

## Recovery of the Numbat – a long road

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The survival of the Numbat (*Mymecobius fasciatus*) was in serious jeopardy in the late 1970s. It is unlikely that more than 300 animals were present at Dryandra and Perup (south-west WA), the only sites that have retained original numbat populations. Research into factors limiting numbat numbers at Dryandra showed that removal of foxes by baiting with 1080 in dried meat baits caused a dramatic increase in numbat numbers.

A reintroduction program commenced in 1985, with translocation of Dryandra animals to Boyagin, 40 km away. Since then, new populations have been established at seven more sites in Western Australia, at one in South Australia and at one in New South Wales. The new sites comprise seven baited and three fenced areas.

Despite the increase in the number of colonies, the total numbat population is less than 2000 animals. In 1996, the success of the recovery actions and new IUCN criteria allowed the numbat's status to be downgraded from Endangered to Vulnerable. The security of the species is still nebulous, however. Climatic events could cause some new populations to vanish. Control of feral cats in unfenced areas remains a problem, particularly in more arid sites.

## *Pseudomys Shortridgei*: a new species for South Australia

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The Heath Rat *Pseudomys shortridgei* is known from woodland, forest, mallee heath and heath habitats in southwestern Western Australia and southwestern Victoria. In South Australia it has been recorded in surface cave deposits in the southeast of the State, and on Kangaroo Island, Eyre Peninsula and Yorke Peninsula. In January 2000 a specimen (M7890), consisting of a skin and skull identified as a *Rattus lutreolus*, was found in the South Australian Museum. It had been collected in June 1967 250 m from a semi-permanent lagoon and swamp '3 miles east of Rocky River', just outside the park boundary of Flinders Chase National Park. Some morphological differences have been noted between this specimen and a small sample from Victoria. Its DNA is currently being compared with specimens from Western Australia and Victoria. Attempts will be made to locate a living population near the site of the 1967 capture. The similar nature of the rediscovery of *Pseudomys shortridgei* in the Western Australian Museum in 1987 and its discovery in the South Australian Museum demonstrates the long-term value of voucher specimens lodged in permanent collections.

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