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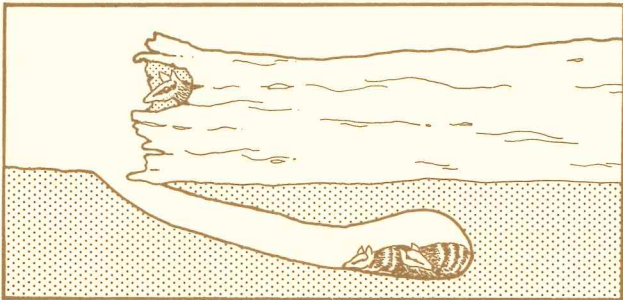
Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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## Logs and Burrows

The same logs which the termites hollow out are used by the numbat for sleeping in at night, and for nesting, but it will seek refuge in any hollow when threatened or alarmed.

Burrows are also used, apparently in colder weather. They contain nests of shredded bark, leaves, and dry grass. Several burrows may be dug and some care is taken to site the entrance so that it is difficult for predators such as the fox, or goannas, to dig out. The burrow entrance is often hard against a log and the tunnel may run along under the log for some distance. The numbat also makes use of the root channels of burnt out stumps. These make easy digging and afford protection.



## Present Distribution

The numbat lives in two forest habitats, the open wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo*) forest and the jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) forest.

There are, today, only a few known populations. The main ones are in the Dryandra State Forest, a wandoo forest situated 130 km south-east of Perth near Narrogin, and the jarrah forest of the Perup

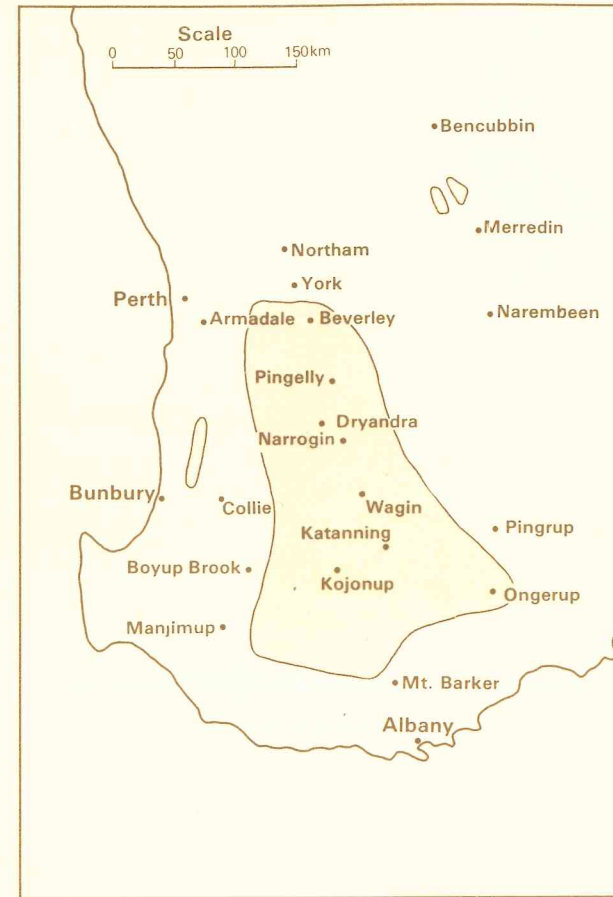
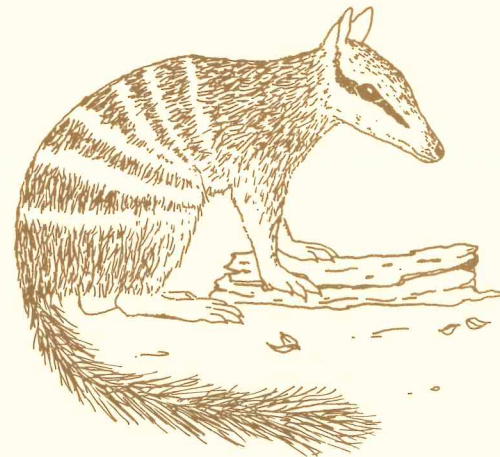
Conservation Area, 70 km east of Manjimup, although numbats are occasionally seen outside these areas.

Because of this restricted range Forests Department researchers and officers of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife are monitoring these areas to ensure the numbats' continued survival.

## Where to See a Numbat

Motor vehicle access through the Perup forest is restricted to prevent the spread of jarrah dieback disease. It is also difficult to sight small animals in dense forest from a moving car. The best chance is to move quietly through the bush on foot.

The Dryandra forest is open and the understorey is sparse. If you sight a numbat while driving through the forest, it is most likely to take cover in a log. However, patient observers may see it re-emerge and begin feeding again, as long as they remain quietly in the car.



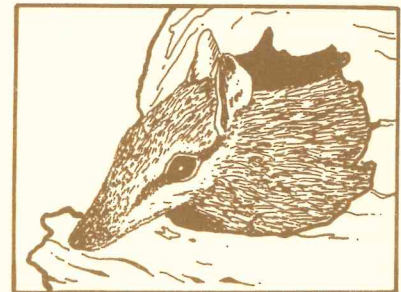
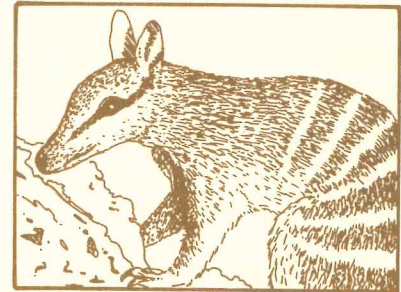
□ Distribution of Numbats

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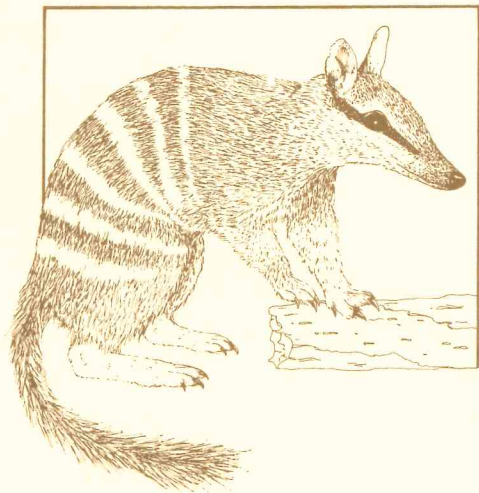


Fauna Series



# The Numbat





## The Numbat

### Introduction

One of the rarer animals inhabiting the native forests of Western Australia is the numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*).

This small marsupial, also known as the banded ant-eater, dines almost exclusively on termites, and before extensive clearing for agriculture began was widespread throughout the open wandoo forest of the western wheatbelt.

For many years little was known about the numbat's habits, and habitat needs. Recent studies of its distribution suggest that in areas of European settlement the creature is on the verge of extinction, particularly where foxes and feral cats are common.

In 1973 the numbat was adopted as the faunal emblem of Western Australia, in a bid to encourage its conservation as much as because the animal is unique to this State.

### History

The first official report concerning the numbat was made by Ensign Dale in 1831. John Gilbert, who recorded observations on many native animals for the naturalist Gould, during his explorations in 1845 made a few brief notes on its distribution and habits. However, it was not until 1960 that any detailed study was carried out.

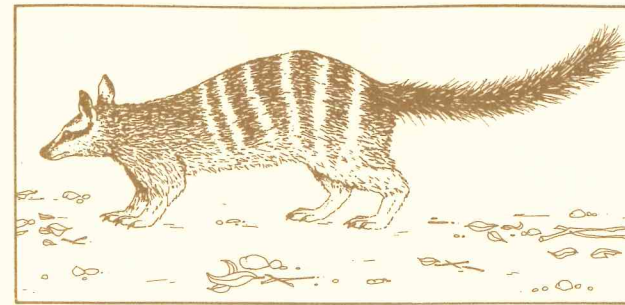
The original distribution of the numbat is difficult to determine. Specimens collected for the W.A. Museum since 1845 have ranged from Albany in the south, to Watheroo in the north, and as far east as Kalgoorlie.

Another species of numbat, the rusty numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus rufous*), which was smaller and a deeper red in colour, once inhabited an area between Kalgoorlie and Western New South Wales. This species has not been sighted for over 50 years.

### Ecology

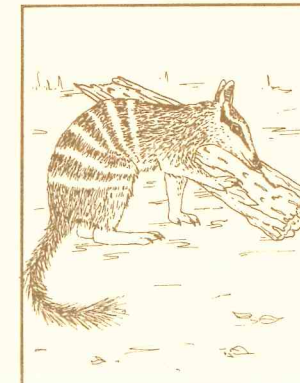
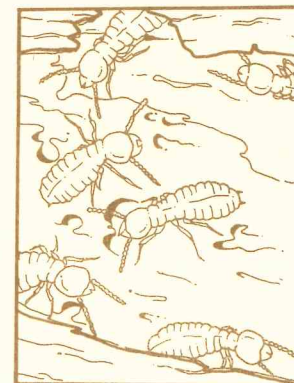
The numbat is a delightful creature, both gentle and curious.

Adult animals weigh about half a kilo and measure approximately 20 cm in body length. Their fur is greyish and reddish brown, with white flecks. Across the back and rump run tiger stripes of black and white. Their head is small and pointed, with stripes of white above and below the eye, and a black bar through the eye, all of which combine to give the animal an inquisitive look. Their long tail is covered in coarse hair, which bristles up in a fearsome fashion when the animal is alarmed.



### Food

The numbat lives on many species of termites in the forest. Termites attack dead wood and invade living trees, eating out the centres. The numbat gets its food by turning over sticks and branchwood lying on the ground, then rapidly licking up the exposed insects. It also digs up underground termite galleries, often close to a tree trunk or termite mound, where the galleries are numerous and near the surface. Numbats do not break open termite mounds, which are far too tough for these small creatures.



### Behaviour

A numbat searching for food appears very busy. It moves with quick jerky movements

similar to a squirrel, and is very alert, often standing on its hind legs to watch and listen.

The numbat is diurnal, searching for food during the day, instead of at night, as is the case with most native mammals. The numbat's routine varies from summer to winter. During hot weather it moves about in the cool morning and evening, spending several hours during the hottest part of the day napping in a hollow log. As the weather becomes colder the numbat rises later and sleeps earlier, making use of the midday warmth for feeding, and often basking in the winter sun.



### Breeding

The female numbat has up to four young. These are attached to her teats and cling to her fur. Although the numbat is a marsupial, there is no developed pouch, just a fold of skin near the teats. The young numbats are born between late summer and early winter. When they are too large to be carried the mother leaves them in a burrow while she forages. The young are usually independent by late spring.