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978-0-521-53154-2 - The Last Tasmanian Tiger: The History and Extinction of the Thylacine

Robert Paddle

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# The Last Tasmanian Tiger

## THE HISTORY AND EXTINCTION OF THE THYLACINE

This book is the most complete and up-to-date examination of the history and extinction of one of Australia's most enduring folkloric beasts – the thylacine, otherwise affectionately known as the Tasmanian tiger. Bob Paddle challenges conventional theories explaining the behaviour and eventual extinction of the thylacine, arguing that rural politicians used the Tasmanian tiger as a scapegoat to protect local agricultural enterprise from the consequences of mismanagement. After the population of thylacines was decimated through a government bounty scheme, ineffective political action by scientists finally resulted in the extinction of a once proud species. Paddle also uncovers a deeper intellectual snobbery that set the scene for the thylacine's eventual extinction. *The Last Tasmanian Tiger* offers new perspectives on the subjective nature of scientific investigation and the politics of preservation.

Bob Paddle's background is in the study of animal behaviour and the history and philosophy of science. He currently lectures in Psychology at Australian Catholic University. This is his first book.

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In affectionate memory of two musical primates:

Ian Stewart (1938–85)

and

Lewis Brian Hopkin Jones (1942–69)

*I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls.*

Job 30: 29

*the world is full of light and life,*

*and the true crime is not to be interested in it.*

A. S. Byatt

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## Notes on referencing, dates and measures

- x To help distinguish between published and unpublished source material in the Bibliography, in-text citations for unpublished source material are presented in day/month/year, for example, an interview conducted on 25 January 1981 is rendered 25/1/1981.

It is not uncommon for the age of young marsupials to be recorded, not from their date of birth, but from the date of their independence from the pouch. However, ages given in this text (quotations aside) are always reckoned from time of birth.

Monetary amounts are presented in the original sterling measures of pounds.shillings.pence, such that £4.12.6 refers to four pounds, twelve shillings and sixpence. There were 12 pennies in one shilling, and 20 shillings in one pound. The relative value of the £1 government bounty payment that ran from 1888–1909 may be determined by considering that the salary for the ‘tiger man’ employed at Woolnorth in 1903 was only £20 per annum.

Lengths and weights for historical data are reported in their original imperial units (with metric equivalents in brackets). For comparison: 1 inch = 2.54 cm; 1 foot = 30.48 cm; 1 yard = 0.91 m; 1 mile = 1.61 km; and 1 acre = 0.41 ha. One pound weight (1 lb) = 0.45 kg.