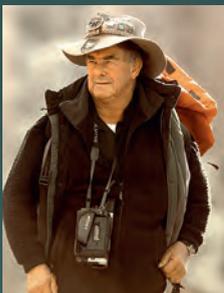


Covering a century and a half during which the thylacine's status has changed from being a despised sheep killer to a magnificent survivor, these enthralling stories are for both the curious and the enthusiast.

Speculation by an ever-growing band of Tasmanian tiger devotees that the thylacine still exists has not wavered, despite the dogmatic stance by the scientific fraternity that the animal is extinct.

This collection of actual accounts and anecdotal yarns originated from discussions the author had with an old Tasmanian tiger trapper, Reg Trigg, who in the early days of the twentieth century established a mutual friendship with Lucy, a tiger he rescued from a trap.

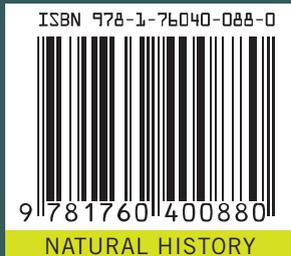


Eddie Saffaric/The Mercury

COL BAILEY is a retired landscape gardener who enjoys bushwalking. He is a canoeist and a marathon race walker who once held the Australian 50-mile walk race record. Col is also the author of *Tiger Tales* and *Shadow of the Thylacine*. He lives in Tasmania.



Visit our website
www.echopublishing.com.au



LURE OF THE
THYLACINE

COL BAILEY



COL BAILEY

LURE OF THE THYLACINE

TRUE STORIES AND LEGENDARY TALES OF THE
TASMANIAN TIGER



In early 1967 Col Bailey chanced upon a Tasmanian tiger while canoeing along the Coorong in South Australia. Since then he's been determined to prove to the world that this animal is not extinct. He has written *Tiger Tales* and *Shadow of the Thylacine* about this wonderful creature. *Lure of the Thylacine* is his third book.

A retired landscape gardener and bushwalker, Col is also a recreational canoeist and marathon race walker, who once held the Australian 50-mile walk race record. He lives in Tasmania.

thylascene@hotmail.com

Also by Col Bailey

Tiger Tales

Shadow of the Thylacine

LURE OF THE
THYLACINE
TRUE STORIES AND LEGENDARY TALES OF THE
TASMANIAN TIGER

COL BAILEY



echo



echo

Echo Publishing
12 Northumberland Street, South Melbourne
Victoria 3205 Australia
www.echopublishing.com.au

Part of the Bonnier Publishing Group
www.bonnierpublishing.com

Text copyright © Col Bailey, 2016
Foreword copyright © Mike Archer, 2016
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

First published 2016

Some of the stories in this edition first appeared in *Tiger Tales* by Col Bailey, and published by HarperCollins in 2001 after originally appearing in a regional Tasmanian newspaper, the *Derwent Valley Gazette*, in a biweekly series running from 1994 to 2005. All of these stories have been revised and rewritten especially for this collection, along with a selection of entirely new accounts not previously published.

Cover design by Luke Causby, Blue Cork
Front cover thylacine illustration by Joseph Wolf, circa 1870, and supplied to the author by Dr Stephen Sleighthome
Page design and typesetting by Shaun Jury
Internal photographs from the author's collection unless otherwise credited

Printed in Australia at Griffin Press.
Only wood grown from sustainable regrowth forests is used in the manufacture of paper found in this book.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry
Creator: Bailey, Col, 1937- author.
Title: Lure of the thylacine : true stories and legendary tales of the Tasmanian tiger / Col Bailey.
ISBN: 9781760400880 (paperback)
ISBN: 9781760400903 (ebook : Mobi)
ISBN: 9781760400910 (ebook : epub)
Subjects: Thylacine.
Thylacine—Pictorial works.
Rare animals—Tasmania.
Extinct animals—Australia.
Dewey Number: 599.27

Echo Publishing would like to thank Benjamin Stevenson for his enthusiastic response to our social media competition and his William Blake references.

Twitter/Instagram: @echo_publishing
Facebook: [facebook.com/echopublishingAU](https://www.facebook.com/echopublishingAU)

For Lexia

CONTENTS

Foreword by Professor Mike Archer	1
Introduction	5
Chapter 1 Reg Trigg and Lucy	9
Chapter 2 Man's Best Friend to the Very End	13
Chapter 3 High Country Trappers	17
Chapter 4 Caught Like a Rat in a Trap	23
Chapter 5 Thylacines in West Papua	27
Chapter 6 Cutter's Backyard Cat Show	33
Chapter 7 Corroborating the Evidence	37
Chapter 8 The Call of the Wild	45
Chapter 9 Time for a Snack	49
Chapter 10 A Shot in the Dark	53
Chapter 11 Charlie Bridges the Gap	57
Chapter 12 Old Boof Slays the Dragon	61
Chapter 13 Feet First for Old Lachlan	63
Chapter 14 The Picnic at Ivy Glen	65

Chapter 15	To Shoot a Tiger	69
Chapter 16	An Offer Too Good to Refuse	73
Chapter 17	There's Gold in Them Thar Skins	77
Chapter 18	The Mystery of a Nullarbor Cave	81
Chapter 19	Ghostly Encounter on a Wartime Airstrip	85
Chapter 20	More than One Way to Settle a Debt	89
Chapter 21	Tiger Attack!	91
Chapter 22	The Money or the Box	95
Chapter 23	A Quarrell-some Tiger	97
Chapter 24	A Genuine Ring-in	99
Chapter 25	Trapped by a Neat Double-cross	103
Chapter 26	This Tiger Was No Bunny	109
Chapter 27	The Legend of the Black Widow	113
Chapter 28	A Tiger Tale to Top Them All	117
Chapter 29	A Belated Reward	121
Chapter 30	The Aboriginal Connection	125
Chapter 31	Memories of an Unfortunate Past	129
Chapter 32	Parallels with the Newfoundland Wolf	135
Chapter 33	The End of a Renegade Tiger	143
Chapter 34	Marsupial Wolf Attack	147
Chapter 35	Danger in the Virgin Forest	151
Chapter 36	The Mystery of the Thylacine	155

Chapter 37	The French Connection	159
Chapter 38	A Tiger Tale from a True Believer	163
Chapter 39	The Derwent Valley Tiger Mystery	167
Chapter 40	The Watcher in the Blizzard	171
Chapter 41	An Unshakable Acquaintance	175
Chapter 42	An Old Shepherd's Tale	179
Chapter 43	A Devil of a Fight for Yukon	183
Chapter 44	The South-East Tiger	187
Chapter 45	The Victorian Connection	195
Chapter 46	Drama in the Forest	207
Chapter 47	Tiger Lore from Balfour	211
Chapter 48	A Pathway to History	215
Chapter 49	Not to be Taken for a Goose	219
Chapter 50	Eaten Alive!	223
Chapter 51	An Uninvited Guest for Dinner	227
Chapter 52	Tiger Tangles	229
Chapter 53	The Sandy Cape Incident	233
Chapter 54	Grandfather's Legacy	237
Chapter 55	Protecting Those Woolnorth Woolies	239
Chapter 56	A Case of Mistaken Identity	243
Chapter 57	Strange Bedfellows	247
Chapter 58	The Shot That Defined History	251

Chapter 59	The Ghost Returns	255
Chapter 60	Old George Had a Tale to Tell	259
Chapter 61	The Last Tiger in the Zoo	263
Chapter 62	Motorcycle Memories	267
Chapter 63	The Tallest Tiger Tale of All	271
Chapter 64	Lyne Dancing – Tiger Style	277
Sources		281
Acknowledgements		293

FOREWORD

PROFESSOR MIKE ARCHER, UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES

The thylacine, once Australia's top marsupial predator, has many devotees, and one of the most loyal enthusiasts of this now-believed-extinct beast is Col Bailey. He is absolutely convinced, and not without good reason, that this once prolific animal, intentionally slaughtered in the thousands in the 1800s and early 1900s, is in fact with us still. With all my heart, I hope he is right.

Col's collation of tales in the pages that follow is, and has been for me, totally addictive. I doubt that anyone who starts to read these accounts will be able to put the book down before finishing. So it should come with a warning that, once opened, this book will require an allocation of at least three otherwise task-free hours before you will be able to focus on anything else. Some of these stories may make you fume with anger at what we did to this unfortunate animal, while others will likely make you weep, for despite how incredibly forgiving these creatures were, we ruthlessly tore them apart. Col's account of Reg Trigg's 'Lucy' gave me heartache, while other stories involving personal sightings entice us to share Col's unshakable conviction that the thylacine must surely still be out there roaming the remote bushland of Tasmania, perhaps permitting us a second chance.

As I read these captivating stories, it occurred to me that Col and I have been trying to deal with the tragedy of the thylacine's decline in curiously similar ways – we have both been gathering and interpreting previously overlooked fragments of ancient information. His obsession began in 1967, the same year I returned to Australia to research the paleontological history of the thylacine based on fossils. Col's invaluable and far more elusive fragments are the memories of the hunters and bushmen, most of them long since departed, who knew the thylacine far better than any of the scientists of their time. He has used their experiences and observations to blend a distinctly unique patchwork quilt of support and understanding about this magnificent marsupial.

The fragments I and others have sought in addition to fossils have been pieces of DNA that can be recovered from almost all of the preserved juvenile specimens, skins and skulls sequestered in museums around the world, mini-genetic arks patiently awaiting the day when we become proficient enough to use these as a tool to 'de-extinct' thylacines back into the world again. But just as Col's albeit rich compilation of bushmen's wisdom contains gaps in what we should know about the thylacine, the challenge for molecular biologists hoping to recreate a whole thylacine from DNA fragments may be comparable gaps in knowledge about this animal's genetic recipe.

But of course bridging these gaps may all be unnecessary if Col's conviction that it's still out there is correct. As he confessed in his last book, *Shadow of the Thylacine*, he actually saw one in 1995 in the Weld River Valley in south-west Tasmania, just after daybreak on a cool autumn morning, and ironically, as he points out, this was nine years after the thylacine was declared officially extinct.

Col began writing up these bushmen's and trapper's tales in a biweekly series in the *Derwent Valley Gazette* between 1995 and

2005, a pastime that increasingly became an incurable obsession. In the gathering of these stories he has added a vast amount to the little previously known in addressing uncertainties about the biology and ecology of an animal that scientists neglected to document before the last captive individual died in 1936.

Regardless, it would be wrong to think that Col's obsession entirely consumed his life post 1967. Like the best of the colonial bushmen he admires, he has long been a lover of all things wild. When not pursuing or writing about the thylacine, he has, in his time, been an avid canoeist, bushwalker, explorer and also a marathon race walker. As he notes in his previous book, his earliest aspiration as a youngster was to become a vet, an ambition unfortunately thwarted by family circumstances at the time. Regardless, he has accomplished much in resolutely keeping alive the conviction, backed by his own experience, that living, breathing thylacines are still out there in the wilds of the island state.

When Col and I went bushwalking in south-east Tasmania in 2001, we chose paths thylacines were known to have frequented, such as the bushland within the enchanting Styx forests near Maydena and the vast highland plains of the Mount Field National Park, where international tourists had recently reported seeing two thylacines loping across the snow-laden buttongrass sedge land.

As we walked through the bush and I listened to the wisdom of this man, his optimism proved irresistibly contagious as it has to so many others. So, we made an agreement. He promised that if he caught one alive, he would grab a small bit of tissue before releasing the animal so we could have some fresh DNA to work with. In return, I promised that if we managed to clone a thylacine before he found one, we'd release the first one near his backyard

LURE OF THE THYLACINE

so he could have the exquisite pleasure of finding a live one in the bush. Whatever comes first, finding a live survivor or whipping up a reconstituted thylacine, both of us fully intend to keep our promises.

Until that exciting time arrives, I commend to you, lucky reader, this wonderful compilation of stories which Col has presented, complete with his own perceptive commentaries that enrich our understanding about these tales from the old trappers and bushmen. Although many of these stories are unverifiable because they were, after all, personal experiences that can't be 'scientifically tested', they need to be cherished because at the moment they're pretty much all we've got to remind us of what it was that we so carelessly let slip out of sight.

I do so hope that Col is right about its continued survival, and that as a result he will be the first to fulfil the mutual agreement we made that day while sitting on a log deep in a wilderness that was once the kingdom of the mighty thylacine.

Professor Michael Archer

School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences

University of New South Wales

INTRODUCTION

My first book, *Tiger Tales*, originated from discussions with an old Tasmanian trapper, Reg Trigg. I met Reg in 1980, and he generously shared a wealth of stories about the Tasmanian tiger. Comprising both anecdotes and verified historical accounts, these stories spanned over 100 years, during which time the thylacine graduated from being seen as a despised sheep-killer to its modern-day status of magnificent survivor.

The first edition of *Tiger Tales* was published in 2001, following the stories' original publication as a biweekly series in the *Derwent Valley Gazette*. Over time *Tiger Tales* has become a sought-after collector's item that in recent years has commanded a figure many times its original cover price. Although this edition contains a selection of the original tales, I have also included additional information and new stories.

An ever-growing band of Tasmanian tiger devotees contends that the animal continues to exist, despite the unwavering stance taken by the scientific fraternity that it is extinct. I am not in any way attempting to challenge the scientists' reasoning, as no conclusive proof has emerged to prove otherwise since the last known thylacine died in the Hobart Zoo in 1936. Nevertheless, I reserve the right to offer my personal opinion.

A selection of these yarns came directly from the mouths of the old Tasmanian bushmen and fur trappers, most of them

now departed, who were always ready to share their personal encounters with me. Their knowledge and first-hand experience of the Tasmanian tiger were incomparable, and as such are historical treasures. Much of their information could well have gone to the grave with them had I not sought them out. These men were the true experts on this unique creature.

I have endeavoured to present accounts ranging from the mid-nineteenth through to the early twenty-first centuries, and in doing so I have sought to cover numerous aspects of the thylacine debate. The bounty period is particularly interesting for it was this era that produced many of these fascinating tales. The commonly held belief that thylacines killed sheep has recently been challenged by some scientists and academics, but I have it on good authority that it actually happened, and many times over, as some of these stories reveal.

The relationship between humans and the Tasmanian tiger shines through, particularly so in the story of the old trapper Reg Trigg and his pet tiger Lucy, but all too often the thylacine is the villain of the piece in an unrelenting battle with man.

Throughout these yarns are insights into the tiger's behavioural patterns, and these add to our understanding of the complexities of this little understood creature.

Several of these stories are somewhat fanciful and for that I make no apologies, for they add a certain flavour to the mix and help to break up the overarching theme of an unfortunate animal that had little choice in its destiny.

Of course, as is to be expected, I have sought to present the thylacine as a survivor, considering my steadfast belief that the animal has survived into the present day. If not for this personal conviction, the underlying theme of this collection could well be one of resignation that the animal is extinct and there is

nothing more to be proved about its current existence.

This collection contains over 60 stories, and the theme of the underdog tiger flows through the whole. It is my hope that the book will encourage readers to question the current official wisdom about the tiger, and to appreciate this very special creature.

CHAPTER 1

REG TRIGG AND LUCY

Like so many other young men of his generation returning from the Great War, Reg Trigg was unsettled and disillusioned. Back in his beloved Victorian high country, he struggled to settle back into a lifestyle he'd once cherished. He felt most at ease working with horses, his affinity with them now much stronger than his affinity with his fellow man.

Upon leaving the Middle East at the end of the conflict, Reg had been forced to put down his beloved Waler, and bitter memories of the horse continued to haunt him. As the Great Depression began to take hold in 1929, Reg, still single and without work, decided to try his luck further south. It was while drinking in a hotel in the Melbourne suburb of Carlton that he was led to believe there was employment to be had working with beef cattle down in Tasmania. Hurriedly packing a few belongings, he was soon crossing Bass Strait on his way to Launceston. On his arrival late in 1929, Reg discovered to his dismay that the situation was, if anything, worse than in Victoria, for there was no regular work of any description to be found.

Stranded and unable to raise his return fare, Reg tramped the country roads looking for work — any sort of work — before befriending an elderly farmer, Frank Scott. Frank gave him several months' work on his farm, and then set him up with a trap run in the Western Tiers. Reg had a good knowledge of trapping,

having trapped extensively in the Victorian highlands with his father before the war. Heading for the high country of northern Tasmania, he soon located the run near what is now the Walls of Jerusalem National Park.

Established in Frank's rough bark humpy, Reg's necessities of life were few and he soon became largely self-sufficient. It was while out checking his trap lines early one cold winter morning that he came upon a young female Tasmanian tiger securely trussed up in a snare. Although unable to free herself, she was not seriously injured and he managed to secure the traumatised animal's head in a hemp sack. Binding her legs and slipping her over his shoulders, Reg was able to safely transport her back to his camp, where he confined her in a hurriedly constructed timber pen.

He named the young tiger Lucy and commenced pampering her with every kindness, to which the wary animal gradually responded. A mutual bond of trust and affection slowly began, and with it evolved one of the more memorable stories of the Australian bush. Feeding the young tiger presented no difficulty because of the ready supply coming from his trap line. Eventually Reg was able to feed Lucy by hand, and she responded by allowing him to gently stroke her head, an experience she appeared to appreciate.

As winter began to take hold, Lucy became increasingly restless. Although the affection between them remained strong, Reg became concerned at her unsettled mood while he was absent from the camp. Eventually, out of genuine concern for his darling Lucy, he released her back into the wild. Parting with her saddened Reg greatly, and afterwards he kept a lookout for the young tiger, but she appeared to have vanished.

One morning Reg's despondency turned to joy. A mother

tiger with two cubs sat patiently waiting for him along one of his well-worn trails. Instantly he recognised Lucy. Reg stopped short of the trio, and for some minutes man and beast faced each other, totally entranced. At length Lucy turned and, together with her two cubs, walked slowly off into the bush.

Although he continued to trap the same area for many years, it was to be the last time Reg would lay eyes upon Lucy or, for that matter, any others of her kind. The ominous clouds of potential extinction were already gathering.

CHAPTER 2

MAN'S BEST FRIEND TO THE VERY END

Early in the twentieth century, Ted Harrison was something of an identity in his neighbourhood in northern Tasmania. The retired bullocky was surprisingly robust for his age and was a familiar sight driving his horse and trap into town every few weeks to pick up his supplies and catch up on all the local gossip. His constant companion was a little black and white fox terrier named Digger. Getting on in age and, like his master, blind in one eye, a more faithful and loving friend no man could wish for. The old chap and his dog were an inseparable duo, and in conversation one was never mentioned without reference to the other. Ted claimed that Digger was his seeing-eye dog, and because of this the terrier was permitted to enter shops where no other canine would dare to tread.

They lived on a small property several kilometres out of town in a neat white cottage on a carefully tended block of land. One cold dark winter's night, Ted needed to replenish his wood box and ventured outdoors to the wood heap, lantern in hand and Digger by his side. Having gathered an armful of wood, he turned to make his way back to the house when a bark from Digger drew his attention to a large Tasmanian tiger standing only yards away.

Why it was there is not clear; apart from Ted's horse there was no other livestock on the property.

Little Digger became increasingly concerned, barking loudly and running back and forth in a frantic attempt to draw the beast from his master. Ted could only look on helplessly as the snarling tiger backed off into the darkness and, in doing so, lured the dog with it.

Despite Ted's desperate calls, all he could hear was Digger's barking becoming fainter as the dog pursued the tiger into the surrounding hills. The old bullocky spent a sleepless night desperately waiting for Digger to return. After another day and night had passed, Ted could wait no longer. Preparing his horse and trap, he took the road into town, anxiously asking all he met along the way if they had news of Digger. Soon the whole town was abuzz.

Almost a week passed before a local farmer came to Ted with some tragic news. Some days previously he had discovered a small black and white dog dead on a back road several kilometres away, mangled almost beyond recognition. Not having heard the report of Ted's encounter with the tiger and his missing dog, he had buried the animal by the roadside. Old Ted's eyes welled with tears as he listened to the story, eventually becoming so distraught that he had to be assisted to his bed. Assuring his visitor that he would soon recover, he bade him farewell, desiring to be left alone with his grief.

Almost another week was to pass before Ted's neighbour, not having seen the old chap around for several days, called to check that all was well. When he knocked on the door and received no answer, the neighbour became alarmed. A search of the property revealed Ted's horse in a distressed condition, badly in need of water. Knowing that Ted always treated his horse with the greatest

of care, he realised something was amiss and forced his way into the house. He was shocked and saddened to discover old Ted dead in his bed.

The local doctor put the cause of death as heart failure, but Ted's many friends knew better. He had been fit and healthy with a heart as strong as the bullocks with which he had spent his working life. They knew he had died of a broken heart, believing that with his beloved Digger gone there was little left to live for.

They buried Ted on his property beside a small knoll out in the paddock, a favourite spot where he'd often sat with Digger, soaking up the sun.

About a month later, his neighbour's wife visited the grave to lay flowers and was shocked to discover the remains of a small black and white dog lying on the grave. It bore terrible injuries: one of its hind legs was missing and severe lacerations covered most of its emaciated body. Deep scratch marks in the surrounding earth indicated that it had tried in vain to burrow into the grave, apparently perishing in the attempt. Further investigations revealed the dog's true identity – little Digger, faithful to the end, had managed to drag himself home to his master despite his terrible injuries, but sadly all too late.

CHAPTER 3

HIGH COUNTRY TRAPPERS

The Tasmanian fur industry was once a booming enterprise with many men seasonally trapping in the high country. Every year they came trudging up from the lowlands on their annual pilgrimage to highland areas rich in winter game: wallaby, kangaroo, brush and ringtail possum and platypus, together with the occasional thylacine.

These hardy bushmen were the true frontiersmen and tales of their exploits abound; many became legends in their own time. For some it was an escape from the law, a way of evading capture as they blended in and became accepted members of the backwoods trapping fraternity. For most it was a supplementary income and a reprieve from their usual occupation, while for others it was a do-or-die effort to put food on the table for a struggling family. A good trapper could earn a year's income in several months and some did. Often shepherds became seasonal snarers, enhancing their meagre salaries when their flocks were moved to lower pastures.

But relations between these mountain men were not always amicable and in 1924 a man was murdered for his skins. Following a long trial, the supposed culprit was found not guilty on the grounds of insanity. Some men found the isolation hard to take, while others relished it.

Country police were ever on the lookout for renegade poachers snaring out of season. These men were too idle to obtain an honest

living and made illicit hunting their sole occupation. In 1929 the Animals and Birds Protection Board was formed to combat illegal fur trapping and fishing. The Board had the power to regulate seasons and to issue permits. Board members consisted of stockowners and farmers, fur dealers, local government and Royal Society personnel.

Early last century conservationists were becoming increasingly concerned that certain species were being trapped out, particularly the beautiful brush-tailed possum. Black brushtails commanded 70 shillings per dozen skins while their ring-tailed cousins fetched only five shillings per dozen.

By the early twentieth century the Tasmanian tiger was already becoming rare. Graziers were willing to pay good money for a thylacine cadaver if they believed it had been killed on their land, although this was not always the case. These skins were mostly discarded once the hunter had been paid, sometimes as much as £5, so desperate were farmers to rid their properties of the much-maligned tiger.

The Jenkins brothers from the Bronte district hunted thylacines with large, specially bred dogs and 14-bore Cashmore muzzle-loaders. A hundred years ago these men were legendary throughout the Central Highlands and Plateau areas.

The Pearce clan from Derwent Bridge and Clarence River were renowned thylacine hunters, earning a small fortune from shooting and trapping tigers during the years of the government bounty, as official records reveal. While they were essentially sheep graziers, they waged a persistent war against the marsupial tiger, as did some of their compatriots at Dee Bridge and Bronte.

Many Central Plateau and Highland place names were synonymous with Tasmanian tigers in the early years of the last century: Lake Mackenzie, Mount Penny, Soldiers Marsh, Lake

Meston, Great Lake, Christian Marsh, Interlaken, Bronte, Dee Bridge, Derwent Bridge, Victoria Valley, King William Saddle ... the list goes on.

Rabbits were another lucrative sideline for trappers. In excess of a thousand pairs a day were being sent to Hobart from the Lakes Country in 1903, while 44 000 frozen rabbit carcasses were shipped to England in 1904. Trappers received between two and three shillings per dozen for their labours.

Severe weather conditions often saw men marooned for weeks at a time in the high country, when snow lay thick on the ground. Trapping was eventually banned in Tasmania during the 1980s after a lingering battle by conservationists to shut the fur industry down.

During the 1940s in the Gordon River country, Ellendale trappers the Quinn brothers and local identity Ernie Bond clashed over the likelihood of tigers still being in the Rasselas Valley. Bond strongly maintained they were, while the Quinns had their doubts. In a series of letters to the editor in *The Mercury* they thrashed it out, with *Mercury* columnist Michael Sharland ('Peregrine') acting as referee.

The Quinn brothers claimed to have been snaring in the valley since 1930 and to have taken up to 15 000 head of game without ever once seeing a tiger or its tracks. They further claimed to have been the only snarers operating in the area during that time. While some, including Bond, were calling for a closed season and a proclaimed game reserve, the Quinns claimed such a move was unnecessary. Regardless, they guaranteed to clear out if ever the Tasmanian tiger was proven to still be in the area. Commenting on the matter, 'Peregrine' wrote that:

LURE OF THE THYLACINE

The outlook of the animal conservationist and the game trapper always will differ, and whenever a sanctuary is suggested the people who oppose it are those who resent any interference with their assumed right to kill. No suggestion was made by me that the Rasselas Valley should be proclaimed a sanctuary, but I remember that in an earlier letter the Quinn Bros themselves advocated closing the valley to preserve the larger game, evidently, and it now seems, with a view to their reaping the reward in later years. I am sure Mr Fleay would hesitate about accepting the challenge to catch a 'tiger' in the valley after having read the statement that these trappers have taken 15 000 head of game there, as probably there is little left on which the 'tiger' might support itself. In other areas, if not in the Rasselas, poison is laid for the carnivorous animals and if a 'tiger' should avoid the snares it may ultimately succumb to the bait. Trapping has depleted many valleys of game and the time is overdue when a brake should be applied.

A *Mercury* item in April 1937 gave a clearer picture of the trials and tribulations of the seasonal snarer and the fluctuating returns:

Keen disappointment at the price of game skins was expressed by Mr EM Quinn, of Evandale, who returned yesterday from a hunting expedition of six weeks in the valley of the Rasselas, beyond Adamsfield. Mr Quinn's party secured about 1700 skins during the season. When the game season was opened in 1933, Mr Quinn and his companion, who hunted and snared under the name of Quinn Brothers, obtained 2077 skins. During the season just ended the skins obtained were wallaby, kangaroo, and brush opossum. As the season was shorter (the haul of game was proportionally greater than in 1933), Mr Quinn said that the

members of the party were isolated in the bush throughout the season, and they worked harder than ever before during the six weeks. They endured great hardships as the weather was extremely rough, and, according to Mr Quinn, they lived like savages in the hope of making a good return. They had no knowledge of the state of the market for the skins, and Mr Quinn said he was disgusted when passing through Adamsfield on his way to Evandale to learn of the low prices offering for the game skins. Although the big catch would pay the expenses of the expedition, the low prices ruling would leave the men nothing for their labour and discomfort.

Trapping was not an easy life, and there was no guarantee of a sufficient return for the trappers' hard work.