

TID-BITS

DEVIL'S ARK AT BARRINGTON TOPS

A refuge for Tasmanian devils has been created in the Upper Hunter Valley for a project developed to help preserve this endangered species. The Tasmanian population of devils is in steady decline due to the contagious facial tumour disease. Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) is a fatal condition in Tasmanian devils that is characterised by the appearance of facial tumours. These tumours grow at a rapid rate, predominantly around the face and neck, and in a short period of time the devils succumb to the disease through starvation as they are unable to eat or drink. DFTD is one of only three forms of cancer, known to science as being contagious. It's estimated that about 80 percent of Tassie's devils have died as a result of the disease.



The Tasmanian devil became the largest carnivorous marsupial following the extinction of the Thylacine

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80 PERCENT OF TASSIE'S DEVILS HAVE DIED AS A RESULT OF THE DISEASE

Devil Ark's mission is to establish and maintain a genetically representative population of 1,000 or more Tasmanian devils in a similar environment to Tasmania. About 350 hectares of bushland at Barrington Tops has been made available for the project by a donation from James Packer. The land is considered ideal because its elevation and relatively low temperatures mimic the living conditions in Tasmania.

The Australian Reptile Park is working with seven other zoos, including Taronga and Dubbo, on the devil-breeding program. On January 18, thirty 'founder' devils were released. About half of the devils had flown in from the quarantine facilities of the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program in Tasmania. The other half coming from the much closer facilities of the Australian Reptile Park, being second and third generation progeny of the highly successful 'intensive' breeding facility. The Devil Ark website is at www.devilark.com.au where you can find updates and regular blogs on the progress of these gorgeous creatures. Donations are also crucial to the project as there has been no financial support from the Australian or NSW governments.

WILDLIFE PARK UNDER INSPECTION

As reported in the Sunday Telegraph, a wildlife park, popular with international tourists, is under investigation for risks to animal welfare. The West Pennant Hills park was ordered to fix a series of problems including exposed stormwater drains in an emu and kangaroo enclosure, lack of clean water in a penguin exhibit, and aging and dirty enclosures. The Department of Primary Industries has asked the park to improve the facilities, which is home to koalas, native birds, kangaroos, emus, echidnas and dingos.

The same newspaper reported that the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing (OLGR) is now investigating the above-mentioned Park as to where an estimated \$400,000 in charitable donations has ended up. The money was earmarked to build a koala hospital. The funds were collected over a 20-year period with thousands of children donating bags of coins after an appeal back in 1989. The Park's management claim the money is sitting in a high interest bearing account and that more funds are needed before the hospital can be built.

MELBOURNE'S LORT SMITH KNOWS THE VALUE OF PUPPY POWER

The caring people at Lort Smith Animal Hospital have come up with a great initiative to organise dog visits to hospitals, dialysis and rehabilitation centres throughout Melbourne. The Pets are Loving Support (PALS) program has volunteers, with their specially trained dogs, who make day visits so that patients can enjoy the company of a canine.

The program needs more volunteers who can give up about one to one-and-a-half hours a month. Volunteers must undergo a police check and dogs must be assessed for temperament. There's no restriction on what type of breed of dog for the program—pedigree or mutt, Maltese or Mastiff. All dogs and volunteers will be considered. The healing power of a soft muzzle and a gentle paw should never be underestimated.

For more information about becoming a PALS volunteer, phone Wendy Lake on 9321 7288 or email on wlake@lortsmith.com

LITTLE LOST CHIHUAHUA MAKES IT BACK TO ADELAIDE AFTER A TREK TO MELBOURNE

As reported in the Herald Sun, an eleven-year-old Chihuahua, named Jack, has been reunited with his Adelaide owner after being found in Melbourne. The little dog disappeared from his home in the Adelaide Hills over a year ago.

So how did a little Chihuahua make his way to Melbourne? Apparently an Adelaide-based family, who then relocated to Melbourne, found the run-away poppet.

The cheeky Chihuahua ran away again and was picked up by the Lost Dogs' Home where he was scanned for a microchip. Jack's original owner was then contacted and identified as his true owner. His relieved owner had given up hope of finding Jack alive as she thought that he had either been bitten by a snake or met some other sad end.

Jack's story is a reminder that microchips really do reunite pets with their rightful owners. When a pet is found, it's imperative that people take action and try to get them scanned. It's also a reminder that we should keep microchip records up-to-date.



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