

“MYSTERIOUS AUSTRALIA”

Vol. 12, Issue No 5

JUNE, 2022.



INSIDE:

- A NEW BOOK FROM THE GILROYS “GIGANTOPITHECUS – THE AUSTRALIAN FOSSIL EVIDENCE”.
- GIANT APES OF VOLCANIC AUSTRALIA.
- THE THYLACINE – ITS FOSSIL HISTORY.

A NEW BOOK FROM THE GILROYS “GIGANTOPITHECUS – THE AUSTRALIAN FOSSIL EVIDENCE”.

Dr [hc] Rex Gilroy PhD
Professor [hc] of History
Copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.

While the authors are preparing their enormous & long-awaited memoirs of one Rex Gilroy, [and Dr Heather enters the picture later in the book], Rex has also been working on another book project, concerning the giant forest ape, Gigantopithecus, the largest known primate that ever lived during the Pliocene- Pleistocene period throughout Europe-Asia-yet also Australia as fossil feet impressions and possible skull endocasts suggest.

Over the years, beginning in August 1972, we have gradually built up a collection of fossil footprint casts, beginning with the discovery of a front half intact right foot, recovered by me at a Katoomba water catchment dirt service road location at the bottom of the high bank containing the railway lines. The date of my discovery was Sunday 6th August 1972. Discovering the fossil amid gravels while on an afternoon short-cut to the [then] Marked Tree/ Convicts Graves, west side of the Great Western Highway, where I often collected insects. Discovering the enormous specimen I quickly forget about my Entomological interests and grabbing my note book, ruler and pen from my back pack I quickly measured the fossil and measured it.

The fossil was a shallow 1 to 1.2 cm in toe depth in places. and the ironstone slab fragment which contained the front half was 9cm to 10cm in depth the foot, or rather what remained of it, needed chalk-outlining. Embedded within the slab what remained of the fossil I measured to be 32 cm length from the outer toes to the to the broken end, 27cm width across the toes impressions and 29cm width across the broken end. I estimated that the giant being had once stood 3 to 4 metres in height! The large opposable big toe to me made the fossil specimen the (incomplete foot impression of a giant ape rather than that of a primitive giant hominin. Meanwhile the day was getting late as I decided this valuable specimen deserved saving. I left the site in hast hoping I would be able to get it back to my North Katoomba home the next day.

When I informed dad of what I had discovered and where I found it he did not approve, particularly since I planned to carry the heavy stone from the gravel service road and up the embankment to the railway tracks [in between trains. Despite my explanation that the fossil was undoubtedly of immense age and important as an exhibit in my then Mount York Natural history Museum he refused to help me. All I wanted him to do was drive me to the railway line fence and I would do the rest!

So about 7am on the Sunday morning I began a walk from my home [situated atop a slope above Victoria Street] that took me about 2 kilometres north to the top of a tall rise overlooking a creek. Here carrying my backpack, I negotiated a dirt road which led over and up the creek and on westward over a shallow rise down onto a swamp. This swamp was dry and I got through the tall dead grass within a few minutes, reaching the base of the west slope of this occasional waterway. Having ‘paced it out’, I then entered a bushy paddock beside a farm, and nearby, a bush road which north-south bordered a long ridge which separates the North Katoomba township to the south ‘border’ between the North Katoomba settlement and the often-dense bush that surrounds the dam and beyond, the Great Western Highway which passes the former Marked Tree / Convict Graves. I finally reached the service road and descended down it to the fossil footprint. Here I took a rest. It could only be a few minutes as Winter days are short.

People seated at the windows had to have seen me as I picked up this few kilogram weight monster, looking down from above the service road at least 50ft below them, but I took no notice. The relic was certain to force me to drop it somewhere as I attempted to carry it all the way back to ‘civilisation’ along Victoria Street. I soon began stopping and resting, dropping the monster half-

foot in grass. Knowing the Catchment roads and bush tracks through years of bushwalking helped me.

An hour into my increasingly difficult and weighty trek I was already cursing my dad for not wanting to help me out [there were times when he was hard to get on with!]. Having climbed the steepest part of the service road with at least two rest stops I reached the summit. Here I had to lift the stone and drop it over the catchment fence for it was here that an outer road turned parallel with that on the inside. I had come up this road on my way to the Catchment that morning. After yet another rest I lifted the stone and proceeded to make my way down to the dirt road that separates the Catchment from the dried gully described earlier, and North Katoomba houses. Now locals were noticing me and the time on my watch said 2.30pm. My rest stops were getting ever longer, but being close enough to my home in Victoria Street on the east side of the north-south gully creek, rather than place the fossil among bushes until the next day, I decided to continue on. I was feeling exhausted but in one super-human effort I once more lifted the stone and staggered on with it for about another 20 ft [6.1 metres], took another break of about several minutes, and then proceeded to make my way to the house about 100 or so yards further on – as a few neighbours stood at their fences laughing at “Mad Rex”!

By now the sun was decidedly approaching the western horizon and was just above the tree tops. My father emerged, and having caught on to what I had been doing all day, made the silly remark that, if I had waited he would have driven me up the highway and parked alongside the railway line fence! I was too tired for an argument and carried the heavy stone up our steps to the back door of the house. Here I dropped it on the lawn and staggered into the house and collapsed on the bed!

The next morning I woke Very Late then still aching all over I hosed the slab down and after chalk outlining this most important fossil, I had my father drive myself and my big discovery up to my Mount York Natural History Museum [today it rests at my home].

My epic painful hike was the talk of a community ignorant of the importance of my discovery, yet while more ignorant locals laughed off my efforts over a “worthless lump of old rock” as it was soon referred to, other more enlightened people to whom I showed the fossil and explained its importance to our ancient past and admired my efforts to preserve it.

Down through the years I have shown the specimen and explained how I single-handedly carried this great prize several kilometers back to my then North Katoomba home. “I call that dedication”, said one man to whom I showed it!

I often wonder how I was able to accomplish what I did even though I was much younger back in 1972 and could lift and carry such items. Had I not discovered and rescued this heavy specimen a valuable piece of hitherto unknown primate history would have remained unknown on that dirt road.

It now bears the name of *Gigantopithecus giltoyii* 1972

-0-



The partially-intact impression in ironstone of a giant primate-like footprint, recovered by Rex Gilroy in August 1972 at Katoomba. This footprint measures 32cm in length by 27cm in width across the toes and 29cm in width across the broken end. It closely parallels others found on the Carrai Range, inland from Kempsey on the NSW mid north coast in 1977 and also another found at a south Sydney site in December 1998. These fossils suggest the presence in Pliocene-Pleistocene Australia of a giant bipedal primate race of from 3 to 4m in height! Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.

GIANT APES OF VOLCANIC AUSTRALIA.

Dr [hc] Rex Gilroy PhD
Professor [hc] of History
Copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.

Despite coldness and dampness following recent wet weather Heather and I decided upon a field search which took us deep into Kanangra Boyd National Park south of Oberon, on Friday 27th May 2022.

Following our arrival our search of volcanic shoal rock [granite], dating somewhere around 8-9 million years soon resulted in the discovery of a worn basalt shoal upon it I detected three fading outlines of primate-type feet impressions, others that had once been embedded by the primates had long ago been worn away by time and the elements. These fossils consisted of: three tracks facing south close together in an east-west row.

These “Tracks through Time” were by their closeness obviously surviving fossil foot impressions of [A] a family of three creatures moving southward together, or else surviving impressions of a larger number of individuals [there was room on the shoal of former ash for other individuals since worn away by time]. Chalk-outlining showed the outer right foot like the other two had an opposable big toe, this one being 4cm and width. across the toes, which were all faded with time and had to be chalk-outlined to bring them out, otherwise the width of the toes was 18cm. The mid-foot was 14cm width and the heel 12cm width. The impression was 1cm in depth. The foot was so placed that its big toe was closer [3cm] to the giant foot than the heel end [7cm].

The centre foot impression was that of a giant, measuring 53cm length. The big toe of this left foot was 12cm tall by 10cm wide., the others being [right to left] 11cm tall by 5cm width, 6cm tall by 6cm width, 8cm wide by 6cm tall and 10cm tall by 8cm width. The width across the toes was 40cm, 29cm across the mid-foot and 29cm across the heel, the foot being 4cm deep in the rock. Of course the measurements were distorted due to originally having been embedded in the soft cooled volcanic ash in all the specimens. 16cm distant from the giant impression was the east side impression pointing south. This impression was 39cm in length by 29cm width across the toes, being 3cm in depth and 20cm width and 13cm width across the heel.

Further searching in this particular area may yet turn up more fossil tracks. The particular eruption whose ash flow had cooled before the escaping beings preserved their feet occurred at least a few million years ago in early Pliocene times. Further study of this particular site may yet give us a more accurate dating. Meanwhile, our study of these latest feet impressions, allowing for distortion, suggests all were primate and Gigantopithecine in shape. The largest [central] specimen having been at least 14metres in height. By their varying sizes I wondered the feet impressions were those of a family, perhaps even Gigantopithecus gilroyii? More will become known as further evidence of this

newly discovered Australian subspecies is uncovered. There were much smaller primate species in ancient Australia, but the Gigantopithecus gilroyii.

These monster primates generally moved about on their knuckles, due to the massive weight of the upper part of their body, which would have been the reason for them moving on all fours, They would have been able to adopt an upright stance when feeding momentarily upon berries, nuts and other favoured vegetation growing high above ground.

-0-



*On Friday 27th May 2022 following days of rain, the Gilroys carried out a search for fossil hominin or primate-type feet impressions in a remote forest region of the Kanangra Boyd National Park, long known for such relics. Here Dr Gilroy is measuring the surviving impressions of three creatures, identified as Gigantopithecene, embedded in an ash deposit probably about several million years old.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*Heather Gilroy assisting husband Rex in recording this latest discovery.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*

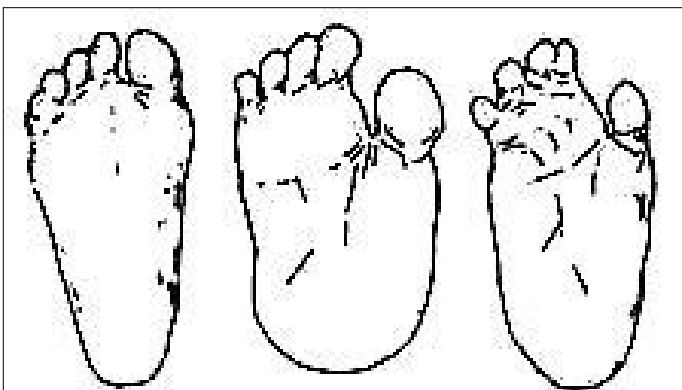


The shapes of these fossil impressions [chalk-outlined due to their faded condition] match Gigantopithecus fossil footprints found elsewhere.

Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.



The fossils were so worn by time that chalk-outlining to show their features was necessary. Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.



Comparative features between [Left] Human foot [Middle] Yeti foot and [Right] Gorilla Foot. The Yeti foot stands closer to that of the Gorilla in physical structure, firmly placing the Yeti with the primates rather than hominins.



Frontal and right profile views of a Gigantopithecus reconstruction. Reconstructions seen at the “Monsters and Myths” exhibition, Sydney, NSW.



Close view of the probable facial features of the Gigantopithecus.



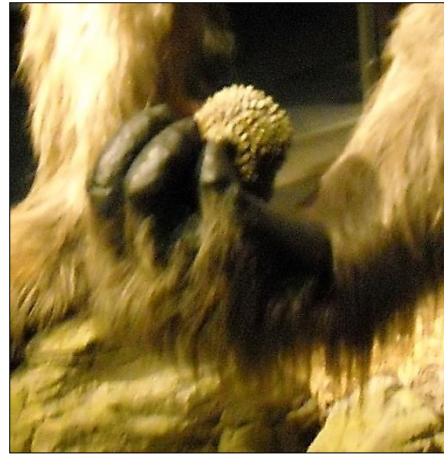
Right profile of the head. It is theorised that the creature would have had a forward-projecting face, thick, projecting brow ridges with high, receding forehead, the skull being doliocephalic in shape.

The feet possessed an opposable big toe as shown in the theoretical feet reconstruction of the Gigantopithecus. It is more likely however, that future fossil skeletal remains will show that the feet of Gigantopithecus will be similarly shaped to the Shipton snow feet impressions, which also parallel fossil examples of the same basic shape in Australia.

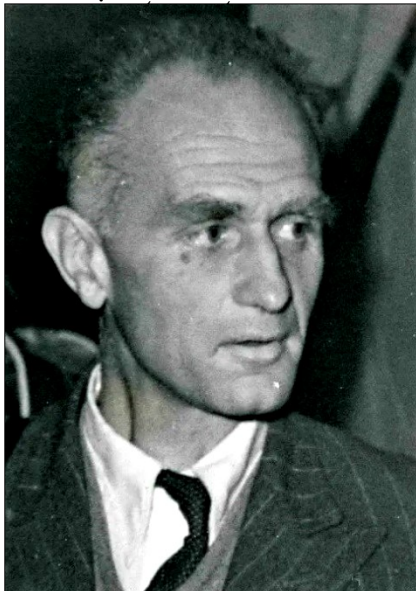




Probable hand/finger reconstruction of the Gigantopithecus which like the rest of the model follows known



The fingers would have been long enough for grasping objects, being much like our own.



Eric Shipton (Eric Earle Shipton CBE, born 1st August 1907-died 28th March 1977), mountaineer. During his 1951 Mount Everest expedition, Shipton and mountaineering colleague, Michael Ward took the famous photos of what may have been a Yeti, an ice-axe being included in the photographs to show scale. Wikipedia image.



An artist's impression of the mysterious Yeti, Or "Dweller among the rocks" of Himalayan Sherpa folklore. Height estimates range from 2.5 to around 3 metres in the males, females being a little smaller. Being giant primates, in the manner of the Gorilla, their body weight is concentrated in the upper part of the body. This enables them only to adopt an erect posture for a short time, before the weight forces them to go down on all fours. This would have to be the same with the Yeti and certainly Gigantopithecus. Photo courtesy Michael Holford Library photos, London UK.

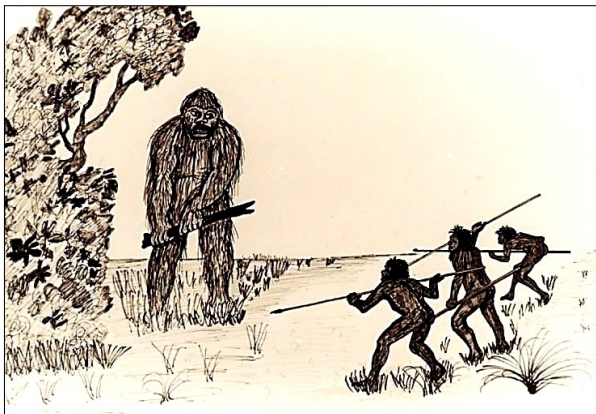


The famous photo of one of the Yeti footprints found in the snow of the Gauri Sankar range near Mt Everest on November 9th 1951 resembles fossil footprints found in Australia believed made by Gigantopithecines. It measures 30.5cm long.



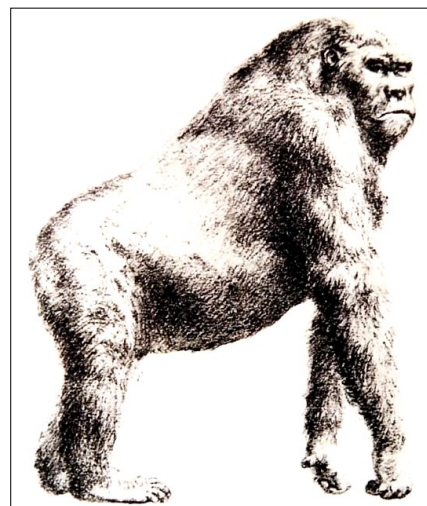
This photo shows the Yeti feet impressions found by Eric Shipton and his team. Their discovery caused a worldwide media sensation at the time.

A painting of a Yeti/Gigantopithecine family group foraging in a Nepalese forest. They have often been claimed seen by local people in this situation or in pairs, even singularly in the forests, preferring to keep clear of humans.



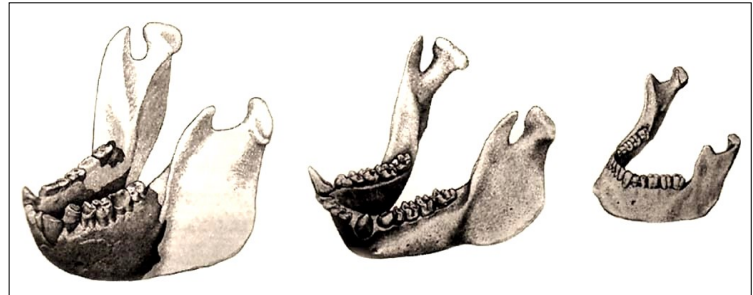
Rex Gilroy's impression of Aborigines attacking a giant man-ape being. Their ancient traditions Australia-wide are full of such encounters, dating back untold thousands of years. Sketch copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.

Reconstruction of a male Gigantopithecus, based upon the conservative scientific theory that these apes walked on their knuckles like a gorilla. The depiction of the head is conjectural, because no remains other than partial lower jaws and single teeth have been found. It is assumed by scientists that the giant ape's body was in proportion to its massive jaw and that, except for its size and much higher face, Gigantopithecus would have stood about 9ft [2.75m] tall when upright and may have weighed as much as 600lbs. Sketch by kind permission of Scientific American.

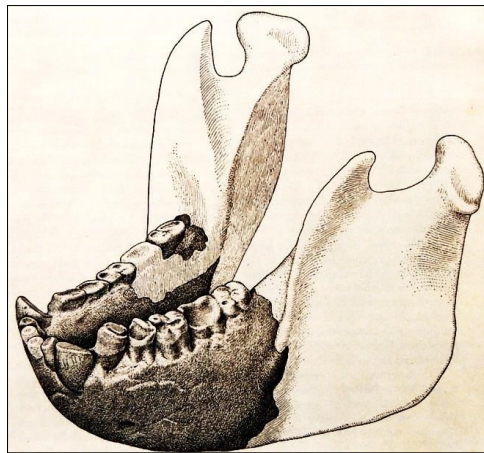




Four jaw bones of Gigantopithecus. They are [top left] from an old female, [top right] a juvenile male and a very old male [bottom left] all discovered in China between 1956 and 1958 and believed to be between half a million years to one million years old. The jaw from a young adult female [bottom right] found in India in 1968 is at least five million years old. Photo kind permission of Scientific American.



Large dimensions of the biggest of the Gigantopithecus jaws [left] are obvious when compared with the jaws of a male mountain gorilla [centre] and modern human [right]. Illustration kind permission of scientific American.



The ascending portions of the Gigantopithecus jaws, missing from all four fossils, are restored in this illustration. Note the wear visible on the Gigantopithecus canine teeth, in comparison to the pointed canines of the gorilla, [see previous page] above which is a result of the giant ape's grinding mode of mastication.

Illustration kind permission of Scientific American.



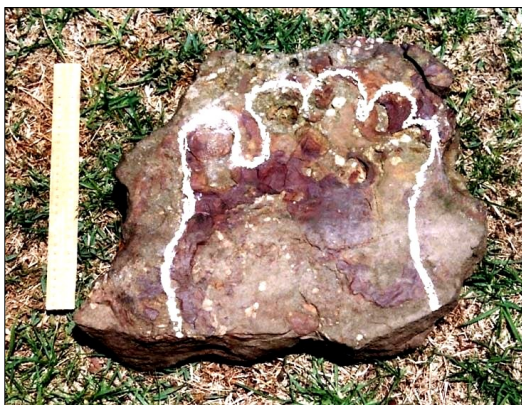
Comparison of the jaws of Gigantopithecus. Assembly reconstruction based on the jaw of a orangutan [right] and the reconstructed jaw of [left] of Homo erectus and [front] fragment of jaw of Meganthropus. The Java man Giant Homo erectus is believed to be a giant form of yowie Wikipedia image



Plaster cast of a Yeti footprint from Nepal. The foot measures 35cm long by 31cm wide across the toes, 21.5cm at midfoot and 20.5cm wide across the heel. Note the similarity to the 'Gigantopithecine' fossil foot impressions found in Australia. Note the authors' right foot cast for comparison.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.



The Nepalese Yeti footprint cast alongside the Carrai Range, NSW fossil cast and the authors' foot cast, demonstrating the large opposable-toed ape features of the Carrai, NSW fossil [right foot] and the left foot impression of the Nepalese Yeti footprint cast. Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.



The partially-intact impression in ironstone of a giant primate-like footprint, recovered by Rex Gilroy in August 1972 at Katoomba [see previous article for further details].
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.



The South Sydney giant primate [right] footprint impression is a larger version of the Carrai and [incomplete] Katoomba [1972] fossil footprints, measuring 63cm long by 46cm wide across the toes, 37cm wide at the heel and is 8cm deep. Note the opposable big toe which is present in all specimens of this fossil foot type. Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.

THE THYLACINE – ITS FOSSIL HISTORY.

Dr [hc] Rex Gilroy PhD
Professor [hc] of History
Copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.

No study of the Thylacine would be complete without first investigating its fossil history which is bound up with the evolution of the rest of Australia's native animals. In this regard it is not our intention to go into great detail on a full geological history of Australia, but concentrate upon those periods pertinent to Thylacine evolution.

Thylacines belong to the Order Dasyuroidea as the Family Thylacinidae. Fossil representatives of the Dasyuroidea are known from as far back as Late Oligocene times [ie around 23.5 million years ago], although their earlier fossil history is conjectural. On the other hand the fossil history of the Thylacine is better known, members of the Thylacinidae not being known earlier than the Miocene Period [about 23.5 to 5.3 million years ago] and their actual relationships and origins uncertain.

The Order Dasyuroidea includes Quolls and Numbats, the Thylacine being the largest species of the Order.

Dasyurids, being carnivorous, possess a biting, cutting dentition with four pairs of pointed upper incisors and three lower pairs, with well-developed upper and lower canines; two or three pairs of upper and lower blade-like premolars and four pairs of upper and lower molars having sharp, shearing cusps.

On the basis of their anatomy the living Dasyurids are divided into four Subfamilies. The Quolls, Tasmanian Devil, Kowari, Mulgara, Dibbler, Sandstone Antechinus and Fat-tailed Antechinus make up the Dasyurinae; phascogales and other antechinuses belong to the Phascogalinae; dunnarts, ningauis and the Kultae comprise the Sminthopsinae; while the planigales stand on their own as the Planigalinae. The Thylacine, officially regarded as extinct by the conservative scientific community, is left out of this list. This book intends to prove otherwise.

The superficially dog-like Thylacine was the last of a family now known only from the fossil record. Prior to the world-famous Riversleigh, Queensland fossil deposit finds revealing five more species of Oligocene-Miocene age, the Tertiary era [65 to 1.64 million years ago] fossil record was poor, with only one distinctive species dating from late Miocene times, *Thylacinus potens*, whose remains came from the Alcoota Local Fauna of the Northern Territory.

The Riversleigh Oligocene-Miocene species vary in size from one as small as a large domestic cat to another about three quarters the size of a German Shepherd Dog. Another of these five new

creatures is *Nimbacinus dicksoni*, a very primitive species lacking distinctive features characteristic of non-Riversleigh thylacines. For example, it retains a distinct metaconid on its lower molar teeth.

It has often been surmised by scientists that it was the arrival of the Aborigines and their later introduction of the dingo that hastened the 'extinction' of the Thylacine on the Australian mainland. Opinion varies on when exactly the earliest Aborigines [Australoids] began arriving here, but lately an age of between 50,000 and 60,000 has been suggested. However, the authors do not support the proposition that Aboriginal hunting itself was to blame, any more than were dingo depredations [and the carnivorous Thylacine could certainly have defended itself against the dingo!], for the fact supported by fossil skull-types and other remains in our possession, which reveal the presence of *Homo erectus* in Australia by around 1.8 million years ago, and one or more forms of *Australopithecus* well before that date!

Homo erectus, and perhaps *Australopithecines* [of the meat-eating 'gracile' forms] before them, probably killed Thylacines for food, but the Thylacine was but one of many other marsupial and other life forms available to these primitive Pliocene – Pleistocene ancestors of ourselves. More likely the decline of the mainland Thylacine was an event that extended over a very long period of time, in which the 'Big Dry' at the close of the last Ice-Age also played a part. Even so, like other wild life the Thylacines would have left the badly affected open country for moister mountainous forested regions, such as the eastern Australian mountain ranges, where we believe small numbers of the species survive today, and have been seen by campers and others.

The 'Big Dry' is still not entirely understood other than it was part of a dramatic worldwide event. By the dawn of the last great Ice-Age, the Pleistocene Period, which began around 2 million years ago, following the close of the Pliocene Period, and which was to last until about 10,000 years ago, a wide variety of unique species had evolved in Australia. In fact, the Pleistocene period supported a vast number of life forms worldwide. At this time much of the northern hemisphere was glaciated, creating extremely harsh conditions which differed considerably to those experienced in the southern hemisphere, which included the Australian region.

For, unlike the northern hemisphere, the Australian continent did not experience extensive glaciations, this being confined to the Victoria – New South Wales Alps, and also Tasmania, which like New Guinea, was at that time joined to the Australian mainland. A great land-bridge had formed, extending from mainland Asia through what is today island south-east Asia to New Guinea. The authors also maintain that, at this time another land-bridge extended from New Guinea to New Zealand, but this has no bearing on the subject of this book.

Apart from the southern alpine region, the rest of Australia experienced a warm and temperate climate. The interior was a land of richly vegetated plains, forests, lakes and river systems. This environment supported a vast population of marsupial, bird and reptile species, and they in turn provided an endless supply of food for our Stone-Age hominin inhabitants.

It was the age of the 'Megafauna' – giant kangaroo species that ranged in heights of from 3 to 4 metres, shared the plains with more than one species of giant flightless bird. One of these, *Dromornis stirtoni*, reached 3 metres or more in height, weighing more than 500 kg. Roaming among them was the largest 'mega-marsupial' of all, *Diprotodon optatum*, nearly 3 metres long and 2 metres tall at the shoulder. Crocodiles, today confined to the far northern Australian water courses, in those times ranged deep into South Australia; and the 'ancient giant butcher', *Megalanias prisca*, a giant 7 metres or more length, 700kg weight goanna, preyed upon animal and human life large and small.

Then, somewhere around 30,000 years ago, this idyllic Australian Ice-Age world began changing forever. The 'megafauna' and many other smaller species of animal and bird life began to disappear. Scientists have postulated two basic causes responsible for this devastating event; one is the climatic changes that overshadowed the Ice-Age, and the other cause, it is claimed, was the hunting activities of Aboriginal man. Yet, as we have just pointed out, as fossil evidence in our possession clearly proves, the presence of *Homo erectus* and one or more forms of meat-eating 'gracile' *Australopithecine* on this continent in pre-Aboriginal times, means the extinction is more

likely to have been a gradual process over a much longer period, accelerated only by the drying up of the continent.

As the climate turned warmer, the southern ice-sheet retreated and the interior of Australia became a vast, parched wasteland and a monumental drought began that was to last for several thousand years

With the melting of the ice-sheets worldwide, the sea levels began to rise, gradually separating Australia from New Guinea and Tasmania from the mainland; while the remaining land-bridges were flooded to form the present-day island chains of south-east Asia and Melanesia-New Zealand.

These then were the environmental conditions amid the turmoil of geological events, which re-shaped the world in which the Thylacine and other species lived, and had relied upon for its existence. The great submergence isolated these marsupials in New Guinea and Tasmania, and mainland Australia, where they would have to adapt to the new environmental conditions and, ultimately survive the Pleistocene into the present Holocene period.

They were not alone, for they still shared the land with another carnivore, the monster-monitor lizard, *Megalania prisca*. Evidence supporting this proposition exists in the Hawkesbury River district north of Sydney, where Aboriginal rock engravings include, besides the Thylacine, Megalania. One such rock engraving depicts a Megalania speared by hunters. All these rock images date back at least 3,000 years BP [Before Present].

According to some Aboriginal people the Thylacines were not very fast runners and were therefore easy to hunt down and kill. These claims are supported by a study of the limb proportions of both the Marsupial Lion, *Thylacoleo carnifex*, and the Thylacine, which indicate that these predators could not run fast. No four-footed marsupial the size of the Thylacine or Marsupial Lion was capable of prolonged and rapid pursuit like a wolf. This would be especially so in the case of females carrying pouched young.

Much still has to be learnt of the early evolution of the Thylacine and Australian scientists have yet to turn up more fossil remains to fill in gaps in our knowledge of these marsupials, particularly from the early period of their evolution. No doubt this will come to light as more fossil sites are uncovered.

We will now move on from the known fossil history of the Thylacine to study its external appearance. The animal displays remarkable similarity in physical appearance to the wolf and dog, with its large head and evenly balanced backbone, legs of about equal length, and the hind legs with the femoral segment pointing obliquely forwards. In the manner of the dog, the Thylacine chest is deep and it has non-retractile claws, running on its toes and not on the whole foot when on the move.

Official measurements for the Thylacine are scant, and not much is known about its weight. What has been deduced by scientists from stuffed specimens and information from 19th century literature on the animal shows that the head and body length varied from 851 to 1,181 mm, [average 1,086 mm]. The tail length being 331 to 610 mm [average 534 mm], while its length at the shoulder is about 560 mm, the whole weighing about 25kg.

The Thylacine is characterised by the 13 to 19 dark-brown to blackish coloured stripes extending from the posterior thoracic region onto the butt of the tail, and which provide a contrast to the brown to light brown or sandy body colour. The anterior stripes extend only a short distance from the midline with the longest stripes, on the rump, extending laterally to the upper thigh. The posterior rump stripes are short, extending to the butt of the tail. There is a variation in the number of body stripes from one individual to the next, and the stripes are more prominent in younger Thylacines.

Interestingly, old bushmen who remember the Thylacines have claimed that individuals of up to 7ft [2.15m] length from head to tail were not unknown; and there is a claim that a Thylacine shot on the McKay property at Trowutta was the largest ever known in that district, measuring 9ft [2.75m] from the nose tip to tip of tail. Either these larger creatures were the result of genetic mutation or a larger form or sub-species could be considered. Such larger animals could help to explain larger-than-normal paw impressions found in the Tasmanian wilds, and also on the Australian mainland, where

such oversized ‘tigers’ have also been claimed seen, not only by bushmen in the past but also in more recent times. These reports suggest to Tasmania-based researcher Eric Guiler that larger examples of these marsupials could have existed than were ever received by scientists in the old days.

The Thylacine tail differs from that of a canine and cannot be wagged laterally, which when the animal is turning, gives the impression that it is clumsy and ungainly. And unlike the fur of a dog, that of the Thylacine is close and tight on the tail, compared to the longish fur of a dog.

The female possesses a backward-opening pouch which is almost circular and contains four nipples; this protects the young when the mother is moving through grass and shrubbery. Other marsupials, such as bandicoots and Tasmanian Devils also have backward-opening pouches.

The male Thylacine has a unique feature also, in that the testes, which in the marsupials are usually external and unprotected, are carried in a partial pouch. Thus, the male Thylacine testes are given greater protection than in the normal method of scrotal retraction.

The early Aborigines could not have failed to observe such anatomical traits of the Thylacine. And it is certain that ancient maritime peoples, who landed on our shores centuries before the first Dutchmen, saw these animals in the course of their inland explorations. Hence mention in ancient Chinese writings of the “Great Golden Land of Chui Hiao”, which lay in the southernmost region of the world. For example, an 11th century document describes some of the animals found there, such as the T’iao-tu or “Jumping hare”, which carries its young in a pouch attached to its body. ‘Tigers’ are also found there it is said. Could this imply that ancient Chinese explorers had seen Thylacines somewhere on the Australian landmass?

Ancient Aryan Indian written tradition includes the account of the Eka-Pada, a fabulous race that dwelt in a great southern land where Australia is today situated. The Eka-Pada were one-footed men or ‘hoppers’ who moved about in leaps and bounds. Does this not sound like some dim memory of kangaroos seen by Indian mariners?

There was also another creature described, Sarama, meaning ‘Quick’, who was the female dog of Indra, who explored the path to the Land of the Dwarfs, the Pani, who were a primitive race that dwelt in the great southern land. Sarama was described as the mother of the two striped-bodied dogs which guarded the Land of Yama, the City of the Dead. Here again, are we presented with an ancient Indian account of Australia? And are the two striped-bodied dogs Thylacines?

When the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman landed off southern Tasmania in December 1642, he recorded in his journal that, while ashore he and his men “*had observed certain footprints of an animal not unlike those of a tiger’s claws*”.

The earliest known drawing of a Tasmanian Tiger was produced by George Prideux Harris in 1807, and thereafter interest in the Thylacine steadily grew. So did the European population, and as farms spread, and with them the sheep population, so did the incidences of attacks upon flocks by Thylacines in the early 1800s. These attacks, not as devastating as farmers of those times made out, would lead to the decimation of the Thylacine population in Tasmania, a subject to be covered later in this book.

Meanwhile on the Australian mainland, Thylacines began coming to the attention of settlers in various parts of the country, particularly in Victoria, eastern New South Wales and parts of Queensland, so that by the 1850s tales of sightings of “striped-bodied native dogs” were not unknown in many parts of the country among property owners.

New Guinea began receiving attention from European explorers and naturalists from the 1870s onwards. In 1875 one lieutenant Robert H. Armit, R.N. [retired], who had been involved in an attempt to establish a colony on the island’s north-east coast, was also involved in natural history researches. Among the many insects, spiders, birds, reptiles and marsupials described by him, was a striped-bodied animal, which today we would call a Thylacine.



Illustration of Thylacines from John Gould's "The Mammals of Australia", 1863.



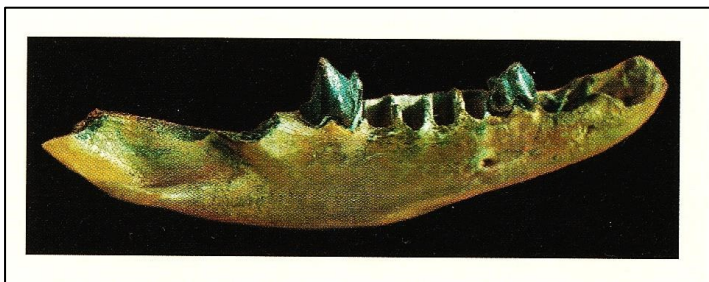
Underside of the skull of Barinya wangala Wroe, 1999. unearthed at Riversleigh World Heritage area, north-western Queensland, features of the skull confirm that the species is the oldest and most primitive member of the Dasyuridae family. Photos courtesy, Prehistoric Mammals of Australia and New Guinea. John Long, Timothy Flannery, Michael Archer, Suzanne Hand, John Hopkins University Press.



Reconstruction of Barinya wangala Wroe, 1999. Scientists theorise that the species hunted small animals in the Riversleigh rainforests 15 to 20 million years ago. Illustration courtesy, Prehistoric Mammals of Australia and New Guinea. John Long, Timothy Flannery, Michael Archer, Suzanne Hand, John Hopkins University Press.

Part of the lower jaw of a Dasyurus dunmalli, which inhabited eastern Australia during early Pliocene times. It is the oldest extinct Quoll known to scientists.

Photo: L. Meier, courtesy, Prehistoric Mammals of Australia and New Guinea. John Long, Timothy Flannery, Michael Archer, Suzanne Hand, John Hopkins University Press.





*Jaw fragment of a *Glaucodon ballaratensis*, from a Pliocene deposit near Ballarat, Victoria. Scientists believe that, because of its tooth morphology and approximate body size, the species may have been an intermediate form between quolls and the Tasmanian Devil.*

Photo: L. Meier, courtesy, Prehistoric Mammals of Australia and New Guinea. John Long, Timothy Flannery, Michael Archer, Suzanne Hand, John Hopkins University Press.



*The Tasmanian Devil.
Wikipedia image.*



Although being only about a third of its size, the Tasmanian Devil is the Tasmanian Tiger's nearest living relative.

Photo: courtesy Australian Geographic, Vol 1, No 3, July-September 1986.



*Part of the upper jaw of a small Thylacine species unearthed in the Riversleigh deposits, compared with a skull of the much larger Thylacine or Tasmanian Tiger [*Thylacinus cynocephalus*]. During the Oligocene–Miocene periods Thylacines were smaller and much more diverse than in later times.*

Photo: D. Maitland, courtesy, Prehistoric Mammals of Australia and New Guinea.



*Reconstruction of the late Miocene period Thylacine, *Thylacinus potens*, whose remains have been uncovered in the Northern Territory. This was the largest known Thylacine species. It was capable of running down and killing very large prey.*

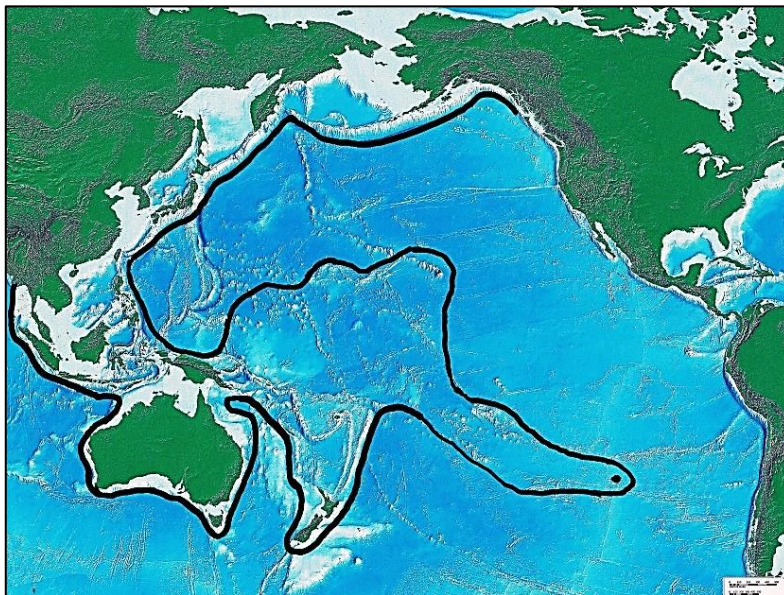
Illustration courtesy, Prehistoric Mammals of Australia and New Guinea. John Long, Timothy Flannery, Michael Archer, Suzanne Hand, John Hopkins University Press.



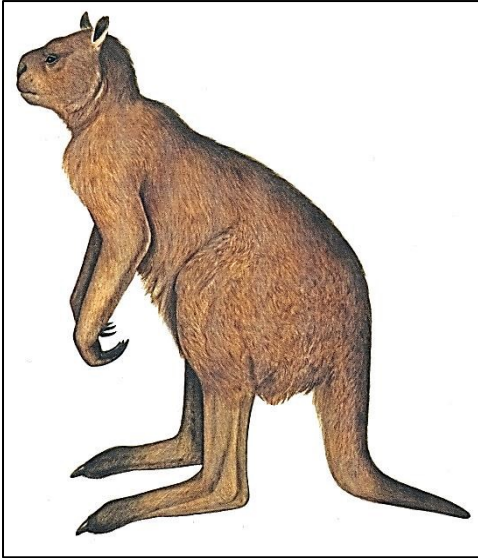
*Skull endocast [limestone] of a late Homo erectus hominin, recovered by Rex Gilroy on Saturday 14th April 1973 from old Pleistocene bank deposits of the Fish River, Tarana, New South Wales at least 350,000 years old. This race, our immediate ancestor, preceded the Aborigines on this continent by around 1 million years BP [Before Present]. Homo erectus shared the land with the megafauna.
Photo Copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*This deteriorated ironstone mineralised skull, unearthed by Rex Gilroy at a Katoomba, New South Wales site on Thursday 6th January 2005, is the first Australopithecine skull-type found outside Africa. Recovered from late Pliocene deposits, it dates back 2.5 million years B P. Named Australopithecus australis gilroy the skull [minus lower jaw] was a 'robust' Australopithecine. The fossil resembles skull-types of Australopithecus robustus Broom 1939, which inhabited South Africa 2.0 to 1.2 million years BP. Australopithecus australis lived alongside the Thylacine and our marsupial megafauna.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



During the Pleistocene Period Australia –New Guinea was part of a vast land -shelf, which extending from mainland Asia, included what is now island South-East Asia, and much of the Central Pacific region. Rising ocean levels towards the close of the Pleistocene [Ice-Age] around 15,000 to 12,000 years ago flooded all low-lying land to create the present geological make-up of the Australasian-Central Pacific region. The Pacific landmass survives today in Polynesian folklore as the “Lost Land of Waingaroa” [Waingaroa means ‘Long gate’ in their language]. The former land-shelf enabled the Thylacine and other marsupial species to become established on the New Guinea Landmass. Illustration copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.

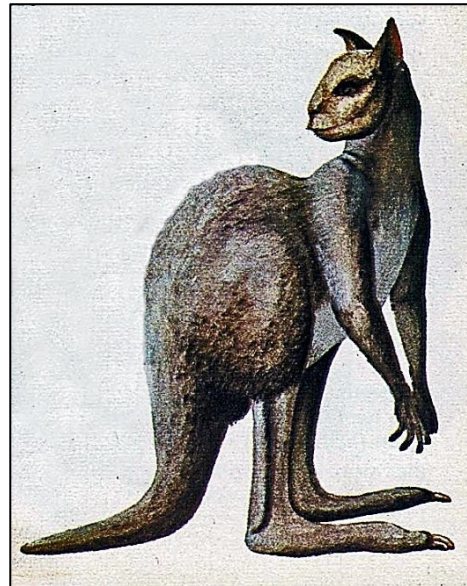


Procoptodon goliath, whose Pleistocene fossil remains have been unearthed at many sites around Australia stood from 2 to 3m tall.

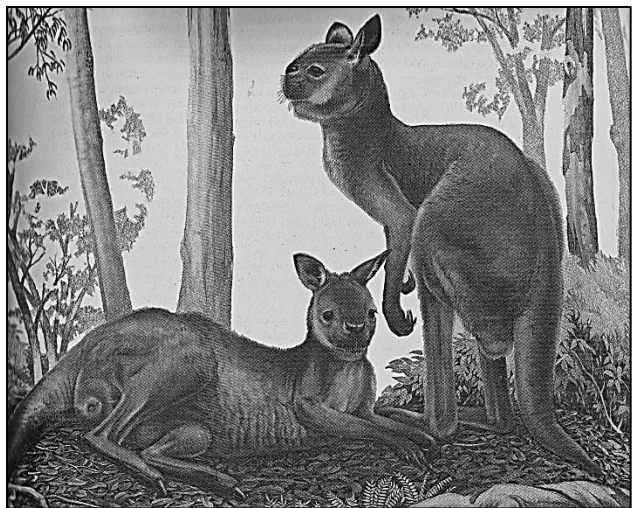
Illustration courtesy "Prehistoric Mammals of Australia and New Guinea".
John Long, Timothy Flannery, Michael Archer, Suzanne Hand, John Hopkins University Press.

Procoptodon pusio, which was about the size of a grey kangaroo, lived in Pleistocene times [2 million – 10,000 years ago] in southeastern Queensland and eastern New South Wales. Scientists suggest that it could have inhabited woodlands and savannah areas. One of a group of short-faced kangaroo Species, this species no doubt received its Latin name due to the cat-like features of its head!

Illustration by Peter Schouten, courtesy "Prehistoric Animals of Australia".
The Australian Museum, Sydney.

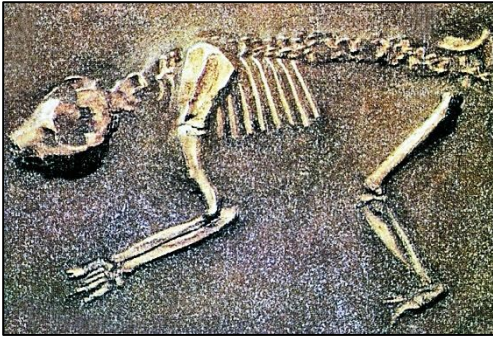


An artist's reconstruction of an average giant kangaroo of the *Sthenurus* group, whose heights reached from around 7 to 8ft [ie around 2.13 to 2.44m].
From "Prehistoric Animals" by Barry Cox, Sun Books London UK. 1969.



Reconstruction of *Diprotodon optatum* Owen 1838. The largest marsupial of the Pleistocene Period, it stood 3m in length by 2 m tall. Its remains have been unearthed in both Australia and New Guinea.

Photo: Courtesy The Australian Museum, Sydney.



Reconstructed skeleton of a Marsupial Lion, Thylacoleo carnifex Owen, recovered from the Victoria Fossil Cave, South Australia.



Fossil skull of a Marsupial Lion, Thylacoleo carnifex Owen, from Naracoorte Caves, South Australia. Courtesy Douglas M. Stone and Sharman N.Bawden, "Australian Fossils".



Reconstructed skeleton of a Thylacoleo carnifex.

Photo courtesy by J. Long, "Prehistoric Mammals" John Long, Timothy Flannery, Michael Archer, Suzanne Hand, John Hopkins University Press.2002.



Palate view of a Thylacoleo carnifex skull. Photo by L. Meier, "Big Cats of the Australian Wilderness".



Down view of another Thylacoleo carnifex lower jaw, showing the long stabbing tooth and long slicing premolar behind.

Photo by D. Maitland, "Big Cats of the Australian Wilderness".

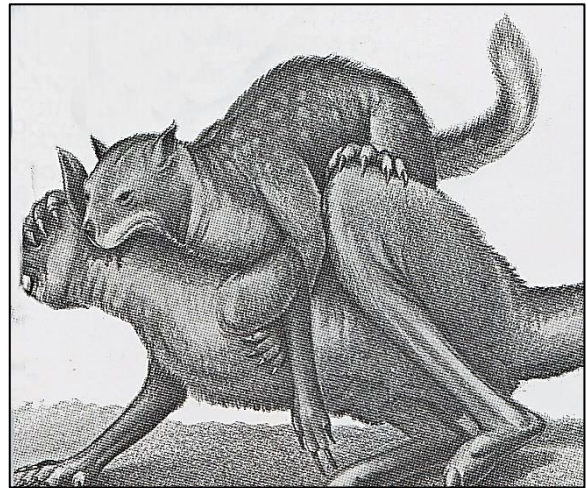


Lower jaw fragment of a Thylacoleo carnifex, displaying the long premolar that dominates the tooth row, and which was used to cut through the flesh and bones of its prey. Note the large stabbing tooth.

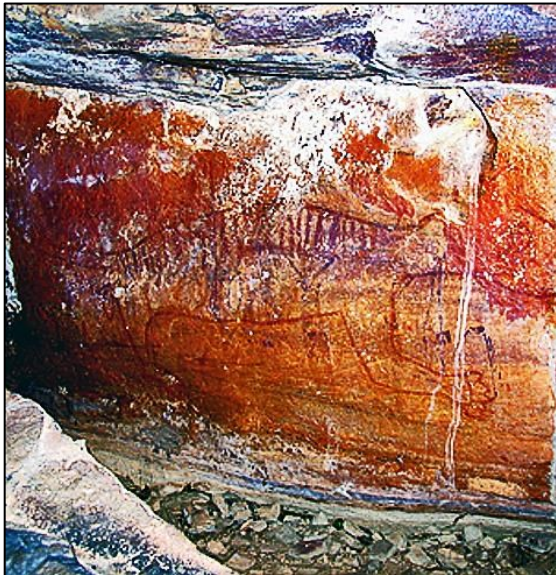
Photo L. Meier, "Big Cats of the Australian Wilderness".



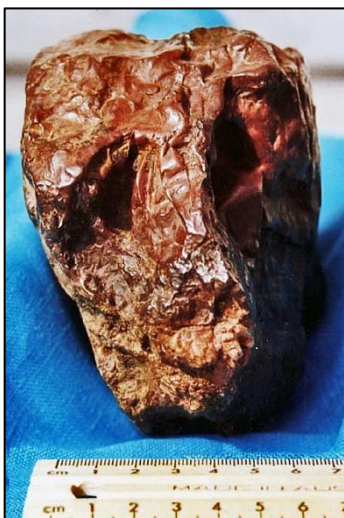
The Marsupial Lion, Thylacoleo carnifex Owen. Opinion varies among Cryptozoologists on whether the species has been extinct since Pleistocene times, or if a sub-species of Thylacoleo still survives in remote mountainous regions, particularly in eastern Australia. Drawing by Peter Schouten, from "Prehistoric Animals of Australia", The Australian Museum, Sydney 1983.



A Marsupial Lion killing a Procoptodon giant kangaroo. Drawing by Peter Schouten, from "Prehistoric Animals of Australia". The Australian Museum, Sydney.



This rock shelter painting in the North Kimberley region, Western Australia, done by an Aboriginal artist many thousands of years ago, is believed by scientists to depict a leaping Thylacoleo carnifex [note it is depicted with body stripes]. Wikipedia image.



The mineralised [ironstone] skull of a Marsupial Lion sub-species, recovered by Rex Gilroy in the Megalong Valley below Blackheath NSW, in February 1972. The Megalong Valley skull - frontal view. The skull has been flattened on both sides, although the eye sockets are still visible. There is a nasal ridge, with fused lower to upper jaw displaying two broken mineralised incisor teeth. The skull is that of a short-muzzled species. The fossil dates to the late Pliocene or early Pleistocene period, suggesting an age anywhere between 2 to 5 million years.

Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.



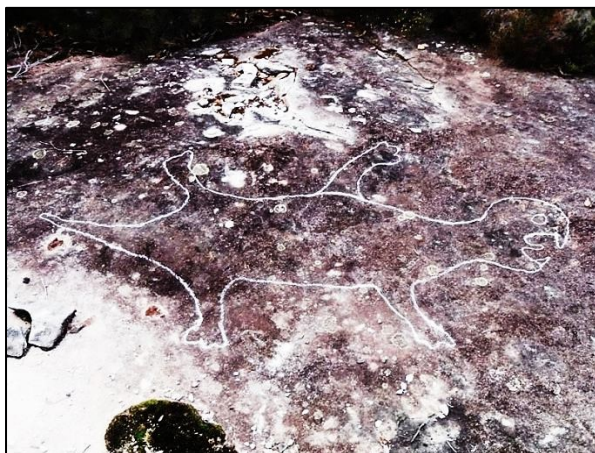
*The right facial area was crushed flat during the early stages of mineralisation, and there is a hollow at the rear left facial side where a large pebble had once been lodged.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*The skull displays a flattish cranium and receding forehead. The fossil comes from a region long steeped in stories of “Blue Mountains Lion” encounters.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*On Thursday 5th May 2011, Rex Gilroy discovered faded Aboriginal rock carvings on this sandstone shoal. The carvings, at least 3,000 years old, were found in bushland near the Hawkesbury River on the fringe of the Blue Mountains. The rock art depicted megafauna in the form of two large marsupial carnivores, perhaps another species of *Thylacoleo carnifex*, and a giant monitor lizard with spears embedded in it. Here is a rare engraving of the giant monitor species, *Megalania prisca*, and possibly the first found in the Sydney district.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*The marsupial carnivore images lie 2.73m apart towards the western edge of the shoal. The westernmost image measures 2.2m long head to tail tip, by 1.27m wide across the outstretched front legs.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*The second large marsupial carnivore image measures 1.89m length from head to tail tip, by 1.14m width across the outstretched front legs
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*The giant monitor lizard image was engraved on a south to north axis. It measures 4.5m length from head to tail tip by 2.2m across the outstretched front legs. This engraving of *Megalania prisca* Owen is possibly the first of its kind found in the Sydney district.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*Reconstruction of the giant monitor lizard, *Megalania prisca* Owen, which reached 7m and over in length. The cast skeleton is displayed in the Queensland Museum, Brisbane.
Photo Rex Gilroy.*

Genyornis newtoni, a giant species of flightless bird, roamed Australia during the Miocene, becoming extinct in Late Pleistocene times 26,000 years ago. They reached 3m or more in height.

Illustration: courtesy Golden Press "Prehistoric Australia".



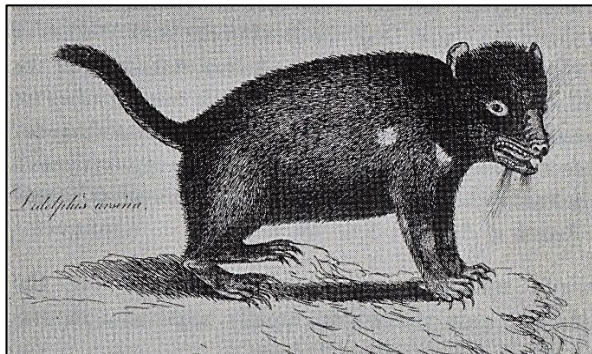


*This ancient rock engraving at the Ewaninga Aboriginal rock art reserve outside Alice Springs, Northern Territory, is believed by some authorities to be the head and neck of a Genyornis.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*



*Heather Gilroy stands beside the reconstructed fossil cast skeleton of the giant flightless bird, Genyornis stirtoni. Like its relative, G. newtoni, it reached over 3m tall. Museum of Central Australia, Alice Springs, Northern Territory.
Photo copyright © Rex Gilroy 2022.*

*A Beaumaris Zoo Thylacine with a broken or deformed hind foot.
Courtesy Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.*



The earliest known drawings of the Tasmanian Tiger [left], and Tasmanian Devil, by George Prideaux Harris, 1807. [From Linnean Society [London] - Transactions].



John Gould, 1804-1881. The famous naturalist, writer and artist, was in Tasmania in the late 1830s. He foresaw the extinction of the Thylacine, through the clearing of forestland for homes and farms by the growing population, and relentless persecution by shepherd farmers.

Portrait State Library of Tasmania.

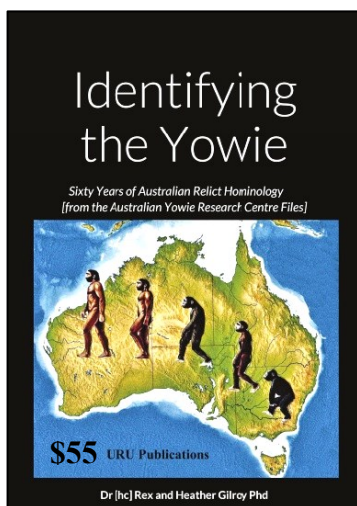
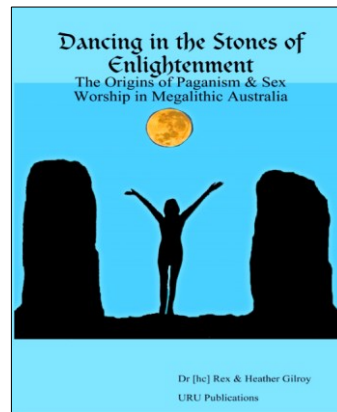
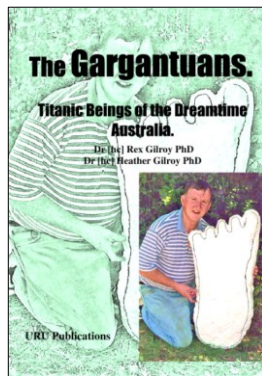
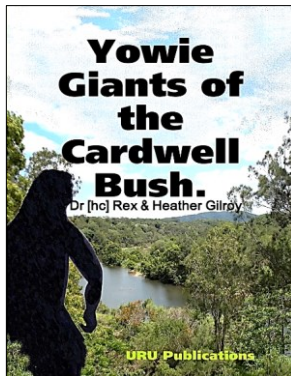
URU Publications. PO Box 202, Katoomba NSW 2780.

Phone 02 47823441 [randhgilroy1044@gmail.com]

Most book titles are available, directly from us or from Lulu.com
 Full price list available – please contact us. All prices shown in AUD plus p&h \$A15 in Australia,
 [overseas postage on application]. Sorry **NO** Credit Card transactions.

Now available from URU Publications.

\$35 AUD each -- available from Lulu.com - \$55



And NEW from URU Publications

