

# *The Haunt of the Marsupial Wolf*



*Compiled  
by*

*Sid Slee*

~~to~~ Warren Jarey  
E.P.A.

THE HAUNT OF THE MARSUPIAL WOLF

J. Alca  
"Killele"  
Joongail<sup>wh</sup>  
Via Busselton

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Busselton, W.A. 6280

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# Thylacine — The Marsupial Wolf

With our 200th year just around the corner I dedicate this booklet to an animal which has by its cunning not been documented, and to the people who do not wish to know about it.

The information I gathered over the first forty years came from within the confines of our farm boundary fence.

While I neither hold a degree in zoology or even profess to be a writer I am trying to get an important message across.

After reading this story I hope to convince you that the *Thylacinus* or *Thylacine* (technical name) is still alive and well on the mainland of Australia.

Personal experience, reports and the sightings that have occurred over many years and the numerous telephone calls that have come to us from all areas of Australia, leave no doubt that many other people are aware of its existence as well.

These are amazing and fascinating animals.

The thylacine is Australia's largest carnivorous marsupial with given "nick-names" of "Tiger or Wolf".

It was supposed to have disappeared from the mainland of Australia thousands of years ago, but this is not so.

The female thylacines carry up to 3 or 4 young in a rear opening pouch. Colours vary from light cream through to jet black, and stripes are not always predominant.

It has 46 teeth in its mouth which includes two extra sets of crushing teeth compared to a dog and two extra vertebrae in its neck. With an 180 degree opening of its jaws the wolf is capable of chewing a kangaroo's head off. It has five toes on its front feet and four on its rear. It can stand on its rear legs and actually hop off like a kangaroo, then drop back to all fours. Its habits are usually nocturnal and very shy of man.

My father took up our present farm land at the inception of "Group Settlement" toward the end of 1922, adjoining the State forest at Yoongarillup.

Prior to this area being surveyed into farming lots it was a large pastoral lease stretching from Wonnerup in the north, to Acton Park in the south, there was a gate across the Nannup Road out by the cemetery to stop the cattle wandering into Busselton. They could wander east as far as they liked to go.

This lease was run for some time by the Reilly family. They in later years used to tell my parents that whenever they wanted their cattle they were always found in the thickets at the bottom of the twelve mile hill on what is now our property, because of the good water and the palatable scrub that grew there. This I believe was also an attraction for the large number of kangaroos and the other small marsupials which abounded there, and of course their predators.

With the coming of "Group Settlement" the clearing was done with hand tools, the axe and mattock and of course the draught horse. The going was very slow and hard. No sooner was the land laid down to pasture, then we were inundated with large numbers of kangaroos; their persistence was unbelievable. One Spanish settler who had lived here some time before my parents used to say that with the coming of the "Group Settlement", there was a marked improvement in their meat.

He lived exclusively on a diet of kangaroo and pumpkin.

When I was very young, before there was any die-back in the timber around home, the gullies and hillsides were lush green thickets and what is now poor clay-pan country down below our house were thickets of paperbark, tea tree and banksia intermingled with blackboys, grass trees, scrub and reeds that were impossible to penetrate except where there were animal pads to follow.

The whole country was fresh and young.

In 1936 in an effort to catch whatever was responsible for stealing our chickens, my father set traps in front of our chicken house, and one morning, by hurricane lamp, was surprised to see he had caught a strange, long legged cat like creature. It made a type of hissing noise at him before pulling its foot off and disappeared into the dark.

On one occasion in 1940, while I was going to investigate where a shooter, late one evening said he thought he had shot a fox, found to my surprise a dead creature on the edge of one of the thickets on our property. I knew although I had never seen an animal at this time, like this before and although it lacked the black transverse stripes, this part dog part cat and part kangaroo was a marsupial wolf. It was longer and thinner than a fox with light yellow biscuit coloured hair one inch long covering its body and a stiff almost hairless tail which was darker in colour.

In the years that were to follow the kangaroo population seemed to steadily increase in numbers, and as we didn't own a rifle and being war-time, they were unobtainable, I took matters into my own hands and set snares on our fences to reduce their numbers and earn a few bob by selling their skins. In this day and age it





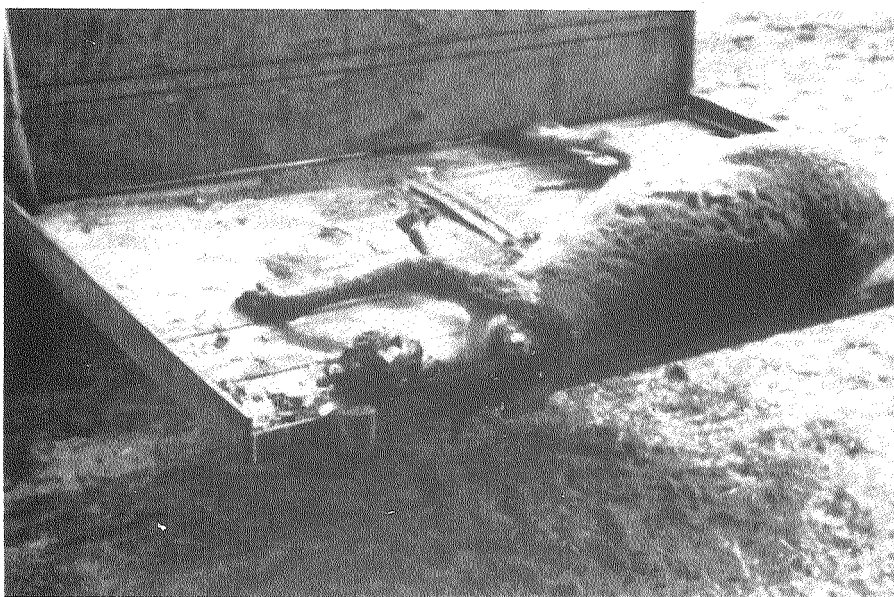
*Kangaroo killed and eaten by marsupial wolf and foxes.*



*Killed by thylacine below dairy, 27.1.1986.*



*Killed by thylacine below dairy, 27.1.1986. Note the long back pad near camera lens cover.*



*Kangaroo's head partially eaten by marsupial wolf.*

may seem a drastic measure to take, but just prior to this half the farms in the district were vacant, people had walked off, and just to survive, drastic measure were needed.

It was during this period that I saw the thylacine or marsupial wolf many, many times around the two thickets that were left in our paddock when doing the rounds of my snares, usually in the early morning. Often I would see one momentarily turn and disappear when walking along the animal pads in the bush on our property.

To my surprise in 1943 I caught an all black thylacine in one of my snares. It was large, sleek and shiny with a few flecks of white hair on its body. I could only assume that these had grown on old scars.

Again there was no mistaking the creature, unfortunately there was nothing I could do with the remains, so I just left them in the bush nearby. I believe it was a male although apart from making jokes about it no one was interested anyway.

Occasionally I would find dead kangaroos around the hills on our farm and used to think some disease had killed them, until one day on closer examination I found they had been savagely mauled, although, their skin had not been broken. I also believe the marsupial wolf was responsible for scratching sticks and dirt over some of the kangaroo carcasses I used to leave in the bush after removing their skins.

In 1972 I found three grey brush all savagely mauled on the same night near a waterhole in our paddock. Since that time this little marsupial has disappeared from our area when previously it had always been plentiful, leading me to believe the thylacine was building up in numbers.

The two thickets in our paddock were the home of the thylacine in the dryer parts of the year as they always retreated into them when I approached, they were half grown animals usually. The bushes they were living under were the pampas grass type bush which used to spread up to twenty feet in diameter and grow over six feet tall and when a few of these bushes grew together they made a perfect hideout which was impossible to penetrate except for creatures like the tiger snake.

If one of these creatures died under one of these bushes they would never be detected and with a fire every few years, all trace would be wiped out anyway. This is the reason I feel the remains are never found. I found in later years this pampas bush always seems to be associated with the strange creature.

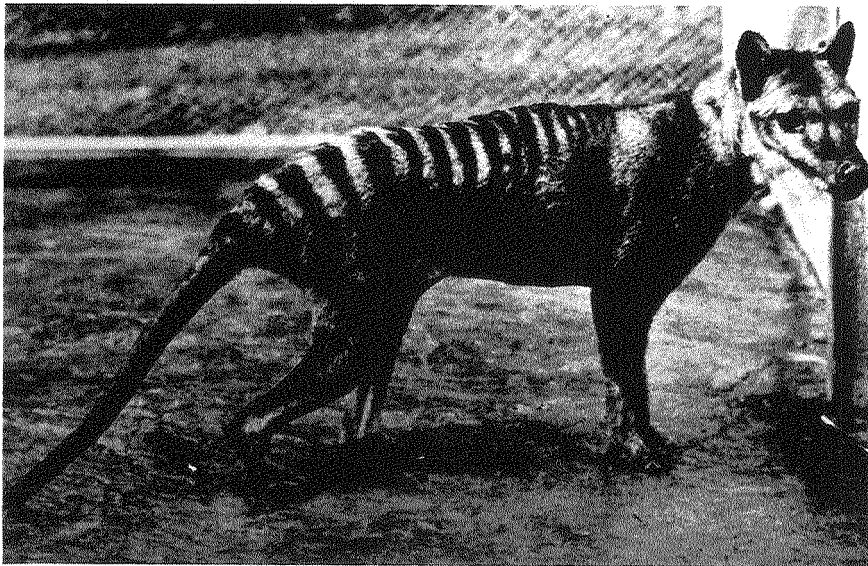
Our cattle dogs would never go near these thickets even to round up cattle. I firmly believe the thylacine made some sort of noise inaudible to the human ear to warn creatures away from their habitat, as quite frequently when I passed these thickets, I had a strange feeling of not only being watched, but the hair on the back of my neck used to start playing tricks it was a most unusual sensation that has never happened to me since, although the marsupial wolf never gave me any cause to be afraid of it.

One morning when going around my snares there was a noise in the bush just ahead and a large marsupial wolf come out on to the paddock not twenty feet in

front of me. This was the best sighting I have ever had. It looked at me momentarily then turned and took off like a kangaroo with its feet about a foot above the ground as if to gain speed. In doing so it was so close that it kicked gravel stones over my feet. After about a chain it started loping down the paddock edge and as it did so it looked back at me, as its head turned to the right its tail moved to the left to keep perfect balance. It was a most amazing sight as this animal kicks both back pads out together as a rabbit does.

I watched it for about fifteen chains to the end of the paddock. At a distance my thoughts were how much it resembled a mountain lion, although in those days there had never been any talk of cougars at Cordering or escaped circus animals. Its body was light yellow, around its eyes and lips were a thin strip of dark chocolate. From its ears down its back to its tail was a strip of chocolate coloured hair with six or seven various length stripes (chocolate colour) over its back leg (I only saw one side). Its tail was dark and appeared to be hairless, its overall length would have been close to seven feet. It was tall and thin but muscular and I could only assume by its size that it was a male. Being confronted by such an animal momentarily the last thing I thought of was its sex.

Their existence is justified by the footprints we find from time to time in our area although the actual sightings now are rare. Our dogs scratching on our back door to be let into the house at night. Our dogs never come into the house as a rule.



*The only resemblance between a cougar and a thylacine are the ears.*

The movement of kangaroos from one area to another, nothing will shift a large number of kangaroos from their natural area to another quicker and keep them away than the presence of a marsupial wolf in the area.

Our cattle are usually very quiet but when this animal is in the area they will mill around in a tight mob and stampede through fences under extreme conditions.

We believe the thylacine was responsible for killing two twelve month old steers in August 1982. We found them in a corner of a drain and a six wire fence, each animal was half way through the fence one was under the bottom wire and one was on the bottom wire between the same two fence posts. I would have been battling to get them in such a position with the aid of a tractor as the bottom wire was less than six inches off the ground. The strange thing was there were fifty young poddies in the same paddock, but these two older ones were the only ones that would panic and run.

We also had seven nine month old heifers killed over a fortnight period in a paddock next to our house during the second world war. There have been other cases of young animals found dead forced into branches of fallen trees in the early days.

All these events would have been forgotten had it not been for me knowing of the presence of the thylacine. Had we been running sheep over the last sixty years our losses financially would have been astronomical from this animal. Two of my neighbours have found large sheep dead with their head and neck partially eaten quite recently.

In 1980 we used to see one of these creatures on the tree line a hundred yards above our house every evening at dusk. We would go into the house where my wife was preparing tea. The prevailing winds would be blowing towards the animal, within a short time the dogs would start barking and we knew by the way they were carrying on the thylacine was just outside the garden fence, on opening the front door the dogs would dart between our legs and start barking from within the house. They were terrified and do not usually come inside.

Had a small infant been left in a tent in our yard its life would have been in grave danger. (Yes there is another animal on the mainland of Australia besides the dingo capable of carrying off a baby.)

We shot a kangaroo to use as bait to catch this creature, but owing to the lateness of the evening we left it in the car trailer right outside my bedroom window. Next morning we found the kangaroo on the ground on the house side of the trailer with its head and neck eaten off. The rest of the kangaroo was still intact. Alongside was a small piece of jaw with the large front teeth still in it, all the skin, ears and eyes were eaten and the kangaroo was left so clean a surgeon couldn't have done a better job.

We then found foot prints in the soft soil on the road adjoining our property.

There were the large footprints we measured four feet eight inches from the

first to the fourth print, this was a large animal. There was a smaller set of prints I believe to be a female as directly behind these was three or four sets of very small prints obviously young ones. The whole family was there and the prints were excellent, so I rang the local newspaper to come and photograph them, but they wouldn't.

In the summer of '82-'83 we used to find two sets of thylacine footprints in the sand in the lane behind our dairy almost every morning coming to the water trough. The footprints were very plain the largest set had a stride of sixteen inches this set us back on our heels, and for a while my family would not venture out after dark. One morning, early, my daughter's horse was backed up in the corner of the yard, snorting very loudly and very disturbed. It was just light enough to see her from the house. The horse was not harmed but later we found the footprints as usual.

We tried to find someone with the right camera to set it up in the lane, but were unable to find anyone with the right equipment at the time. It was at this time that we met Kevin Cameron, a very eminent bushman and tracker with his two heeler bull terrier cross dogs, Sam and Lobo.

Kevin's dogs had baled up a thylacine some time earlier. It stood on its back legs like some prehistoric creature and made a coughing noise before breaking away as it saw Kevin approach.

He described it as having several stripes, a big head and a long straight tail.

In recent times Kevin was responsible for photographing a thylacine and is to be congratulated in doing so.

Within a short time of arriving at our property on his first visit, he had plaster casts of numerous different thylacine footprints, all within close proximity to home, and had detected the unusual animal smell associated with it.

On showing this evidence to one government department we were informed that we had deformed dogs in our area.

Tom Spence of the South Perth Zoo congratulated Kevin on the quality of the prints and said the only other animal with similar prints was the cheetah.

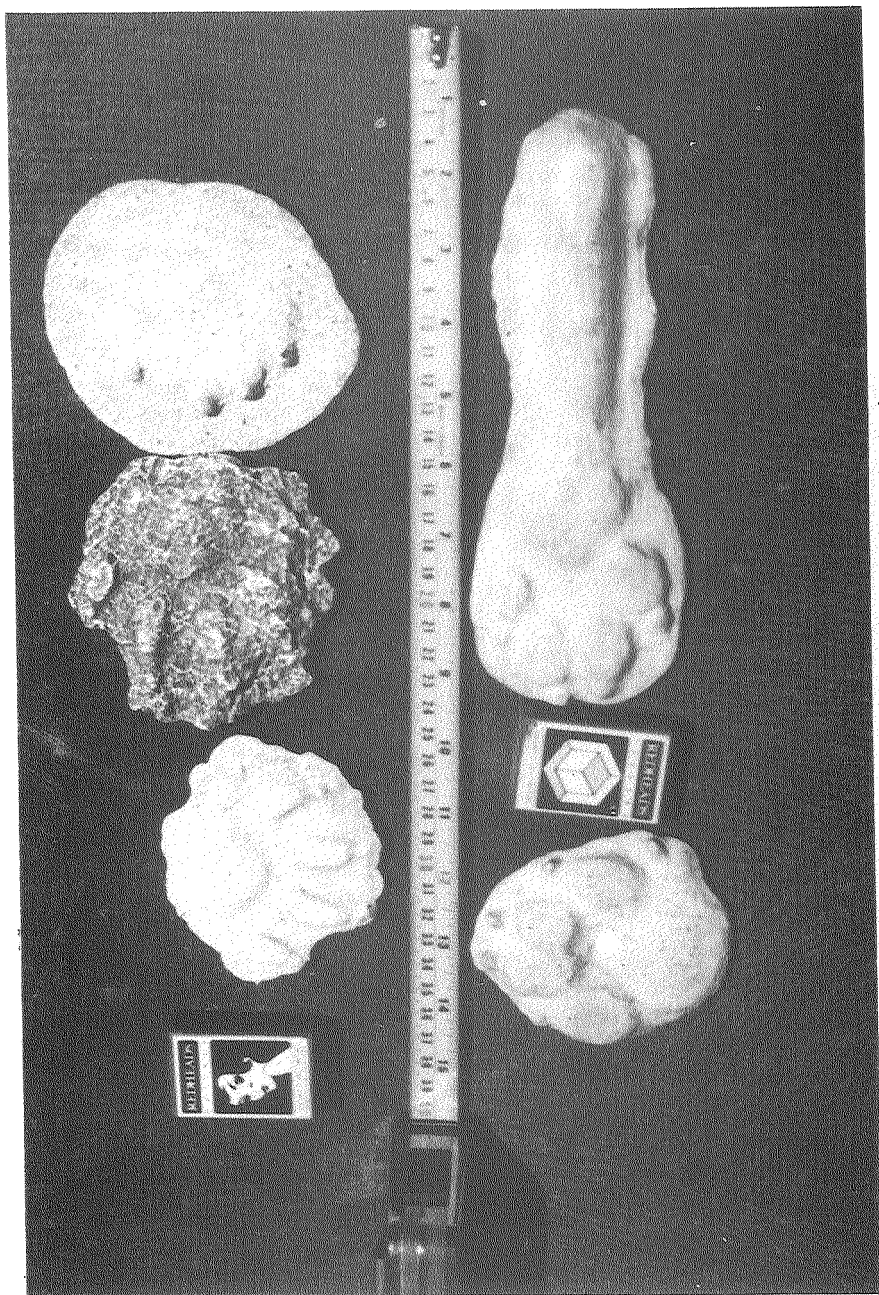
I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kevin Cameron for the effort and help he gave us over this period, his knowledge of the bush made him a pleasure to work with.

I have heard the marsupial wolf call in the bush behind our house on several occasions (a soft twin syball call) exactly the same call I heard on a documentary "The Big Country" ran on the Tasmanian Tiger on TV a number of years ago.

There is a gentleman who lives out towards Nannup who has heard the call and can mimic it very well.

Apart from the hissing noise, the one made when dad caught it in a trap years ago, there is the spine chilling scream made possibly at mating time. This makes your blood run cold when heard at close distance at night. This scream has been heard by a few people in this district, one such incident was the family who lived in





*Thylacine footprints taken from nearby.*

an old farm house which I owned three miles down the road and the people who lived next door.

On investigating next day we found the tell tale footprints in their vegetable garden.

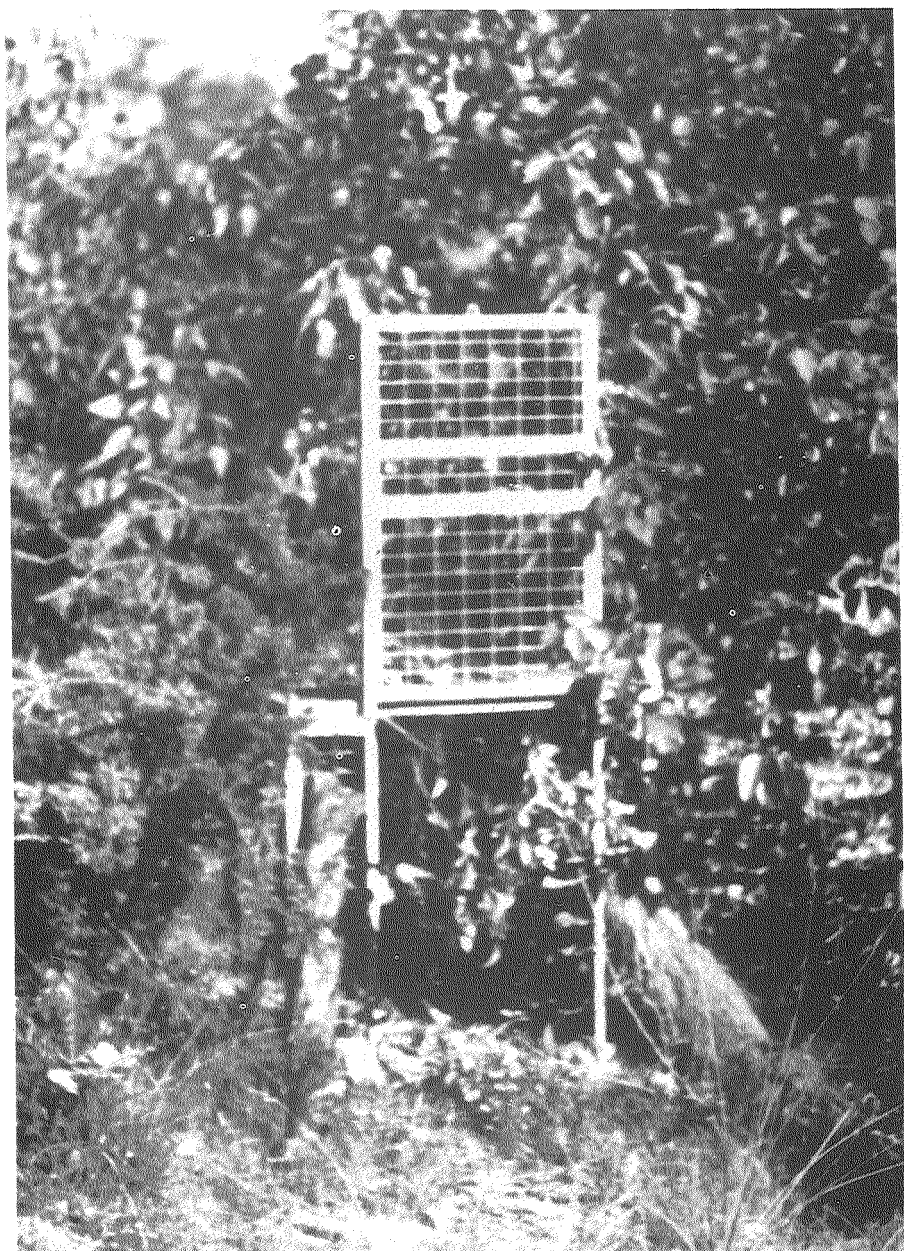
Later when I went to examine a hay crop on this property, I disturbed a thylacine in a small patch of docks where it appeared to be watching the neighbours turkeys ten chains away. It ran towards the turkeys for about two chains then in a flash it just disappeared into the hay crop again. It was dark biscuit on its back. I did not pursue it because of its size.

I believe the steely blue eyes we see from time to time in our spotlights are from the black thylacine and the amber eyes are from the predominantly yellow or



*Kangaroo head eaten by thylacine on roadside.*





*One of our cages set.*



*A disturbing sight in an area where we know the thylacine lives.*

yellow and chocolate ones. They are set wider apart than a dog or fox and always move off very quickly when spotted.

Around 1950-1953, we had dingoes in our area and all through the rabbit era I lost track of the marsupial wolf, although I used to find occasionally, large rabbits with their heads eaten off. I have since wondered if the thylacine was responsible.

Off course I was at an age when I spent most of my spare time around town instead of wandering around the bush.

I again spotted a thylacine one evening in 1965 when going to our rain water tank. It was standing watching me with its nose to the ground. I ran into the house to get my family but on returning it had vanished.

We occasionally find kangaroos with their heads eaten off, although I am sure they do not live on this diet exclusively. Kevin on one of his trips found where a thylacine was living in a thicket which was crossed by a well used kangaroo pad. His dogs disturbed a thylacine there eating a freshly killed kangaroo in daylight.

He brought the headless kangaroo back and kept it in the freezer for several weeks, trying to get someone to analyse the saliva and hair samples found at this spot, but again no one was interested. The kangaroo was later skinned and found to have teeth and claw marks all down its spine, Kevin fed it to his dogs.

On returning weeks later Kevin's dogs baled up a female thylacine on a log in the same area. It had a large pouch obviously carrying young, and black transverse

stripes. It had a long neck as it kept lunging out at the dog before escaping unharmed. Because of its conditoin Kevin would not let the dogs pursue it any further.

The kangaroos remains found in this area had been killed weeks apart.

Four of the GWN news team came out and investigated first hand the area and saw the fresh footprints of a five toed creature in a creek bed.

In Kevin's next visit early one morning saw what he and his friend, believed to be the same female sitting on a kangaroo eating its head off on a roadside. The kangaroo had been killed by a passing motorist the night before.

Reporter from the West Australian, Alex Harris and a cameraman, came and stayed, and we took them out to an area and found fresh footprints for them.

Another time Kevin and my son Ian found where a thylacine had been doggedly following a herd of feral pigs, obviously after the young ones.

It was here where a piece of a puzzle fell into place for me. My father over a long period of time used to have whole litters of baby pigs just disappear at night without trace. The sows used to be very disturbed in the morning when the young disappeared and we used to think she must have eaten them. Now on looking back I am sure the thylacine was responsible for the loss.

We have three cages which we have baited from time to time. Apart from the fact that we are dealing with a very cunning animal it is very time consuming and as dairy farmers, we just do not have the time.



*Slee corner, Vasse Highway.*

Then there is the feral cat which does not grow anywhere as big, it does not have the wide square bottom jaw, or the long dog like nose, or the stiff almost hairless tail which is thicker where it joins the body, or the unusual back legs. They haven't the strange craving for kangaroo or sheep blood as a marsupial wolf has. A feral cat is a feral cat!

As time goes on I hear of more and more sightings, not only in this district or the south-west, but in other parts of Australia as well. It makes me realise just how remarkable this creature is, not to be documented in 200 years.

I have been trying to inform various government departments over a period of forty years that this animal exists here, and have written no end of letters to the papers, some of which are never published.

The marsupial wolf is here in this district and in fact is increasing in numbers but because of their nocturnal lifestyle are rarely seen. The information given to us by people who have seen this creature would alone convince anyone that the thylacine exists here, but I have found the departments concerned very disappointing.

No doubt if one is caught dead or alive it would be confiscated by the authorities and of course the books on Australian fauna will then have to be altered.

Yes, there are wolves in the Witcher Ranges — "Marsupial Wolves".

If you have any doubt in my integrity, just remember:

YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD

S. Slee,  
Hillside Farm,  
Yoongarillup.

# **Copies of some of Kevin Cameron's reports**

Report from KEVIN CAMERON, Hunter and Tracker

Friday, 1.4.1983

Arrived at the farm and within an hour of searching, found a track of a fived toed creature. Witnessed by Kevin Cameron senior, Kevin Cameron junior, Ian, Garry and Shane.

I, Kevin Cameron senior, believed it to be that of an unknown animal. Track was too poor for casting.

Saturday, 2.4.1983

I, Kevin Cameron, decided to use sand traps in this area (farm boundary) and placed 28 sand traps and used several dead animals as bait in this area.

Sunday, 3.4.1983

K. C. senior and K. C. junior patrolled area of sand traps with good results and found several perfect tracks of a five toed creature very large in size. Made casts of tracks one front foot and one back foot with pad down. Back foot with four toes only. Several other casts were made but tracks were blurred.

Very unusual animal smell was detected at that time. Dogs were on edge and started working the scent and they were stopped by K. C. senior as he thought it was too soon to make any move at this stage as it may frighten the animal out of the area.

Patrolled further out from sand trap area and discovered tracks in pine plantation, detected unknown faeces and collected samples from the edge of a thicket in the middle of the plantation.

Monday, 4.4.1983

Kevin Senior and Kevin Junior patrolled area and detected several tracks, no sighting of animal. Evening patrol picked up one perfect track and several distorted tracks of a five toed creature, smaller in size than the first one detected. Made several casts of other animals in area including fox, roo, emu, cat, crow and dog.

Tuesday, 5.4.1983

Patrolled area, early morning; no tracks and no sightings. Left for Perth to see Tom Spence at South Perth Zoo who examined the tracks and was very impressed with the quality of the casts. The only other animal with similar tracks was a cheetah. He advised us to be very cautious of the animal because of its size. All Government Laboratories were closed we were told on that day. We then returned to the farm. Picked up an extra dog in Perth, because of the danger of the unknown animal.

Wednesday, 6.4.1983

Patrolled area and picked up tracks of a five toed creature, but were too distorted to cast. Patrolled area in evening, no sighting no new tracks.

Thursday, 7.4.1983

Patrolled area morning and evening; no sighting; no tracks.

Friday, 8.4.1983

Patrolled area in morning, no sighting, no tracks detected, afternoon patrol of sand trap area, detected sign of a five toed creature, in the evening patrolled in a new area and picked up signs of another animal of the same type, tracked him with dogs for a mile on sandy road, found signs of the animal laying down on road, he then veered off into the bush. Where the road crossed a dry creek bed it was detected scratching and eating moss growing on the road. Too dark to track any further with dogs. Same unusual animal smell detected. Returned later that night with spotlight searching for animal and detected one fox, one roo, area very quiet and scarce of wild life.

Saturday, 9.4.1983

Patrolled area back of farm, no sightings or tracks of animal. Returned to the new area of the previous day. Kevin senior got the dogs to work on the scent immediately. Kevin junior and I. S., and the dogs were tracking the animal for an hour, and Sam located a freshly killed kangaroo twenty five feet from the road. The kangaroo was decapitated; its head was completely crushed and eaten, except for one ear which appeared to have been bitten off by a sharp toothed animal, also one forearm was crushed and eaten. The dead roo was still warm and the blood was still

weeping from the upper part of the body. There were no ants or blow flies on the kill when discovered. Taken photos of the kill area. All that was left of the head was one ear and few chips of bone which are believed to be a piece of rib, or chip of skull and chip of vertebrae. Three hairs believed to be that of the animal and also faeces believed to be that of the animal also, were collected for lab. testing and also main body of roo.

Kevin junior and I. S. continued tracking with the dogs and gave chase which continued for three hours, dogs had animal bailed up for a short period, no sighting by Kevin junior or I. S. Animal was using elusive tactics by leading us away and doubling back to the same area continually.

I believed it had young in the area. The area was a dry creek bed with moist patches and was very heavy undergrowth, dogs were exhausted and called off the search.

I Kevin Cameron, decided to return to Perth for laboratory tests and photos and footprints to be identified.

Without my sons help and I. S. it would not have been possible for this work that was carried out as I, Kevin senior, have a knee injury. I would like to recommend that the animal be tried to be taken alive for further study.

Kevin Joseph Cameron,  
27 Casserley Avenue,  
Girrawheen.  
April 11, 1983

## JANUARY, 1984

12.1.1984

Arrived at farm at midnight after blowing head gasket on Suzuki and had to be towed 21km by Ian.

13.1.1984

Ian, Kevin, Shane and dogs (Lobo and Sam) left home at 6.30am and traveled to area where we located the thylacine and a dead kangaroo on previous trip. Checked road with Lobo right through. At first creek we located two good prints, both sides of the road. Continued on to second crossing and left vehicle one hundred yard from there.

Kevin and Lobo then continued and picked up strong scent and gave chase to thylacine which leapt up a log about 30 feet in front of Kevin. The thylacine made a snapping noise and snarled at dog (Lobo) ducking back on log to avoid dogs jaw. K. C. senior radioed back to vehicle to release Sam. While K. C. was doing this the thylacine leapt off the log and make a break for it. Lobo gave chase snapping at it

for about 50 yards. K. C. saw head and shoulders through bush several times. We rang GWN news team who examined site and footprints and took photos. Plaster casts were then taken and they turned out very well. Five toes on front feet and four toes on back feet. As we believe this animal to be carrying young it was pursued no further. It was believed that there were two animals in this area as the dogs went in two different directions following scent.

Checked out another site in the afternoon where thylacine was seen previously.

14.1.1984

Left home at 6.00am and travelled to the area again to check for thylacine. Proved negative. Travelled countless miles. In one area there was plenty of wildlife (pigs, kangaroos, emus, water fowls, ducks, pigeons, parrots, cockatoos, etc). Flowing water excellent for this time of year. Checked out farm area in vicinity.

Friday, 20.1.1984

Kevin Cameron arrived at farm at 8.00pm.

Saturday, 21.1.1984

Set out at 6.00am for "pig area" and found fresh diggings and footprints which we believe belong to a female thylacine. Returned home and set up display in town for the weekend, at Busselton Civic Centre.

(Display was of the prints of different animals for comparison.)

Reporter turned up with photographers in the afternoon. That evening we all went spot lighting for about two hours. We sighted 6-7 kangaroos as well as four foxes and a few rabbits. Nothing unusual. Ian shot two foxes.

Sunday, 22.1.1984

Left at daybreak and proceeded to area of previous weekend. Main party remained with vehicle while K. C. senior searched area with dogs (Sam, Lobo and Minni).

Dogs picked up scent and started to give chase but were called back. Picked up tracks of female thylacine — very fresh and indential to the one found the previous week, indication animal living in the area.

Later we searched and found three small roos with only the hind quarters left, showing top half clearly having been eaten.

The weather on the day was too windy to give chase as you couldn't hear the dogs barking.

Party returned for breakfast, photos and interview.

Went to town and picked up display.

Kevin and Co returned to Perth.





*Kevin and Ian, Sam and Lobo ready for work.*

Saturday, 28.1.1984

Kevin and Angus arrived at farm at 6.30pm.

Decided to go out and cut some wood for an "all wood" trap.

After tea we went out for one hour spotlighting. Picked up a fox, the dogs gave chase and killed it. The dogs had a good workout.

Sunday, 29.1.1984

Left farm before daylight to go out and cut more wood (same area as previous night). Enroute we picked up eyes on the edge of the road (culvert). Stopped car about 45 metres past where the eyes were seen. Left motor running and turned strong torchlight on the animal. Animal sat upright — seemed curious. Told Angus to walk back and see what it was. Eyes were too wide apart to be a fox or cat. Called Angus back realising that it must have been the animal. Immediately led Sam towards the animal. Kevin approached to within 30 metres, where at the animal turned, in full view, and jumped down into creek bed. Sam gave chase but was stopped because it was too dark. Animal was growling and seemed to be in no hurry to get away. It looked like the same animal sighted in previous report. Kevin believes it to be the thylacine!!!

There was a dead roo at the culvert and the head had been eaten. Chip of (skull?) bone and a hair (thylacine?) were found on ground near the headless carcass.

Took photos when it was light.

Once light, we gave chase and followed thylacine tracks and scent to previous area where it was sighted ten days before at close range.

We believe it has a lair in the area, as we have found a lot of dead roos in the same basic area.

## **Description of animal seen on log at 30 feet**

Tail was long, rigid and kangaroo-like; black in colour and on tip of tail it had bristles on either side of flat tip.

Back legs were kangaroo-like except for feet which were dog-like.

From base of tail to head there were several long black stripes, tapering away to smaller ones towards head.

Front shoulders and legs were dog-like.

Neck was very long and its head was large with rounded ears and it had a large mouth.

Pouch like kangaroo which hung very low and appeared to have young — definitely not testicles of male.

Casts were taken of footprints.

Front feet were measured and were  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches across, 3 inches long and had five toes. Pad  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " long,  $1\frac{3}{4}$ " wide, toes approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from pad.

Back foot has four toes  $2\frac{3}{4}$ " long;  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. Back pad  $1\frac{1}{4}$ " long,  $1\frac{3}{4}$ " wide with toes an average of  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from pad.

Animal had light brown body, slightly bigger, but not heavier than Lobo. (Lobo is 4 stone).

A special thanks to Kevin Cameron and my son Ian, who, by their tireless effort, came up with some very interesting facts.

I can recommend them to any government department.

S.S.

## Correspondence on the subject

PO Box 177,  
Busselton, WA,  
18.6.1978

The Honourable Mr MacKinnon,  
Minister for Fisheries and Fauna,  
Dear Sir,

In view of all the reports on feral cats and circus animals and the like, I feel an utter frustration that all efforts to name these strange creatures that exist in the south-west are heading in the wrong direction.

Being neither journalist, zoologist or practical joker, but a dairy farmer, farming profitably, the land taken up by my parents as original group settlers at Yoongarillup in 1922.

I have enclosed a letter which I sent to the "Western Farmer" paper weeks ago, being a true and correct record of my experience over a number of years.

Five years ago a strange creature was frequently seen by people in our district. I then drew a sketch of the creature I caught in 1943 and showed it to two people at Ruabon on separate occasions, they were both sure beyond doubt that this strange creature was what they had seen. There are other people who could be questioned on their sightings.

In 1943 we had no telephone in our area and we only visited Busselton one day per week. I have written to the paper, spoke to the museum and wildlife people and even tried to interest an emminant naturalist on this subject but to no avail.

150 years and no record of such an animal! Why? Because of their habit to survive and also of course the fact they are very rare. This creature will hide and watch you walk right past similar to the grey bush that frequent this area. I was very lucky to see them, of course things changed with the coming of the bulldozer about 1945.

If circus animals were loose in the south-west, I think perhaps their habits would be somehow different enabling them to be seen or caught up with in some way, (I am not suggesting that there are no circus animals loose in the south-west as I do not know), but I do know that the thylacine, although sometimes lacking the conventional stripes, are.

It was during the killing of some sheep one summer evening five years ago my son and I heard the call of the "Tasmanian Tiger" coming repeatedly from the hill behind our house. We heard exactly the same call a few days later on a TV programme "Big Country" where they ran a documentary on the animal. This was the only time we have ever run sheep on our property. We bought a dozen for our freezer.

Please find enclosed an article by C. F. H. Jenkins published in the daily paper recently. This article by the learned gentleman was in my opinion the last straw.

The object of this letter is to ask if your department will obtain a recording of the call of the "Tasmanian Tiger" and have it played on radio or TV a few times so as farmers and people concerned could recognise it when they hear it in the bush. This will at least give proof of their existence eventually. Farmers could also be asked to report to the local Fisheries and Fauna office the sightings of these strange animals. As in the case of the people at Ruabon a few years ago, I felt sure here was a situation where the presence of the thylacine could have been authenticated.

Although they move like a large cat and could be mistaken for a cougar, they are really a dog-like creature when looked at closely.

Yours Truly,

Sid Slee,  
Yoongarillup.

Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife,  
Perth,  
Western Australia,  
June 22, 1978

Mr S. Slee,  
PO Box 77,  
Busselton, 6280,  
Dear Mr Slee,

Your letter of June 18 and newspaper cuttings concerning unidentified animals has been read and noted.

As with all such reports, it has to be pointed out that the arguments about the identity of the animals concerned cannot be settled by hearsay evidence but only by scientific examination of specimens alive or dead.

It is not considered desirable that we should add to speculation by radio or television broadcasts.

Yours faithfully,

P. V. Jones  
Acting Minister for Fisheries  
and Wildlife

98 St Leonard's Ave.,  
Leederville,  
WA, 6007,  
24.11.82

Mr S. F. Slee,  
Box 177, Busselton,  
WA, 6280,  
Dear Mr Slee and Ian,

At last I've managed to get a print done of the Tasmanian Tiger! As I said to you when I visited you, I think what you've been seeing may be a cousin rather than a brother of this fellow, but I guess only time will tell..

I had someone look at the sample of hair we found near your trap, but they maintained it was probably roo or wallaby. It was also, as they pointed out, fairly small sample to be definitive about.

As regards setting up a camera and flash — it's an expensive proposition. It would also require a bit of care as to how it was done. The best suggestion I've heard so far is for some kind of electronic triggering device and perhaps using infrared film — but, again, that's expensive. I'm thinking of perhaps trying to persuade some government body, or perhaps the university, to come to the party. But I won't approach any of those people until you OK the idea.

Once again thanking you for your time and hospitality while I was at Yoongarillup.

With best wishes,

Howard W. Willis

National Geographic Magazine,  
Washington, D.C., 20036  
May 3, 1983  
CATHY NEWMAN  
Editorial Staff

Mr Sid Slee,  
Yoongarillup,  
Busselton,  
Western Australia, 6280,  
Australia,  
Dear Mr Slee,

Thank you so much for taking the time to call and write us about the marsupial wolf in Australia.

Unfortunately, the Geographic is very picture-oriented and I'm afraid such a story would be most difficult to illustrate.

Nonetheless, thank you for your interest in us.

Sincerely,

Cathy Newman,  
Planning Council Specialist,

Western Australian Museum,  
June 2, 1983,

Mr B. K. Bowen,  
Director,  
Department of Fisheries & Wildlife,  
108 Adelaide Terrace,  
Perth, WA 6000,  
Dear Mr Bowen,

I refer to your letter about the unidentified animal reported by Mr Cameron.

Dr Kitchener has now been able to examine the report, the slides and the casts. He has also, independently, been approached by Mr Slee of "Hillside", Yoongaril-lup, on whose property these casts were obtained, and been able to examine further casts reportedly from a similar animal.

I enclose a copy of Dr Kitchener's report. From discussions with him, and Dr Berry, I conclude that on balance the animal responsible for the tracks from which the casts were made seems likely to have been a dog. There is, however, a problem with the position of the dew claw, which appears as a "Blip" at the lower right hand margin of the large cast (at about 4 o'clock). A dew claw so low down on the foot to make an imprint is not a common dog feature.

The additional tracks seen here on May 30 by Dr Kitchener were similar, but smaller. These too possess an apparent dew claw, but are even more anomalous since it is in a more central position on the rear margin of the print. The casts were exceptionally good and well-defined. Dr Kitchener's opinion is that those tracks were from a similar, though smaller, animal.

Museum staff would be happy to assist further in indentifying the animal or animals responsible for such tracks, to review further reports, and even visit the area if necessary but preferably only if a fresh series of tracks — preferably on a reasonably long run — is available. Of course any scats, hair or other concrete evidence should be retained for examination. I should comment, however, that with our other priorities, without additional support, we could not commit Museum staff to an extended search of the area.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on this intriguing problem.

As requested, this letter and your original material is being conveyed by hand to your office.

Yours sincerely,

J. L. Bannister,  
Director.



Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife,  
Grain Pool Building,  
172 St George's Terrace,  
Perth, 6000,  
Western Australia,  
Tel. 321 4241.  
June 16, 19883

Mr K. Wilson, M.L.A.,  
Member for Dianella,  
272 Flinders Street,  
Nollamara, WA 6061  
Dear Mr Keith Wilson,

I am pleased to write further on the subject of reported sightings of an unidentified animal by Mr Kevin Cameron.

Mr Bannister, Director of the Western Australian Museum, has now written to the Director of Fisheries and Wildlife following examination by the Curator of Mammals, Dr Kitchener of the slide, casts and report. I undersand that Mr Cameron has had discussions with Dr Kitchener on the subject.

Mr Bannister concluded that "on balance the animal responsible for the tracks from which the casts were made seems likely to have been a dog". I have attached a copy of Mr Bannister's letter to the Director of Fisheries and Wildlife which draws attention to a problem posed by the position of the dew claw.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Cameron for producing the information on this subject and invite him to take up Mr Bannister's offer to assist further in indentifying the animal or animals responsible for the tracks. The Museum's staff are experts in fauna indentification.

The Director of Fisheries and Wildlife is holding the casts and slide in his office. If Mr Cameron would like them returned could he please contact the Director. Alternatively he may prefer that they be lodged with the Museum. I would appreciate Mr Cameron ringing the Director, Mr Bowen, so that Mr Cameron's wishes in relation to the casts and slide are understood.

Your sincerely,  
H. D. Evans, M.L.A.,  
Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife.

Agriculture Protection Board of Western Australia,  
Jarrah Road, South Perth,  
Western Australia, 6151.  
Telephone 367 0111.  
Telegrams: AGPROTECT, PERTH.

Mr K. Smith,  
Post Office Box 307,  
Busselton, 6280.  
Dear Sir,

Your recent letter expressing concern about the possible presence of a "Tasmanian Tiger" in your area is acknowledged.

The APB does receive reports of unusual animal sightings, and has done so regularly since its inception. Most reports describe large feline animals, however, some have claimed sighting a Tasmanian Tiger. All reports are investigated, and many are followed up far beyond the credibility level of the reports; this is understandable in view of the sensation such a discovery would make. No material evidence has ever been produced to support any of the claims.

Predators do not contribute greatly to sheep mortality in the agricultural areas. Seasonal stress, deficiencies, blowfly strike and toxic factors are greater threats.

Dogs, foxes, crows and eagles are all scavengers with a strong attraction to sheep carcases and are blamed for many more sheep deaths than they actually cause. Of the possible predators, domestic dogs are the greatest threat to sheep. There is no justification to take precaution against possible attacks from Tasmanian Tigers, but you would be wise to keep a close watch on local dogs.

For further advice on this subject, please contact the Regional Officer, Mr M. Sparrow, at the office of the Department of Agriculture, Busselton.

Yours faithfully,

M. T. Sexton,  
Acting Officer In Charge, Control Branch.

8 Troy Avenue,  
Marmion, 6020  
January 16, 1984.

Dear Mr Slee,

I read this morning's "West Australian" with great pleasure and hope that this is the year that it will be proved beyond doubt for everyone what some of us have known all along — that Thylacine is alive and well in W.A.

As promised I'm sending a donation towards expenses — and only wish it was more.

Regard to all concerned — and good hunting!

Yours sincerely,

Freda Carmody.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Thanks Mrs Carmody, your donation was greatly appreciated and the type of inspiration we needed.

## NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Magnet Court or  
PO Box 210, Sandy Bay,  
Tasmania, 7005  
Telegrams: TASPAS  
January 18, 1984

Mr Sid Slee,  
PO Box 177, Busselton,  
Western Australia,  
Dear Sid,

Thank you for your extremely interesting letter. You certainly have some unusual observations which cannot be readily explained. Of particular value is the length of time over which these incidents have been recorded by you.

To address the immediate problem, any direct evidence must be examined. Obviously you already have had some expert assistance. Although we may well come to the same conclusions, we are quite experienced in the matter of deciphering alleged thylacine prints and would be pleased to examine any prints or photos of prints you care to send us. We would also be interested in hearing a tape recording of your neighbours version of the "soft twin syllable" call you described.

I appreciate your problem with time and money to further your ideas and interest. I suggest being extremely careful if you intend capturing one. If there was an accident and one was harmed (or worse) the consequences could be, to say the least, embarrassing. Far better to get a photo. The best procedure would be to establish some pattern of activity and set up a camera instead of a trap. To have any hope of a financial commitment from the government this sort of evidence would be needed.

The Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service takes all alleged sightings seriously and the small size of the State allows us to respond, even if it is only by interview. Often we examine the place reported for hard evidence but our regular high rainfall usually frustrates these efforts.

The work reported in the enclosed book was done using private money (from the World Wildlife Fund) administered by the Service. At the moment the Service cannot commit large amounts of resources to investigating "tiger reports."

Other recent searches conducted in Tasmania have been privately funded often using sponsorship from newspapers, etc. In reality, this would be your only source of external funds.

I appreciate the sincerity of your interest and encourage you to commit your sightings to a diary. I, for one, would be pleased to read it. Please feel free to further correspond with the Service.

Yours sincerely,

P. Murrell  
Director.

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER  
Department of the Premier and Cabinet,  
32 St George's Terrace,  
Perth, Western Australia, 6000.  
Telephone (09) 425 6666. Telex AA95078.  
January 25, 1984

Mr S. F. Slee,  
PO Box 177,  
Busselton, WA 6280

Dear Mr Slee,

Thank you for your letter about your research into the Tasmanian Tiger.

I have referred your approach to the Hon. Dave Evans, M.L.A., Minister for Agriculture, and Fisheries and Wildlife, and asked him to examine this matter and reply direct to you as soon as possible.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Burke, M.L.A.  
Premier.

Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife,  
Grain Pool Building,  
172 St George's Terrace,  
Perth, 6000,  
Western Australia,  
Tel. 321 4241.  
February 9, 1984

Mr S. F. Slee,  
PO Box 177,  
Busselton, WA 6280  
Dear Mr Slee,

The Hon. Premier has passed to me your letter of January 23, 1984, which I have read with interest.

I would be delighted if you were able to furnish positive proof of the existence of the thylacine in Western Australia; the great weight of evidence being that the species became extinct on the mainland many years ago. I certainly would not like to be regarded as having discouraged you in your quest but neither am I in a position to assist you financially. Such assistance would be outside my power to provide.

I would urge you to endeavour to obtain definitive photographic evidence of the animal in question such as is being sought by the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service in their surveys of possible Tasmanian Tiger occurrences in that State. Such evidence would greatly assist your task.

Yours sincerely

H. D. Evans, M.L.A.,  
Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife.

60 MINUTES

May 14, 1984

Mr Ian Slee,  
PO Box 177,  
Busselton, WA 6280  
Dear Mr Slee,

Thank you for your letter and story suggestion. We have in fact already done a story about the search for the Tasmanian tiger and do not wish to pursue the matter further.

Thank you for writing to 60 Minutes.

Cordially,

Gerald Stone,  
Executive producer.

BUSSELTON NATURALISTS'S CLUB,  
104 Geographe Bay Road,  
Abbey, via Busselton, 6280.  
August 20, 1985.

Mr S. Slee,  
Yoongarillup, 6280.  
Dear Mr Slee,

Many thanks for taking the time to speak at our meeting last week. I believe that your subject was of immense interest and feel there were few, if any 'doubters' by the end of your talk.

Strange to say I was telling some friends the next evening and one couple said "we have seen one of those animals — it crossed the road one evening when we were coming home." (They come from your general area.) Then two other ladies admitted to seeing something which sounded exactly the same when out riding horses one day. As you said when someone admits to seeing one then all sorts of similar tales come to light!

Club members really appreciate having the opportunity to listen to people like yourself and thanks again for spending the time with us.

Kind regards,

Your sincerely,

Sandra Rains,  
Hon. Secretary.



8 Troy Avenue,  
Marmion,  
April 29, 1986.

Dear Ian Slee,

I was delighted to hear in the course of your phone call of fresh sightings this year. As requested I am sending details of the sighting by my late husband and myself, quoting from the report made to the Fisheries and Wildlife people at the time.

Am looking forward to being in Busselton next week.

Kindest regards to yourself and your parents,

Yours sincerely,

Freda Carmody

EXTRACT FROM A REPORT OF SIGHTING MADE BY JOE M. AND FREDA  
CARMODY BETWEEN BRIDGETOWN AND NANNUP ON SATURDAY,  
NOVEMBER 4, 1972

At 6pm at the end of a warm day we were travelling at a fair speed being anxious to reach Busselton in time for a meal, having left Kojonup at 4.30pm after a Zone Council Meeting.

Half a mile from the State Forest, some nine miles from Bridgetown, an animal — first thought to be a fox — commenced to cross the road. The wind was blowing in our direction and we were within a short distance of it when it became aware of our presence and with a graceful bound remarkably like that of a kangaroo, turned in its tracks. The sun was behind it so we had no impression of stripes but otherwise had a good view passing within 30 feet of it, as, looking in our direction, it loped up a bank and disappeared into a growing crop.

It was a large animal, between 5ft to 6ft from nose to tail tip . . . It was totally distinctive with its heavy jaw, unusual tail and hind legs, slightly humped appearance and big feet. It was definitely not a dog or a dingo or fox. Having seen the specimen in the W.A. Museum and several reproductions of photographs we had no doubt that it was a thylacine.

NOTE: I'm afraid you'll have to translate the figures into metric — it's a bit beyond me. We continued our investigation for the remainder of my husband's life, and studies of thylacines in museums in South Australia and Tasmania only strengthened our conviction that thylacines were alive and well in W.A. We were at first puzzled at not being aware of stripes, but after seeing the specimens displayed in a natural setting in the dioramas in the Hobart Museum, realised that its stripes would

be hard to see in the dappled late afternoon sunlight in which we have viewed it. At no time did the animal we had seen give an impression of being in haste to get away, and seemed to look at us with a blank expression — probably due to the fact that it is a nocturnal animal and we felt that only the heat of the day had brought it out of the State Forest to drink at a farm dam for which it was heading at the time, and it probably could not see us too well.

Freda Carmody.

## **A few of the reports I have received on sightings**

### **NANNUP TIGER**

1966

I claim to be the first to see it in this district. I was in my cow yard one night, I had the lights all on, when I heard something in the calf yard. When I went to look there it was.

I stood and looked at it for 2-3 minutes before it ambled out of the yard. I was no more than 15-20 feet away from him.

It was about the size of a roo dog with big head, long body, heavy shoulders, long tail with brush on last 12-14 inches or so. Some dark bands went around the body as well, eyes were not like dogs eyes.

I have been in the bush all my life and never seen anything like this before. It came back quite often for milk I left in a dish. I made a trap but never got him.

I still say it was the Nannup Tiger as we all call him now.

I have a few sheep on my place and now and again we find a lamb with its head eaten off. Just the head. Then we find roos with their heads gone as well.

I have a photo of a big roo with his head off, it was still bleeding and warm when I found it. The tracks were not dogs tracks. We hear funny sounds at night like a choking or a soft barking which I'd say was him.

Our dog will not go after him in the dark any more. He did once and had a big fight in the roadway but he won't go out any more. I don't blame him. Well that's the Nannup Tiger.

Tom Longbottom,  
1986.

MRS CORALIE SLEE  
37 Tuart Street, Bunbury 6230

In approximately June or July 1985, I was driving north from Manjimup to Bunbury, when I sighted a most unusual animal 1 kilometre south of Mullalyup. Because the animal was so unusual I took a speed reading so I could know exactly where I was when I sighted the animal.

I've travelled extensively throughout WA and have never seen an animal such as the one I saw that day.

The animal looked dog-like in shape, but seemed to have tall slim legs, very high in the rear haunch and three broadish stripes that ran round its girth, starting from the middle of its back, and separating into three as they went round its girth. The animal had a very sharp pointed face, and the overall appearance was that it's fur was very patchy looking, and not sleek like most of the dog like creatures but almost mangy looking.

The most amazing part of the animal was that it had a very rigid looking tail that stuck straight out behind him as he headed across the road. I slowed right down and watched it, because it was so unusual, until it ran into thick bush.

On my next call, I described what I'd seen to a gentleman who felt I would be wise to contact Ian Slee of Busselton who was interested in locating a similar animal. When I was in Busselton the next day I contacted the Slee family and told them of my experience. The similarity of surname is a co-incidence.

Coralie Slee.

THYLACINE SIGHTING BY PAULINE OF BUSSELTON AT 2.15PM,  
OCTOBER, 1985

Whilst returning from the metropolitan area to Busselton and on the above date along the Old Coast Road, I encountered the strangest of animals.

At the point approximately 1km north of Finn road and some 30km north of Bunbury, with cleared rural ground on my right and natural bush lands on my left, in ideal visibility, clear to cloudy conditions.

The animal broke from low scrub on the right hand side of the highway and crossed the road at a steady canter, disappearing into the bush on my left. Estimated distance in front of car 35 metres.

My view on the animal was unimpeded, no other vehicle or distraction in sight.

It was fawn brown in colour, a darker colour along the backbone area and appearing blotchy.

I estimate the animal to be about the height of an average dog but extremely lean.

An extremely skinny tail and appeared most unusual with regard to pelt, almost as if no fur at all. I don't think it had very pointed features, long snout. I can't remember shape of ears.

I'm sure it wasn't any regular dog or fox and have never seen anything like it before or since.

A. L. PITTS  
 "Te Ada Apa", 27 Harris Road,  
 Busselton, WA 6280

17.4.1986

Dear Sid,

Please find enclosed description and sighting particulars of the animal we saw recently. As far as I'm concerned it was one of the same we saw several years ago near Ludlow. This was reported in the press and on radio, but I can't remember just when it was.

Cheers for now,

Slim Pitts,

One morning at approximately 11am, my wife and I decided to take a utility load of garden rubbish to the town rubbish dump. After off-loading our load on the further side of the dump in the place provided for the disposal of prunings and loppings from trees, we continued on the access road into the sand pits which are adjacent to the rubbish dump. This road leads out on to Rendesvous Road and so back to Queen Elizabeth Avenue and so back to town.

As we turned from the back sand track on to the gravel access road I said to my wife: "Look at that skinny old cat." She replied "I don't think it's a cat, I think it's a dog."

As we got closer to the animal which was about ten yards away nuzzelling around in some long grass, I said: "You know it's one of those things we saw that day at Ludlow!" She agreed and I got out of the ute and walked closer whereupon the animal turned away and loped off across the paddock in the direction of the Pony Club Grounds.

The creature was about the size of a kelpie dog, coloured brown and black in irregular patches, not exactly stripes, but certainly of the two colours. I would have called it brindle.

It was at no time particularly worried at our presence and even when I approached quite close to it, it went away at quite a leisurely pace. Not at all in a hurry.

It was quite thin and was obviously searching for food but although I checked the place where it had been, I couldn't find any sign of what it had been doing. I surmise that it had discovered a lizard or something and did not want to leave until it had finished eating it.

As to the description of the animal, I have already described it's colour and

size and its action when in movement I described as a lope. If it had been in a bigger hurry I would say that it would bound along with thrusts from its back legs which appeared to be slightly longer and more powerful than its front legs. Its head was carried straight out from its body as was its tail which was at no time carried above its back.

When asked to describe the animal later my wife said it reminded her of “The Pink Panther” which appears on TV and in some comics. The sighting would have been in the last week in March.