exist today. So those who truly believe this is the case, or those who are undecided, need a reason to take those views. For most the reason why the thylacine "must be extinct" is because no irrefutable evidence of existence has been obtained for such a long period. So many times the comment is made; "we have to face the fact that no proof of existence has been found for seventy years". Certainly by world standards, all kinds of ecological and biological concepts point to the improbability of the thylacine's continued existence - but never the impossibility.

Nobody denies it would be an incredible feat of survival for the thylacine to overcome so many biological odds. Equally incredible would be the ability of an animal to avoid humans so effectively for so long in such a small place, when it was historically not regarded as intelligent; that species would need to have reinvented itself. Many see these two things as impossible, and so they accept the thylacine to be extinct. Others want to believe the animal could have persisted, but do not see how that is possible. These people only need a nudge to move from "the tiger is probably extinct" to "the tiger is probably still there". If enough people take the later view, then pressure might build to protect likely habitat just in case.

D) Explaining how the tiger did it.

To present an explanation of how it is that the Tasmanian tiger still exists, I will address two main issues separately; **1**) **Raw survival ability**, and **2**) **A species reinvents itself**. Comment has been made by Nick Mooney, senior thylacine authority of the Nature Conservation Branch (Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment), that "one has to come up with a pretty bizarre set of circumstances for the tiger to have it exist" (Owen p.197). Opinions and sightings are pre-judged bizarre before even being considered by authorities; not good science, not good for the thylacine. If Nick Mooney requires a bizarre set of circumstances then here it is. If you are a hopeful sceptic, then here is the nudge you need.

1) Raw survival ability.

The sad history of the Tasmanian tiger prior to 1936 is well documented, and there for all to see, as is the loss of potential habitat which has occurred in Tasmania since that date. No other species on earth has endured such historical pressures, and remember this is a marsupial; still regarded by many as an inferior, unintelligent, uncompetitive form of life compared to placental mammals. Yet despite the shameful past, it is a fact that the Tasmanian tiger still persists today, so how did the species endure such odds?

Paddle (p.16-18) offers a good account of the megafauna period of Australia's pre-European history, describing a time with a huge diversity of large animals; giant wombats, 300kg emus, 10ft high kangaroos, land based crocodiles, giant goannas and a huge range of marsupial predators, including at least six species of thylacine. The bulk of these megafauna animals start to decline in the fossil record around 40,000 years ago, at the same time Aborigines are thought to have started colonising Australia.

Most of the megafauna die out of the fossil record by about 20,000 years ago. This was a very bad time of extinctions for Australia; according to Paddle (p.16) every Australian land animal weighing more than 60kg died out, as well as 75% of all species weighing more than 10kg.

It is generally accepted that Aborigines caused these extinctions, possibly backed up by climate change. Aborigines used fire to modify the habitat and are thought to have hunted the larger, slower, less adaptable animals to the point of no return. The large predators were apparently hunted likewise and/or lost their main food sources, and so died out also. Reduced prey diversity and hunting pressure is a bad combination for any top order predator.

From that entire period only one large carnivore survived, and that was the Tasmanian tiger. It "stepped through the ranks" of the falling species to stand alone as a survivor without equal, so even before Europeans sighted Australia, the thylacine had proven itself to be a species with uncommon will, and uncommon ability to persist; a survivor of ages. It seems whenever the chips were down the thylacine was able to re-gather, and respond like no other.

The pre-European thylacine was adaptable - it occupied every habitat from the Nullarbor Plain deserts to the rainforests of north Queensland. But dingoes were the last straw. According to the fossil record dingoes were introduced to the mainland about 4,000 years ago, and with their supposedly more efficient pack hunting strategy they are thought to have out-competed thylacines for food, and/or killed thylacines directly.

Paddle (p.22) also says introduction of the dingo made Aborigines better hunters. Either way there is little doubt that the dingo directly caused "extinction" of the thylacine on the mainland.

Of course some say thylacines still exist on the mainland as well, and considering the similarity of many sightings coming from both the mainland and Tasmania, it is logical to keep an open mind on that subject. If the thylacine can hide in Tasmania then it can also hide on the mainland.

But dingoes never made it to Tasmania, and so the magnificent survivor awaited its next challenge - arrival of Europeans. The rest is well documented history, again found in the four main texts mentioned above. During the government bounty period, disease epidemic, and subsequent habitat loss, the chips were down once again, and the thylacine species must have somehow retreated to areas of safe ground, gathered its resources, then picked up the pieces to face the new era.

Could the thylacine still exist through **raw survival ability**? Four main questions come to mind:

Was hunting during the bounty period enough to make the species extinct?

No. Anyone who has walked the Tasmanian wilderness knows how thick/extensive it is, and that there is no way human hunting alone could have reduced thylacine numbers beyond the point of no return. This is an adaptable animal that can live in all habitats.

Was the widely publicised 1908 disease epidemic enough to kill off the species?

Possibly, as this is not affected by thick bush or harsh terrain. However Paddle says the pathogen affected thylacines in a non-lethal way. There is comment from zoo staff that thylacines were very badly affected, but this did not necessarily occur in the wild. The same disease affected other marsupial carnivores in a severe manner, so it has been assumed the thylacine suffered likewise. If the thylacine is assumed to have been affected the same as other carnivorous marsupials, then we should remember that just as the other species recovered, so by our own reasoning the thylacine physically could have recovered also. We have proof the species existed until 1936, which is nearly 30 years after the disease was apparently at its peak.

Is habitat loss enough of a problem to cause extinction?

No. There is still enough suitable habitat in Tasmania to support viable populations of thylacines, though obviously now at a precarious, short term, disturbed state of existence. Habitat loss in prime areas is increasing; those areas are getting smaller and more vulnerable.

Was a combination of these three factors enough to make the species extinct?

Probably, and this is the view taken by extinctionists. In fact it makes perfect sense; a combination of hunting pressure, epidemic disease, and habitat loss was too much for the poorly evolved, unintelligent marsupial thylacine. Scientific reasoning says the Tasmanian tiger should not have been able to endure all three of these elements together.

Yet today wild thylacines walk the Tasmanian wilderness. I say this repeatedly without definitive proof, asking sceptics to have patience; don't give up on it so quickly. If you think the species does not still exist, then you will obviously do nothing to help it. Wait until you read the rest of this book.

The Tasmanian tiger has defied scientific logic to survive incredible biological odds. But in addition to that, it has somehow been able to actively avoid humans for seventy years; so effectively that society thinks it is extinct! To do that the thylacine species must have changed from what it was to become incredibly, unbelievably elusive. How has the thylacine managed to avoid humans for so long when it was historically not regarded as intelligent? It is true that while it was still plentiful the Tasmanian tiger was said to be an exceedingly stupid animal. If opinions of early commentators are accurate, then the thylacine would certainly be incapable of the kind of elusive attitude required to avoid detection for the past seventy years. I explain this elusive ability in three ways; 1) incorrect colonial attitudes, 2) the species has changed from what it was, and 3) ability to persist in very low numbers.

2-1) Incorrect colonial attitudes.

In a climate of hatred and persecution there were many clearly unjustified comments made about the Tasmanian tiger. It was claimed to be a stinking, worthless vampire, ready to kill every sheep and bullock on the east coast. It was also said to be stupid, which I expect was overstated because of human ignorance, blind hatred, or to achieve a political objective.

Most people only saw thylacines in zoos, and here the comment was made that the animals were boring or unhappy, with little sign of interest in their surroundings. But surely in captivity the most disinterested and unhappy animals (those that know what they have lost) are actually the most intelligent. People were ready to hate the thylacine at first sight, and ready to attribute stupidity too soon. The Tasmanian tiger was always a very intelligent animal.

2-2) The species has now changed from what it was.

The first function of unnatural selection during the bounty period(s) would have been to remove the less intelligent or less elusive. This continued generally throughout all of Tasmania for 100 years until a very low number of individuals remained, mostly in the western forests. As the species dwindled, a critical point was reached during the 1910's where thylacines were so hard to find that hunters gave up looking; it was no longer commercially viable. This coincided with completion of a change in genetics, via the selection of traits which allowed the remnant population to largely avoid capture.

The next thirty years represent only 9 or 10 tiger generations, so there was not much scope for change in this population status. However there is scientific opinion that numbers may have started to increase during the 1950's and 60's. Searches were conducted, and thylacines were apparently seen during this time, but through a combination of still very low numbers, the species' newly honed elusiveness, and perhaps a bit of luck, none were caught or photographed.

During the 1960's and 70's numbers of most Tasmanian native marsupials started to increase dramatically after the sudden reduction of wholesale poisoning and trapping during the 40's & 50's. Thylacine numbers should have been recovering likewise, and so specimens should have been caught during those years, but this did not happen - again one of the pillars of extinction theory.

There was a force suppressing thylacine numbers during the 60's & 70's, and this pressure is greater now than ever. Tasmanian devils kill juvenile thylacines waiting in the lair as the mother hunts, as will be discussed in Chapter 8. This is the main reason why Tasmanian tigers have not been able to increase their wild population. Farming eats wilderness areas from the outside and logging eats them from the inside. Skyrocketing devil numbers accompany both of these industries.

As wilderness areas become smaller and more disturbed, thylacines have fewer safe lair options and are more likely to lose their offspring. It is likely that inbreeding has also caused sustained infertility problems. Thylacine numbers are today as low as they have ever been in the past.

Even allowing for extremely low numbers, inaccessible habitat, and a great deal of luck, the Tasmanian tiger has achieved something remarkable - remarkable to the point of being unbelievable. It has reinvented its behaviour to face the new age. Nowhere else in the known history of zoology has such a radical transformation taken place, and no other large animal species on Earth could be so elusive, to avoid humans for so long in such a small place - be it panther or wild dog or fox.

To explain this incredible elusive ability I need to return to the concept of intelligence. It is true that the thylacine's brain is measured to be 40% smaller than that of an equal sized dog, and so it logically may not be as "intelligent" as a dog. There are many forms of intelligence however, and we should resist the temptation to compare thylacines with dogs. In fact these two species have little in common apart from superficial appearance. The behaviour and psychology of a thylacine is not at all like that of a dog, as discussed further in Chapter 4.

Most people see the thylacine as the marsupial version of a wild dog. Wild dogs are not difficult to locate in the bush, and so thylacines should not be difficult to locate either; yet another reason for people to think the tiger must be extinct. Consider however that in the past all dog types have had a very long association with humans (even wild dingoes), and most wild dogs in Australia ultimately gravitate toward humans sooner or later.

In contrast the marsupial thylacine species has apparently never had this association with our own kind; its psyche is not compatible with humans like the dog. The thylacine had 40,000 years to establish a relationship with Aborigines, yet there was no evidence of that in Tasmania, and mainland cave paintings suggest the thylacine was a prey item, not a friend. Given the way Tasmanian Aborigines attached immediately to introduced dogs, then the clear indication is that the thylacine was always a persecuted competitor; a distant mind.

Comment was made by Nick Mooney in a video documentary (Winning Post Productions 1996, *The Tasmanian Tiger - The Definitive Documentary*; hereafter referred to as "Documentary Video") that he suspects thylacine wariness was "somewhere in between a Tasmanian devil and an Eastern quoll. That is to say that in most circumstances they were wary of people but not exceptionally hard to find".

This is a strange comment from a supposed expert, and certainly not accurate either now or in the past. I have heard second hand comment from a professional tiger trapper employed at the historical Woolnorth property in North West Tasmania; that he trapped 20 of them in his lifetime, but never saw a single one in the wild.

The Tasmanian tiger was always elusive, but is now far more so than ever before. Now it is certainly the most elusive animal in the world.

2-3) Ability to persist in very low numbers.

If the population is so low that thylacines cannot be detected, then how are they able to find each other for breeding, and why haven't they succumbed to inbreeding? Owen p.199 again quotes David Pemberton of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery as saying the minimum theoretical thylacine population size for long term survival is 500, but as few as 50 may still be viable. "Theoretical" is an uncomfortable word when discussing the thylacine, as again this species is totally unique - vastly different from other animal types on which these theories are based.

The Tasmanian wilderness is extensive, but it is surely not possible for 500 thylacines to hide there undetected for 70 years; never making contact with humans long enough to leave irrefutable proof of existence. More logical is a total figure around 200. I believe this is the maximum number of thylacines that could live in the available area without being detected, and that it is also the minimum number required to allow the species to continue. This number is critically low for any species, and may ultimately not be enough to allow long term survival.

The Tasmanian tiger has survived to the present however, so numbers such as those must be viable at least in the short term. Mummified cave fossils prove thylacines lived on the Nullarbor Plain at a time when the climate was basically the same as it is now. To live in such a desolate area the species must have been able to survive at sparse population density and find each other at very long range.

2-4) Devotion of the few

There is one other reason why you might start to believe the Tasmanian tiger still exists when there is no irrefutable proof. That is understanding the serious devotion of people who are trying to prove the species is not extinct. Intelligent people have devoted their lives to show the world the thylacine is not yet dead; names such as Eric Guiler, Col Bailey, James Malley, Ned Terry and others. Motivation is always because these people have either seen a tiger, or seen enough sub-proof evidence to be certain it is still there. The only aim of these people is to help the species before it does actually become extinct.

Again these are intelligent people, who would not waste so much of their time without good reason. If you had seen as much sub-proof evidence as they have, then you would probably believe it also. Sceptics should not be so quick to ridicule these "true believers" without making an effort to view the same evidence.

Of course the mere fact that others believe something, is not enough reason for you to do the same. After all some people believe in all honesty the Loch Ness monster waits to be discovered. Perhaps it does, but the thylacine is quite different from the Loch Ness monster; it was confirmed to exist into the 1930's, and as mentioned even most sceptics agree that the thylacine existed fifty years ago.

The mere fact that others believe strongly in the Tasmanian tiger can sway your opinion if you allow that to happen. Consider the amount of effort this book represents, and consider the strength of motivation behind it. If I can believe so strongly in continued existence of the thylacine, then from one good soul to another, you can believe it also.

So does the thylacine still exist? Of course it does.

It physically could survive pressures of the last 100 years, and it has. But it is bouncing along the knife edge of extinction, and it is being persecuted now as before - by secrecy instead of open hostility. Chapter 9 discusses deeper forces within Tasmanian society which today conspire to keep thylacine existence a secret.

Society collectively believes the Tasmanian tiger is extinct because "experts" say so. "Experts" say so because scientific logic, based on known animal species, says continued existence of the thylacine is impossible.

Despite this, you can at least believe it may still exist, because survival ability beyond known animal species was historically demonstrated, it physically could have survived pressures of the past 100 years, and also because many good, intelligent people, who are better qualified than sceptical "experts", have seen sub-proof evidence that is enough to convince a reasonable person the Tasmanian tiger is not extinct.

E) Example of sub-proof evidence; Location X.

The author's investigations at location X have been chosen to illustrate the kind of subproof evidence that is available today to anybody who has the will to go and look for it. The term "location X" refers to a network of sandstone caves in the east coast forests of Tasmania. The quality of images is not 100% because they were captured from analogue video.

These caves are not unlike other eroded sandstone throughout the entire east coast forests, however location X does lie at the base of a granite peak, and there are isolated sheep paddocks about 3km away. This is one of many locations in several regions throughout the island where similar kinds of sub-proof evidence can be found.

> Plate 3. Sandstone overhang & cave; east coast Tasmania

E-1) Kill pattern.

While walking through an isolated east coast sheep paddock in April 2000 looking for thylacine evidence, the following carcasses were found 50m apart.



Plates 4 & 5. Suspected thylacine kills.

Note from Plates 4 & 5 that each of the victims was killed by what appears to be a single predator. Marks under the adult's front feet show the sheep was still alive (kicking) for several hours after the attack. Note also that specific places were targeted on both victims; primarily the chest and inside of the back leg, yet there are few visible marks anywhere else, except the top of the adult's head, where it appears the predator has tried to access the brain. It would take a lot of force to tear a patch of skin from the chest of an adult sheep in such a way.



Plates 6 & 7. Probable attempt to eat the brain, and close-up of facial lacerations.

Most importantly, the close-up of the nose suggests the animal that killed this adult sheep was very vicious, with a mouth full of teeth that cut and slash cleanly; consistent with thylacine dentition, but unlike the bite of a dog. You can even see two v shaped cuts in the upper right of the nose laceration, which appear to have been caused by the distinctive cutting edges of thylacine molars; molars of a dog are similar in shape, but not as sharp. There was another dead sheep about 300m away from these two, but before I could film it the property owner arrived and told me to leave.

Comment from bounty period trappers and shepherds is universal in describing a characteristic thylacine kill pattern. The best summary of this is offered by Guiler (p.181):

"The throat and chest are opened, then the heart, liver, lungs, and other vascular tissues are eaten together with some other meat, perhaps from the inside of the ham. The nasal tissues are often eaten as well. The kill is "clean" with no unnecessary biting or savaging of the prey"

Guiler (p.183) also suggests a thylacine tried to eat the brain of a sheep. Beside is a 2003 photograph taken by a land owner at a location 80km south from the subject of plates 4 - 7; within a connected area of bushland.

Plate 8. Possible thylacine kill. Note damage to the nasal bones and chest. The crotch was also damaged.



Plate 8 shows exactly the same kill pattern as trappers and shepherds describe. The chest is ripped out, which again would require a lot of force (a broken rib can be seen at the top of the chest opening). There was another victim nearby, killed in the same way; both were perfectly healthy the day before. This is not the way dogs kill sheep. According to the land owner, two or three sheep are killed this way each year during March or April, which may indicate seasonal movement of a lone thylacine. Plate 40 in Chapter 4 shows another sheep kill, which occurred 1km from the subject of Plate 8, approximately one year earlier.

The area surrounding the kills shown in Plates 4 - 7 was intensively searched full time for five months following discovery of the carcasses, including an extensive network of eroded

sandstone caves and overhangs about 3km into the bush, which are again referred to here as Location X. It is obviously important not to disclose the specific location.

> Plate 9. Fallen logs are a constant delay on disused logging tracks.

During that five month search a wide range of other compelling signs of thylacine presence were found as follows.



E-2) Footprints.

A lot of footprints were found in powdery sand underneath the eroded sandstone overhangs. Most were clearly wombat or devil, however the caves had also been visited by large animals which drag their tails, leaving long wavy lines in the sand. These were quadruped (four legged) animals with long legs because there was no shuffling through the powder. Size of the animals was far too big to be Tasmanian devils. There are no goannas in Tasmania.



Plates 10 & 11. Plate 10 suggests different sized animals made these impressions, and Plate 11 shows opposing quadruped footprints either side of the tail marks.

Plate 10 suggests one adult and two young moving together, and Plate 11 shows large distances between footprints on each side of the central tail mark.

The two plates below show the scale of these marks; author's size 11 boot at bottom of Plate 13.



Plates 12 & 13. Scale of tail marks

Plates 14 and 15 below again show the scale of these tail marks and footprints.



Plates 14 & 15. Scale of footprints

Note Plate 14 shows a thylacine footprint pattern (front left) in association with the tail mark beside it to the lower left of the photo. There are no large toenail marks in this print, as would be the case if a wombat was the maker. Possible impression of a raised thumb or 5th toe can be seen near the author's thumb. Thylacine footprint patterns are described in more detail in Chapter 6. Plate 15 is a close up of Plate 16 below.



Plates 16 & 17. Quadruped prints either side of dragged tail marks

Plates 16 and 17 clearly show that the distance between footprints on either side of the tails marks is quite long. These marks do not seem to have been made by a shuffling wombat, a two legged wallaby, a smaller Tasmanian devil, or any kind of introduced quadruped. They were not even made by a three legged dog dragging its bad limb around. The best explanation is that one or more thylacines made these marks. Analysis of old zoo photographs shows that casual thylacines do hold their tail near or on the ground; Guiler (p.174).



Plates 18 & 19. More lines in the sand

Plate 18 shows marks left by a large quadruped animal walking up a steep incline, dragging its tail as it goes, perhaps for support. This plate again clearly shows the legs must be slender to leave such clean impressions either side of the tail mark, and also that these animals are quite long in the body. Plate 19 suggests three of these animals, all different sizes, entering or perhaps leaving the cave at a single point.

If Tasmanian tigers did not make these marks, then I welcome someone else's educated guess. I had actually seen Tasmanian devils make these kind of marks previously, and many of the prints in the caves did appear at the time to have been made by devils. However most of the tail marks and associated prints shown in these images could not have been made by Tasmanian devils, because they are far too big. Wombats often drag their rump in soft material, but with the exception of Plate 12, none of these marks appear to have been created by wombats. Other prints in the plate 12 series were clearly not made by a wombat.

E-3) Scat samples.

The following scat samples were found in the same caves at the same time.



Plates 20 & 21. Large scat samples

Note here that large black, greasy scat samples were found in association with the tail marks. This is consistent with a large predator which eats mainly soft tissues and blood. There was very little bone or hair in these scats. The following were found within a 4km radius of the same caves, in open grassy areas at the edge of the bush.



Plates 22 & 23. Large scat samples



Plates 24 & 25. Possible thylacine scat and dissection.

Plates 24 & 25 show part of a large scat found near the caves, and also a close-up of the same piece dissected. Note there is very little bone, and not much hair inside the scat. All hair inside the scat is short, light coloured and fairly fine – this may in fact be the animal's own hair, ingested as it licked itself. Minimal bone and hair in the scat indicates the diet did not favour those things. Devil scats are usually full of both hair and bone.

E-4) Nests in caves.

Plates 26 & 27 below show two angles of a "nest" in the back of one of these caves.



Plates 26 & 27. Suspected thylacine nest or sleeping spot - scale of the nest hollow was more than 1m across

Note in Plates 26 and 27 that a lot of sand had been pushed up to make a large hollow mound, then bedding material has been collected from outside the cave and placed in the hollow. Again this was found in the same cave area as the tail marks/prints, and large black scats. Wombats do make this kind of nest, but usually in tight holes – not open chambers such as this.

Paddle claims to have the only photograph of a thylacine lair, taken in 1902 (p.61), which is described as a collection of nesting material in a shallow sandstone cave in the eastern forests. Paddle also mentions comment by others that the tiger made nests of grass, fern fronds or moss, and that zoo captives carried hay in their mouths to make nests.

Plates 28 and 29 show a collection of bones/scat which was found a distance of four metres from the nest mound above.



Plates 28 & 29. Bones and scat samples in association with the nest of Plates 26 & 27.

The bones appear to be an adult wombat femur, ribs, and also collar bones. Again the scats are large and black. Does this mean an adult wombat carcass was dragged back to this nest mound?

Finally Plate 30 shows large scratch marks on rocks outside the same cave, which suggest large animals with relatively sharp claws have repeatedly moved in and out of the cave over long periods of time; some of the older scratches are covered over by lichen.



Plate 30. Claw marks on rocks outside the cave Plate 31. Possible adult thylacine footprint; front left. Main pad is toward the upper left of the photo

Plates 31 - 33 show footprints which were found within a 4km radius of the nest cave above. Note that Plate 31 shows a raised thumb to the lower left of the print – the impression appears darker in the image, but it was actually not as deep as the other toe impressions. This raised thumb only shows when a thylacine treads in deep, soft material. The same raised fifth toe can possibly be seen in Plate 14 near the author's thumb.



Possible juvenile thylacine footprints from the same series: Plate 32; front left, Plate 33; rear left

Below are the same images with outlines drawn on the prints.



Plates 34 & 35. Prints with outlines shown



Plate 36. Comparison of print patterns

Beside are the same outlines placed next to the established thylacine print pattern of Guiler (p.52).

Comparison of Plates 34 & 35 with Plate 36 clearly demonstrates one reason why I believe those footprints were made by a Tasmanian tiger. The technique of tracing print casts or photos using a clear plastic film, then laying the tracings over the pattern of Guiler (p.52), is the best way I have found to determine the validity of prints.

There is only one other published description of thylacine footprints; drawn as an information flyer by James Malley/Jeremy Griffiths, and shown in Smith. The Malley print description is effectively the same as Guiler (p.52). Few would disagree the footprints shown in Plates 32 & 33 match the known thylacine pattern, but do not match patterns of the other animals shown in Plate 37 below. However



Plate 37. Other print tracings from Guiler (p.52)

identification of thylacine footprints is never based on tracings alone. The layout of the prints on the ground, distance between each foot, and attitude of the animal, all give further clues to the subject's identity. In the case of Plates 32 & 33 all of these clues pointed only to thylacine.

Plate 51 in Chapter 6 shows plaster casts of probable juvenile thylacine prints found in a different part of Tasmania.

So does the Tasmanian tiger still exist? Of course it does.

I am sure there will be a lot of people who think I hoaxed some of this evidence, but there won't be many who think I hoaxed all of it. Read the books and you will see that everything in this chapter fits known indicators of thylacine existence, but is not consistent with signs of any other species. There are no dog footprints shown from location X because I have never found any there. People who have publicly said the thylacine does not exist are challenged to compare these patterns, then now say publicly that the footprints shown in this book were not made by Tasmanian tigers. How dare academics claim the thylacine to be extinct, without ever setting foot in the bush to look for it.

Of course I say to you that nothing in this book has been hoaxed. So then the question is "why haven't I tried filming with automatic cameras in those sandstone caves?" In fact I did exactly that, full time for five months; lugging car batteries through the bush, disguising cameras, performing running repairs to chewed power packs and leads, and resetting the print beds etc. etc.

However I did not film a thylacine. The reason presumably being that my presence had

scared them off, they could see or smell the cameras, or that they could see the infra-red light (which was invisible to the human eye). Perhaps the presence of other humans in the area had disturbed them, or perhaps they had simply moved somewhere else. Many searchers describe this as a ghost species, and I would certainly agree.

Plate 38. IR night vision motion activated video camera mounted on a ledge on the cave roof; battery to the right, camera to the left.



This is a bonus section. If you would like to believe the tiger still exists, then here is a logical path you can take.

A) **Definitely extinct** - zero evidence to support that. Not a good judgment given the literature and subproof evidence - scientific or otherwise. It is more logical to go to level B.

B) Probably extinct - fair judgment on base information, but with a deeper analysis you must accept that it is physically possible for the species to exist. There are plenty of reasons why it can still exist, but not one reason why it cannot. The main reason why people think the Tasmanian tiger is probably extinct (no irrefutable evidence for 70 years) has been rebutted in this chapter, and other intelligent people (dedicated fieldworkers; true experts) are saying that the species is definitely still extant. Hundreds of unrelated people keep saying they have seen Tasmanian tigers. These are intelligent adults, from all walks of life, with no reason to lie. Anyone who knows the subject will know that sub-proof evidence shown in this book is compelling. With these things in mind it makes more sense to at least give the tiger a 50/50 fighting chance.

C) Neutral 50/50 chance - good judgment, but this is an important issue for all Australians; you have accepted here that a magnificent and valuable animal species, which the whole world seems to think is extinct, now has a 50/50 chance that it is still there! If so then it logically must be on the very edge of extinction. For the sake of the species itself, with a 50 percent chance it still exists, you should take a proactive mind-set, and work on the premise that it probably still exists. If others do the same then the concept will grow in the community, thylacine existence may be taken seriously, and something might actually be done to help the species.

There is the jump which is not entirely logical; to move from taking a neutral stance to a belief that the thylacine probably still exists. There is no irrefutable evidence to support that jump, and yet the jump can easily be made, for that is what it means to be human; the ability to recognise a cause worth believing in, and to trust at least some of the sub-proof evidence available from so many sources.

D) Probably does still exist - if you accept that the thylacine probably does still exist, then why not go & look for it? If you have the drive and wit, then there is a chance you will see it as I have. Then you will understand as more do than you know, that the Tasmanian tiger is definitely not extinct.

E) **Definitely not extinct** - to my knowledge at least not until December 2003. Once you have seen the animal for yourself, and you know that it can happen, then sighting reports made by others are seen in a totally different light.

The next chapter is a direct copy of sections of a Recovery Action Plan which was prepared during 2002 in readiness for rediscovery of the Tasmanian tiger. I was very close to obtaining irrefutable proof - there was a time (three years ago) when I was certain that was only days away. The following Action Plan originally had sections discussing behaviour, psychology and distribution, but I found I was repeating myself, so those sections have been removed from the Action Plan and included as full chapters later on. Part of the Action Plan is also shown in Appendix 1. The "Address to the Nation" is still memorised just in case.

It will be demonstrated in Chapter 9 that the Tasmanian government currently has no formal action plan in place ready to deal with rediscovery of the thylacine should that occur. If government departments or employees do have a formal action plan, but are keeping that secret from the general public while also declaring the species extinct, then I believe that must be a crime.

TNPWS authorities and museum curators openly ridicule private thylacine searchers; referring to them as "amateurs", or "true believers" etc. (Documentary Video). I challenge any of these so called authorities to demonstrate half the professionalism and logical organisation of a thylacine issue as that shown in Chapter 2/Appendix 1.