

personal english



Animal #31

Tasmanian Devil

The **Tasmanian devil** (*Sarcophilus harrisii*) is a **carnivorous marsupial** which was once found in mainland Australia but which now only inhabits the wilds of **Tasmania** and **Maria Island**, where there currently is a conservation project. It is characterized by a sinewy build (in spite of its small size), black fur, pungent odor and, most notably, an extremely loud and disturbing **screech**, which it gives out especially when it is (voraciously) feeding, usually in group. The Tasmanian devil's large head and neck have endowed it with **the strongest bites per unit of body mass** of any extant mammal land predator, which it uses when either **hunting** or **scavenging carrion** as well as household products if humans are living nearby. Although it is a solitary hunter, it is not infrequent for the devil to eat and defecate in group. Despite its ostensible chubbiness, the devil is capable of surprising **speed** and endurance, and can both climb trees and swim across rivers. Devils are not monogamous, and their **reproductive process is very robust and competitive**. Males fight one another for the females, and then guard their partners to prevent **female infidelity**. Females can ovulate three times in as many weeks during the mating season, and 80% of two-year-old females are seen to be pregnant during the annual mating season. The newborn are pink, lack fur, have indistinct facial features and weigh around 0.20 g at birth. As there are only four nipples in the pouch, **competition for food and survival is fierce** and only few newborns survive.



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