



Tarkine Trails

The path less travelled

Rhythms of the Tarkine

3rd-10th December 2007

Accommodation: Corinna Ecocabins and tent based accommodation.

Summary

The Rhythms of the Tarkine tour is a vehicle-supported tour designed for people wanting to experience the remoteness and solitude of one of Australia's most magnificent wilderness areas in style and luxury including light weight packs, warm showers and day walks. The trip circumnavigates the Tarkine capturing the best of rain forest, coast, mountains and rivers.

Expert Guide

Our expert guide is renowned Tasmanian naturalist Sarah Lloyd. Sarah specialises in birds and fungi. She is knowledgeable and passionate about the Tarkine and recently produced a CD/Book called "Rhythms of the Tarkine, A natural history adventure" Each morning and evening, Sarah will conduct bird identification sessions, where she will teach you how to identify the bird life by their specific calls. Sarah will also compile a species list of all the animals and plants encountered on the trip. This list will be sent to you post trip.

Fine print

Departure points for the trip.

We can pick you up from your accommodation in the following towns. We can pick you up in Hobart if you prefer but this will add 3 hours to your traveling time

Hobart	5:00- 5:30 am
Launceston	8:00- 8:30 am
Devonport	9:30-10.00 am
Burnie	10:30-11.00 am

Gear check

Gear checks are conducted primarily for safety and risk management. It is important that we know that you have all the equipment required for the walk. We will contact you prior to departure, and confirm a specific time and place for the gear check.

Wake up/ breakfast

Each morning we conduct a dawn chorus bird identification session. This will be followed by breakfast. Depending on the day's activities, most mornings we aim to be out of camp at 9am.

Bearings

Each morning your guides will give you an opportunity to gather around the maps and identify your position and destination.

Lunch

We generally stop for lunch at around 12:30pm. We allow approximately 2 hours for lunch.

Dinner

We aim to be at camp by no later than 5pm each day allowing us to have plenty of daylight hours for camp set up and dinner preparation. Evening meals are a selection of delicious and wholesome dishes that are designed to satisfy your taste buds as well as your daily dietary requirements.

Day One: Giant Trees and Ancient Rain Forest

Accommodation: John Lynch Ridge/Tents.

Highlights: Giant Eucalyptus trees, Rain forest, John Lynch Creek

Drive

We depart from Launceston and drive west to Burnie. From Burnie, we head south, through scenic rolling hills, towards the heart of the Tarkine. The journey traverses highly productive agricultural land with the rich volcanic soils of the region. As we venture south we encounter the first of the Tarkine forests. The highway creates the western boundary of Tarkine. Eventually we depart the Murchison Highway and head west towards camp located in the south eastern corner of the Tarkine. We initially cross a button grass plain, a relict of glacial action that once dominated the landscape before traversing a forest clad range. From the summit the impressive mountain landscape of Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff appears to our east. As we continue westwards, the forest thickens and we gain our first glimpse of the giant Eucalypt forests. On approaching the rainforest lined John Lynch Creek we park the vehicle and prepare to walk into our forest based ecopod accommodation.

Walk To Camp

John Lynch Ridge is located in the southern section of the Tarkine. At the beginning of the track, we organise our gear for the first nights camp. You pack your clothes for the next day, your sleeping bag and sleep mat. The guides will carry all the group equipment including food. Your pack should weigh no more than 9 kg. If you find this weight too challenging, the guides will organize a lighter pack for you. The walk is approximately thirty minutes into giant mixed forest. The tour is designed to give access to

people with a broad range of fitness levels, so please contact us if you have any concerns about your ability to manage the pack weights.

Our forest based camp is nestled amongst giant Myrtle, Sassafras and Eucalyptus trees. The huge stringy bark *Eucalyptus obliqua* trees reach up to 80 m in height, placing them amongst the tallest hardwood trees on earth. The trunks of these trees are often larger than ten people linking hands around the base. The forest floor is very open and covered in lush green mosses, lichens and tree ferns. From camp you can explore the forests of huge Eucalyptus and pristine rain forest flanked creeks.

Dinner is served at approximately 6.30pm around a warm campfire. Our dinners are delicious creations inspired from all corners of the globe.

Accompanying dinner each evening is a selection of Tasmanian wines.

Day Two: Huskisson River

Accommodation: John Lynch Ridge/Tents

Highlights: Ancient rain forests, giant eucalypts, wild rivers and pristine creeks.

We wake to the spring dawn chorus of forest birds and listen while Sarah identifies the birds by their songs.

After a tasty breakfast we undertake a day walk to the Huskisson River. The forest trail meanders through a stunning forest of giant eucalypts, sassafras, celery top pine and myrtle. The under storey is completely open in parts, lined by a soft carpet of green mosses and lichens. In other areas, ancient ferns cover the forest floor, providing a 60 million year old link to the ancient Gondwanan forests that once covered large parts of Australia and Antarctica. Birds that live in the forest include, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos, Green Rosellas, Forest Ravens, and a number of birds found only in Tasmania including the Tasmanian Thornbill, Scrubtit, Tasmanian Scrubwren and several species of endemic honeyeaters. As we approach the Huskisson River, the Eucalypts disappear, leaving the Myrtles and Sassafras to dominate. Known as *Callidendrous* rainforest, the ancient gnarled myrtle trees stand witness to the passing of time. The atmosphere is thick with antiquity and the experience of travelling back in time past the age of the dinosaurs is ever present.

On arriving on the banks of the Huskisson, lunch is prepared. Keep your eyes peeled for a sighting of the endangered Grey Goshawk, which in Tasmania occurs in a pure white form. Those who wish can enjoy a swim in the rainforest filtered waters. After lunch, sit back and soak up the stunning surrounds.

In the afternoon, we head back to camp and prepare for another sumptuous meal around a warm campfire.

Day Three: Philosophers Falls, Corinna.

Accommodation: Corinna, Eco village.

Highlights: Ancient rain forests, stunning waterfalls, pristine creeks.

Awake to your favorite morning drink and tasty breakfast. From John Lynch Ridge we walk back to the vehicle (25 minutes). Then we depart for the historic mining town of Waratah and a day walk to Philosophers Falls. Waratah was the first mining town established on the West Coast of Tasmania. The Mt Bischoff tin mine was discovered by the prospector, Philosopher Smith. It was the largest tin mine in the world in 1871. The mining was discontinued in the 1940's, however the town has survived and is now the closest settlement to the Tarkine.

Walk

Philosophers Falls is located 20 minutes west of Waratah, and is a four hour round trip. The walk is challenging but well worth it. Depending on the walking speed of the group, a gourmet lunch is usually served at the base of the falls under a thick canopy of ancient myrtle and sassafras trees.

Philosophers Falls is a twenty metre high waterfall. The surrounding forest is covered in a thick layer of green mosses and lichens. The forests of the Tarkine have retained their general structure since the time of the final break up of Gondwana, some 60 million years ago. Since then the most abundant tree species the myrtle beech (*Nothofagus Cunninghamii*) has dominated the forest landscape.

Tasmanian rain forests are hotspots of fungal diversity, something we will witness if conditions have been favourable. Fungi break down dead organic matter and ancient myrtle stumps can support a stunning variety of species in a wonderful array of colours.

Drive

Upon returning to the vehicle, we drive west toward the old mining town of Corinna, located on the banks of the Pieman River. The car trip is a journey through a myriad of landscapes, including ancient rain forest, open eucalyptus forest, and expansive button grass plains. The spectacular Meredith Range forms the backdrop for the day's drive. The Meredith Range is the largest granite based mountain range in Tasmania and is surrounded by wild valleys of pristine rain forest and eucalyptus forest. Your guides will explain how the landscape in front of you illustrates the important role of fire in the evolution of Tasmania's vegetation types.

As we approach the Pieman River, the button grass gives way to thickening rain forest.

Accommodation

After completing the walk, we head to the Corinna where we stay the night, enjoying a hot shower and warm fire. Dinner is served with a selection of Tasmanian wine.

Day Four: Mt Donaldson and Pieman River

Accommodation: Corinna, Eco village.

Highlights: 360 degree views of the southern Tarkine, stunning mountain ranges, ancient Huon Pines.

From Corinna we briefly retrace our steps until reaching the Western Explorer. It is a short drive from here to the Savage River. We park on the northern bank of the Savage River, pack our lunch and depart the vehicle.

Walk

The four-hour round trip takes you to one of the most spectacular and unique views in Tasmania. The walk meanders through ancient rain forest before climbing into open eucalyptus forest. Eventually the vegetation changes to button grass allowing for expansive views of the southern Tarkine region. On arriving at the summit, lunch is served whilst you sit back and soak up the scenery. The 360-degree views capture the Norfolk Ranges to the north, the Pieman River valley and Southern Ocean to the south and west and the Savage River rain forest to the east. The Savage River rain forest is the largest patch of cool temperate rain forest in the southern hemisphere and is globally significant as a refuge for this ancient forest type.

From our vantage spot, it is easy to keep your eyes peeled for two of the largest birds of prey found in Tasmania. The endangered Wedge-tailed Eagle and Grey Goshawk both inhabit the Tarkine. The Goshawk lives in the forest, flying through the treetops hunting a variety of animals that inhabit the region. If lucky, you may glimpse this stealthy white bird flying through the forest canopy on one of its hunting missions. The Wedge-tailed Eagle is often seen soaring high in the sky, riding the thermals in search of prey.

After lunch, we return to the vehicle and then drive back to Corinna.

Day Five: Tarkine Coast

Accommodation: Tarkine coast /tent.

Highlights: River cruise down the rain forest flanked Pieman River, rugged coastal scenery, Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, remote beaches, sheltered coves, huge sand dunes, bizarre rock formations.

Boat trip

At Corinna, we meet our boat for a cruise down the rain forest flanked Pieman River to the wild West Coast. The boat journey takes an hour and a half in the historic Arcadia 2. Made completely of Huon Pine in the 1930's, the Arcadia has an interesting history that will be detailed to you by the local boat guide. After leaving Corinna, we cruise through the spectacular Pieman Gorge, passing the mouth of the Savage River and Donaldson River. These rivers have their origins in the heart of Australia's largest temperate rain forest and are flanked by ancient huon pine and myrtle beech. These timeless forests have remained relatively unchanged for 60 million years.

Walk/Camp

On arriving at the coast, we walk north for 30 minutes to our camp located next to the wild and powerful Southern Ocean. Once again, you will have to carry a lightweight pack with your clothes, sleeping bag, and sleep mat.

We spend the afternoon exploring the coastline surrounding camp. There is an abundance of bird life that lives on the coast including, White-bellied Sea- Eagle, Mutton Birds, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers and the endangered Hooded Plover. We may be lucky enough to see albatross gliding over the waves on the distant horizon. With the expert help of Sarah, we should be able to identify these and many other species.

Camp

After lunch we head back to camp for dinner and a warm campfire. Dinner is served surrounded by spectacular rocky outcrops, sheltered coves, Aboriginal middens and serene west coast ocean sunsets.

Day Six: Tarkine Coast

Accommodation: Arthur River Seaside Hotel.

Highlights: Views of the Norfolk Ranges and Savage River rain forest, rolling button grass plains and a dinner appointment with wild Tasmanian Devils.

Walk

We depart camp for a return day walk up the wild Tarkine coast. The Australian Heritage Commission has described the region as "one of the richest archaeological sites in the world". The Tarkine coast was home to a number of clans or communities of Tasmanian Aboriginals including the Peternidic, based around the mouth of the Pieman River and the Tarkiner, based at Sandy Cape. Tasmanian Aboriginals have lived in Tasmania for over 35 000 years. There are many thousands of Aboriginal people living in Tasmania today who are descended from the first Tasmanians and have an ongoing connection with the land. The landscape speaks powerfully of Aboriginal occupation. Giant shell middens, the remains of their abundant seafood source, dot the coastline at every headland. On our walk, we cross numerous creeks that flow from the Norfolk Range, explore remote, grassy headlands and view sweeping beaches with towering sand dunes. Lunch is served relaxing on a grassy headland overlooking the Southern Ocean. For the adventurous, a refreshing dip in one of the sheltered pools is highly recommended. There is a vast diversity of sea life that inhabits the rocky pools providing many opportunities for budding photographers.

Camp

After lunch we head back to camp for dinner and a warm campfire.

Day Seven: Rain Forest and Wild Tasmanian Devil Tour

Walk/boat trip

After a light breakfast, we pack camp and head back to the mouth of the Pieman River. We return to Corinna by boat allowing time for more breakfast on board the Arcadia 2. On arrival at Corinna, we pack the

vehicle and continue our journey northwards along the Western Explorer, otherwise known as the "Road to No Where".

Drive

Whilst driving the Western explorer, we get great views of the Norfolk Range to the west. To the east lies the Savage River rain forest and to north, button grass heathland spreads out to the horizon.

Walk

Lunch is served in either a giant stand of *Eucalyptus obliqua* trees or next to the Donaldson River, depending on the weather. A short walk around the forest is undertaken here.

After lunch, we continue driving north to Arthur River.

Drive /accommodation/Devils kitchen.

On arriving at the coast, we drive to our accommodation at the Arthur River Seaside Hotel and prepare for the evening's devil tour. Our guide, Jeff King, will meet us at our accommodation and lead us to his coastal property, just north of the Arthur River.

Devils Kitchen.

This evening we have the unique opportunity to see wild Tasmanian devils feeding in their natural habitat. The "devils kitchen" is a fantastic wildlife viewing opportunity. Whilst we sit back in Jeff's coastal shack and enjoy our meal, the devils are attracted to the viewing position by a road kill animal that is staked to the earth. Quite an experience! The devils proceed to devour the carcass 2-3 meters from our viewing place. It is common for more than one devil to arrive providing exiting viewing of their somewhat curious behavior. For more information about Joe Kings and the Devils Kitchen, see appendix one.

Day Eight: Tarkine Coast and Lake Chisholm

Highlights: Lake Chisholm and the ancient rain forest of the Tarkine.

Drive/walk

On the final day of the trip we head back into the forest visiting Sumac Lookout, Julius River rain forest and Lake Chisholm in the northern reaches of the Tarkine. The Sumac Lookout is a short walk to beautiful view over the Arthur River and surrounding forests. It is also a great opportunity for a possible sighting of the endangered Grey Goshawk. Julius River is a twenty minute round trip that explores the ancient rainforest fringing the Julius River. The Lake Chisholm walk is a twenty minute round trip through giant eucalyptus forests. The under storey has a diversity of plant species, many of which are only found in Tasmania. Lunch is prepared on the edge of Lake Chisholm with views of the surrounding mixed forests. Lake Chisholm is a natural lake in the middle of the rain forest. The lake is a result of vast cave systems forming a natural sink in the earth's surface. Over millions of years the sink holes have become plugged with forest debris and a natural lake has formed.

After returning to the vehicle we say goodbye to the Tarkine and make our way back to Burnie and then Launceston.

We arrive in Burnie at 5.00 pm.

We arrive in Launceston at 7.00 pm.

We arrive in Hobart at 10.30 pm. (For those traveling to Hobart, please bring \$20 for purchase of dinner in Launceston.)

Rhythms of the Tarkine Track Grading

Many people who join our walks have no previous experience in bush walking and no concept of the standard track classification system. The Tasmanian Track classification system classifies walks into four categories according to the difficulty level of the track. This grading is fine if you are a regular walker and understand it. For first time or infrequent walkers the system fails to define the specific tracks challenges and weigh them up against people's confidence and fitness levels.

Our grading system refers to the challenges of each walk we offer and explains these challenges according to an individual's confidence and fitness levels. We recommend that you contact us with any concerns regarding your chosen walk prior to booking. If you book, then we highly recommend that you participate in the pre trip training program.

Rhythms of the Tarkine

- The tour is designed to give access to people with a broad range of fitness levels.
- All the day walks can be completed with light weight day packs.
- During the sections of this trip where we sleep in tents, there is no need to carry anything other than your pack, sleep mat, and clothes. If you can manage these items, fine but it is not essential.
- The average age of people who participate on our forest and coast walk is 45
- The average age of people who participate on the explorer is slightly higher at 55. We have had 80 year olds participate fully on this walk
- The day walk descriptions, detailed below, are designed to give you a clear picture of the specific challenges encountered on each walk. The entire trips grading is specified further below.

John Lynch Ridge

The 30 minute walk to John Lynch ridge camp is a steep up hill walk. The walk commences at the rain forest flanked Platypus Creek which is home to the threatened Giant Freshwater Crayfish. The beginning of the walk is steep gradually flattening out as we get closer to camp. The initial uphill section is steep and can be a bit slippery in wet conditions, however it is quite short and we can take our time. For this walk we need to carry tents

and everything we need for an over night stay. Because the walk is short, you can carry what ever you are comfortable with and the guides can easily do a second trip if required.

Mount Donaldson

The Mount Donaldson track is a 4 hour round trip that follows an old 4WD trail. The ascent is constant and the trail is very clear until the near the top. The height of Mt Donaldson is 437 meters At this point the track enters button grass and we need to negotiate this for several hundred metres. This obstacle is reasonably easy to maneuver through and we take it very slowly up the mountain stopping to enjoy the views as often as we need to. We grade this walk as medium.

Walk to coast camp

After we depart the ferry at Pieman Heads, we walk for 30 minutes to our camp on the coast. For this walk we need to carry tents and everything we'll need for an over night stay. Because the walk is short, you can carry what ever you are comfortable with and the guides can easily do a second trip if required. The walk is basically flat and follows old 4wd trails. There is a small amount of mud along the trail that is easily negotiated without getting wet feet.

Coast Walk

Today's walk is a leisurely stroll north along the picturesque Tarkine coast. There is plenty of time to explore. Daypacks only are required. The walk has very small undulating hills that are easy to negotiate but for the majority of the day the walk is flat. The coastline consists of striking conglomerate rock formations and expansive views. There is plenty of fresh water running off the Norfolk range to the east .We will have lunch sheltered behind coastal vegetation. The length of the days walk is determined by the group on the day. After lunch we have the option of going further north toward the interview river or turning back toward camp.

Grading

We grade this walk according to the individual's experience and fitness level. We grade the entire trip not the individual day walks. The categories below are set to the most challenging day walks on the trip (Philosopher Falls and Mt Donaldson walk). They are both approximately 4 hour return walks Please read the above descriptions of the main day walks and then pick the category below that most suits your experience and fitness level.

Never done a 4hr return bush walk / I don't feel fit or confident

For someone who has never gone on a 4 hr return bush walk, and you don't feel fit or confident then "probably" this walk will be **challenging** for you to tackle.

We suggest that you call our office and talk with us in more depth before deciding to either book or not. This way we can assess in detail your specific circumstance, thoughts and feelings toward the walk.

If you do decide to book, our pre trip training program offers a valuable support to help lift both your confidence and your strength and fitness.

Never done a 4hr return bush walk / I feel fit and confident.

- For someone who has never gone on a 4hr return bush walk and feels fit and confident to give it a try then "probably" this walk will be **moderate** for you.
- If you do decide to book, our pre trip training program offers a valuable support to help lift your strength and fitness.

Have done a 4hr return bush walk with pack/ I don't feel fit or confident

- For someone who has gone on a 4hr return bush walk yet doesn't feel fit and confident then "probably" this walk will be **moderately challenging** for you.
- If you do decide to book, our pre trip training program offers a valuable support to help lift your confidence strength and fitness.

Have done a 4hr return bush walk with pack / I feel fit and confident

- For someone who has gone a 4hr return bush walk, and feels fit and confident to give it try then "probably" this walk will be **easy** for you.
- We still suggest that you participate in our pre trip training program.

Gear List

Please read the list carefully. You need to bring all the equipment listed below unless advised by a member of our staff. It is vital that all gear is of good quality and condition. Cheap gear can adversely affect the quality and enjoyment of your trip. Whilst the pack weight for the explorer is very light, we still require you to bring at least a 65 litre pack. This ensures you have space for all your gear.

Items in **bold** can be hired from us at \$25/item/trip, except gaiters and walking poles at \$10/trip. If you wish to hire gear, please advise on booking form.

Gear	Description
Pack	At least 65 litres, internal frame, worn in and in good repair.
Sleeping bag	At least 3 seasons (-5° C) and lightweight.
Sleeping mat	Self inflating or foam - lightweight.
Torch	head torches are recommended
Waterproof coat with hood	Must be goretex or japara, and of high quality (not a drizabone).
Waterproof pants	Plastic or goretex is acceptable.
Walking Poles	Optional but highly recommended.
Gaiters	Leg protectors (for protection from mud and unlikely event of snake bite).
Binoculars and 10 x's lens	For bird watching and identifying fungi and plants.
Pack liner	Strong/ water proof (to keep clothes dry in heavy rain/river crossings).
Boots	Worn in bushwalking boots, waterproof, properly sealed.
Warm jacket or jumper x 2	Must be either polar fleece or woolen, cotton jumpers are not acceptable.
Thermal top x 2	Polypropylene, chlorofibre or woolen.
Thermal Long Johns x 2	Polypropylene, chlorofibre or woolen.
T shirts/ short sleeved shirts x 1 or 2	For walking in and evening wear.
Shorts	Loose fitting for walking
Long sleeved shirt x 1	
Long pants x 1	Wool/synthetic is best, these are optional for those who feel the cold. Denim jeans are not acceptable.
Socks - x 3 pairs	Minimum - 3
Underwear	
Sun hat	Wide brimmed/lightweight and sunglasses.
Beanie/woolen hat	
Gloves	Woolen / synthetic.
Scarf	
Sandals / sandshoes	Lightweight for wearing during river crossings and at camp.
Bathers (optional).	
Small towel	Lightweight eg. chamois (optional)
Water bottle	1 litre (strong plastic/aluminum).
Personal hygiene items	
Sunscreen	
Four spare plastic bags	Shopping bags are fine- very handy when it's wet.

Tarkine Trails supplies,

- High quality tents,
- Stoves, fuel and all cooking equipment
- Toilet paper, alcohol hand wash gel, small shovel for toilet when walking
- Cutlery, bowls and cups
- Comprehensive first aid kit
- All food for the walk including trail mix, lollies, muesli bars etc.

Appendix One

Devils kitchen

Geoff King

Farmers are responsible for managing Tasmania's natural assets as well as producing food, believes fifth generation beef producer Geoff King. Five years ago Geoff de-stocked his 830-acre King's Run property at Arthur River, on the west coast. He'd become aware of the natural and cultural significance of the fragile foreshore land and how it was being affected by erosion - not only from cattle but also from the four wheel drives that were accessing the foreshore.

The block had been a winter run for his family's cattle for 108 years.

"After realising what the values were, I felt I had a responsibility to protect them," said Geoff, who has two further beef farms in the Marrawah district.

"Making money was no longer an objective with that block. I thought it was such important land that I was really lucky to have it and that it just needed to live and breathe."

It was his long-time friend Nick Mooney, from DPIWE's Nature Conservation Branch, who then helped Geoff identify the opportunity for tourism. Despite years of winter grazing, Geoff's land was a haven for native animals and migratory and endemic birds. Nick was also keen for Geoff to try a devil viewing technique that he'd been working on.

"Nick thought the way to improve the image of the Devil was to put a dollar value on it," Geoff said.

It was the start of King's Run Wildlife Tours. Geoff guides tourists onto the block by foot, where they can observe unsuspecting Devils eating in the wild.

"At my place you're only a few metres away from the Devils," Geoff explained, "and it's a spectacular location.

"We stand on a rugged coastline with a big swell beating against it as the twilight illuminates a backdrop of quartzite rock covered with moss. Then, all of a sudden, an animal appears that's different to anything else that's in the world."

The response has been extraordinary. Geoff now works with Devils more than 100 nights per year, closing the gap toward what he would have been making if he were still running cattle on the block. But, he insists, money wasn't the issue. He just felt too guilty to keep the cattle there.

"It's interesting to see a fifth-generation farmer taking stock off his land and turning it over to wildlife," said Nick Mooney. "It challenges the traditional view that if the land can support stock, then it should support stock. But that's not necessarily the case.

"And all that Geoff has to do now is to worry about how pristine his property is for the presentation of wildlife because the native animals will pretty much run themselves. There aren't really any animal management issues."

The King family's connection with the land dates back to 1880 when John King sailed from England as a land manager. But once in Tasmania, he ended

up paying out his contract and settling in Wynyard. Apparently he'd spent too much time fraternising with his workers during the voyage.

He ended up drowning in one of the small rivers on his way to defend himself in the insolvency court, leaving his large family destitute. His sons Charlie, Chris and Willie rode their horses down to the coast and selected the land on the Arthur River to run cattle. It's the very block Geoff uses today for the Devils restaurant.

"My respect for Devils has only come with my increased respect for the land," Geoff said. "Growing up, I guess I thought they were a frightening animal. I'd only really heard their loud noises and never seen one up close. I'd heard that they ate dead animals. Did they eat live animals too? There was a bit of a folklore about them.

"But there's a lot of bluff with their interaction because it's not in their interest to hurt each other. And they're also quite an attractive animal. The females have an elegance about them and the young ones are really cute, with a softness of look and behaviour. Then you get these old males who come in with thinning fur and skin hanging off their faces, perhaps where females have been biting them during mating. They look like some battered old car that's come into the community with rust around it and the exhaust hanging off. These old animals have a distinct charm."

Sadly Geoff's goal to increase the profile of Devils has been helped lately by the Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD), which has devastated populations in the eastern half of Tasmania. Adult populations in high density areas have been reduced by up to 90 per cent, with no signs that the disease is abating. To date, western and north-western populations of devils haven't shown any signs of the disease. But Geoff, a member of the DFTD Steering Committee, said it is a biodiversity concern for all farmers.

"There's something about a big chunk of one particular part of wildlife going out of a region," he said. "And in Tasmania that's complicated even more by the fact that foxes are about.

"If devils are controlling the spread of foxes, and we take out that limiting factor, then we have an ecological disaster. The loss of devils in itself probably pales into insignificance compared to the destruction that would be caused by foxes taking over the state."

But if farmers are as much responsible for the environmental outcomes of their land as they are productivity principles, then Geoff believes this opportunity is more a privilege than it is a burden.

"I just feel lucky and grateful to be on the end of this coincidence of events," he said. "My family were cattlemen and they were looking for land to hold their cattle and they chose that block. And then, years later, it's shown that it's got a completely different character."