

Extinction of Australian Mammals - Article

We have all heard of the Thylacine - the notoriously extinct Tasmanian Tiger. The last of the Thylacines died in captivity all the way back in 1936, but what other Australian mammals have gone extinct? Have you heard of any?



Since European settlement, at least 27 native Australian mammals have gone extinct, with the most recent being the Bramble Cay melomys in 2016. This small, mouse-like rodent was only found on a small island in the Torres Strait, Bramble Cay, and was found to be extinct once conservationists finally managed to obtain approval to start a protection program. Since the island is only 3m above sea level at its highest point, climate change-induced sea level rises over the past 10 years, and an increase in weather events in the region, caused the island to become inundated with ocean water. This salty water is said to have destroyed native vegetation and led to the extinction of the melomys.

According to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC), Australia has 8 critically endangered mammals, 3 of which are bats and another 3 are small, mouse-like animals similar to the Bramble Cay melomys. The EPBC also lists 35 endangered mammals and 66 vulnerable mammal species, one of which is Australia's most iconic mammal - the koala. This cuddly animal was added to the vulnerable list in 2012 and has received millions of dollars in government funded conservation, not to mention the work of the Australian Koala Foundation which was founded more than 30 years ago in 1986. And although we love our Koalas, we can't help but feel bad for the extinct Bramble Cay melomys. Especially since they had been listed as critically endangered all the way back in 1996 and after 20 years of waiting, were not able to be saved.

Sources:

Thylacine:

- <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/?base=4765>

Bramble Cay melomy:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/radical-conservation/2016/jun/29/bramble-cay-melomys-australia-extinction-climate-change-great-barrier-reef>
- https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/endangered/endangered-animals/bramble_cay_melomys.html

Australian endangered mammal stats:

- http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicthreatenedlist.pl#mammals_vulnerable

Koala:

- <https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/koalas/strategy/>
- <https://www.savethekoala.com/about-us/about>