

THYLACINE SEEN NEAR TOM PRICE

Hikers in the hills behind Area W, near Tom Price have spotted a ‘Tasmanian Tiger.’ It is thought that the dog-like marsupials were once widespread across the Australian mainland until the introduction of the dingo, over three thousand years ago. A local anthropologist, Bill Day, who works for the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation has been searching for a thylacine since he was shown photographs taken by the son of one of the original inhabitants of Tom Price, Heather MacKenzie, who now lives in Queensland. Heather’s teenaged son took photographs of the thylacine on a boyhood hike in 1967. Heather could only give Bill a vague description of where the photograph was taken. Since meeting Heather several years ago, Bill has been searching for the site.

While showing some visitors the ancient rock art which survives beside springs in the region, Bill climbed a little higher than usual and noticed markings on a flat rock atop the vertical surfaces where petroglyphs are more usually found. He was very excited to find that the animal portrayed was the same thylacine pictured in Heather’s son’s photograph, 38 years previously. ‘I am amazed that we don’t value these ancient art galleries,’ Bill told the Communicator, ‘particularly something like the thylacine, which must date back at least before Christ 2000 years ago. More and more graffiti is desecrating these sites and something needs to be done to protect them. I have seen rock art protected in Kakadu by walkways and signage. Visitors need to know that we value these sites.’

Dr Bill Day

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The gorge beside Rio Tinto's Tom Price to Dampier railway west of Tom Price. The Thylacine engraving is on the flat table rock above the man in blue shirt. Photo: Bill Day.



Other unprotected petroglyphs in the gorge west of Tom Price.