

# Trapping trip finds disease-free Tasmanian devils in remote Southwest

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One of the disease-free Tasmanian devils found. Credit: Toledo Zoo & Aquarium

Scientists from the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program (STDP), the

University of Sydney and Toledo Zoo spent eight days exploring the south west wilderness on a quest to find and trap devils in an area that nobody had trapped before.

The trap came under an existing collaboration between the STDP and University of Sydney to investigate the long-term genetic management of Tasmanian devils. It trapped 14 devils, all in good health and with no signs of disease (DFTD).

Results from the trap show that the population in this area of the south west coast is small but healthy.

Dr. Carolyn Hogg, Research Manager of the Australasian Wildlife Genomics Group at the University's School of Life and Environmental Sciences said it sourced crowdfunding to help make the trip a reality and was supported by 106 donors to the crowdfunding campaign.

"It has been wonderful to bring together government, academic and industry partners to ensure we have a better understanding of what is happening with Tasmanian devils in south west Tasmania in regards to the disease and their genetic value," Dr. Hogg said.

"This trip would not have been possible without community support through the [crowdfunding campaign](#), the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program and the international partner zoos."

Dr. Hogg said funds were used to support the genetic analysis of the 2015/16 scat samples collected by volunteers from Wildcare SPRATS and Tasmanian National Parks & Wildlife.

Scats were also collected as part of the trapping mission and they will be used to look at the devils microbiome. Tissue was also collected from ear biopsies. The samples are currently being analysed by the University of

Sydney and this will shed more light on how genetically different these devils are to the rest of the population across Tasmania.

"The data we collected on this trip can give us a rough population estimate, based on the capture mark capture process, looking at the number of devils captured and how many animals were new or recaptured," said Tasmanian Devil Program Leader and Adjunct Biologist to Toledo Zoo Dr. Sam Fox.

"From our trapping we found that the ages of the devils ranged from 18 months to five years which is a good sign to show disease is not present as we just don't trap devils as old as these in areas of the State where DFTD is found," Dr. Fox explained.

"The devils we caught are likely to have a large home range. They are having to travel long distances along the coast to find food and are moving backwards and forwards as they forage for protein," Sam says.

"We know this because we trapped the same devils two or three times in different locations between our trap sites that were kilometres apart."

Dr. Fox led the Wreck Bay crew and said the results show that the population in this area of the south west coast is small and healthy.

Provided by University of Sydney

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