

A Dingo Ate Her Baby

The Story of Lindy Chamberlain

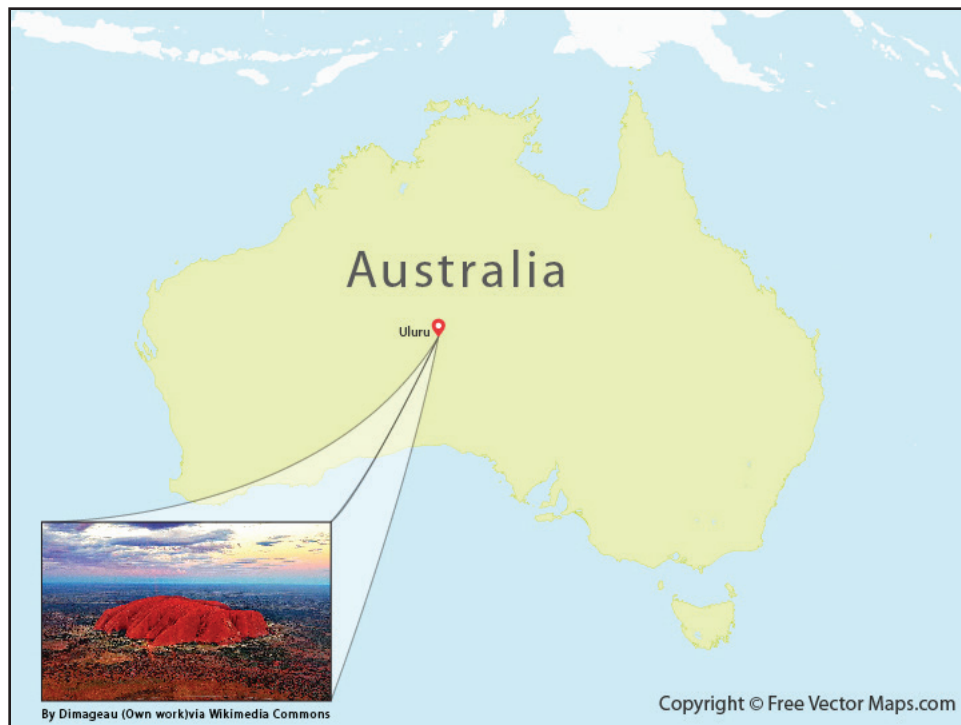


A wild animal ate her baby girl, but Lindy Chamberlain was charged with the crime. Sounds like something right out of a movie, right? Well, you wouldn't be wrong. Hollywood thought the story was so sensational that they made a movie about it.

The year was 1980. Lindy Chamberlain's day started ordinarily enough. The Australian family was on vacation, camping in Uluru. Lindy was with her husband Michael, a minister, her two sons, and her 2-month-old daughter Azaria. The family was busy making a campfire, cooking food, and enjoying the great outdoors. Little Azaria was asleep in one of their tents. Suddenly, Lindy saw a dingo leaving her daughter's tent. Alarmed, she went to check on her daughter. But the baby was gone!

A Dingo Ate Her Baby

Dingoes are wild dogs that are native to Australia. They may look like a friendly pet, but they are just as deadly and wild as wolves. Like wolves, dingoes are extremely clever and resourceful hunters. Sometimes they hunt in packs, and other times they hunt alone. Dingoes hunt everything from very small animals to prey as large as gray kangaroos. Dingoes are not known for attacking humans, but that doesn't mean they won't.



Uluru is also known as Ayers Rock

Two years before the Chamberlain family camped there, Derek Roff, an Uluru park ranger, had been writing to the government asking for help in dealing with the dingo population. He warned that the dingo population had gotten too big. He said that if nothing was done, it would lead to a human tragedy. Nothing, however, was done. The dingo population continued to increase.

A Dingo Ate Her Baby

Lindy Chamberlain told authorities what happened to her baby. Many didn't believe her. Authorities launched a massive search around the Uluru area. Baby Azaria's body was never found. When Azaria disappeared, the Chamberlains said she was wearing a jumpsuit and a cardigan. Only the jumpsuit was found. There was blood around the neck of the jump suit. This indicated the cause of her death. Azaria's cardigan, however, was never found.

Authorities launched an investigation and charged Lindy Chamberlain with the murder of her infant child. The case sparked so much public interest that Lindy's trial was televised all across Australia—something that had never been done before. Televising her trial was very hard on Lindy and her family. She had just lost her baby in a terrible accident and now all of Australia tuned in to see if she was guilty of murder.

Public opinion—what the public thought of Lindy—may have made matters worse. People watching the trial said that Lindy was too unemotional. They said she looked too calm for a woman whose baby was eaten by wild animals. This convinced people that Lindy was guilty.

In October of 1982, Lindy Chamberlain was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. This meant that she would not be able to be with her surviving children as they grew up. It was a horrible tragedy.

Lindy spent three years in prison for a crime she didn't commit. During this time, Lindy appealed many times for a new trial. A lot of the evidence used to convict Lindy was circumstantial, meaning it wasn't solid evidence. It proved that Lindy was near her baby when she disappeared, but not that Lindy killed her.

A Dingo Ate Her Baby

In 1986, new evidence was found that helped prove Lindy's dingo story. Someone found the cardigan that the Chamberlain's claimed that Azaria was wearing at the time of her disappearance. Until now, many people didn't believe such a cardigan even existed. The cardigan was half-buried next to a dingo lair in an isolated area of Uluru. The cardigan had Azaria's blood on it. The fact that it was buried near a dingo lair was proof enough to get Lindy released from jail. But it wasn't until 2012 that authorities finally closed the case and changed the cause of death on Azaria's death certificate. Her death certificate finally said that she died as a result of a dingo attack.

Lindy was released from prison in 1986. But it took another 32 years for the courts to officially rule that Lindy was not guilty of her daughter's death. After such a long time, Lindy felt relieved. "No longer will Australia be able to say that dingoes are not dangerous and will only attack if provoked," Lindy said in an interview with an Australian newspaper. "We live in a beautiful country, but it is dangerous."

