Perth Zoo's Native Species Breeding Program

Perth Zoo's Native Species Breeding Program (NSBP) supports Threatened Species Recovery Plans by providing animals for release. The Numbat breeding program is just one of the success stories of the NSBP.

A Numbat breeding program commenced at Perth Zoo in 1987, with the first breeding success occurring in 1993. Each December, the NSBP provides Perth Zoo-bred Numbats to CALM for release into the wild. By early 2005, 93 Numbats had been provided by the Zoo for release into protected habitats. Despite this success, the species is still far from secure and remains vulnerable to extinction. The successful partnership of Perth Zoo and CALM will continue with the breeding and release of Numbats until they are considered secure in the wild.

You can help too

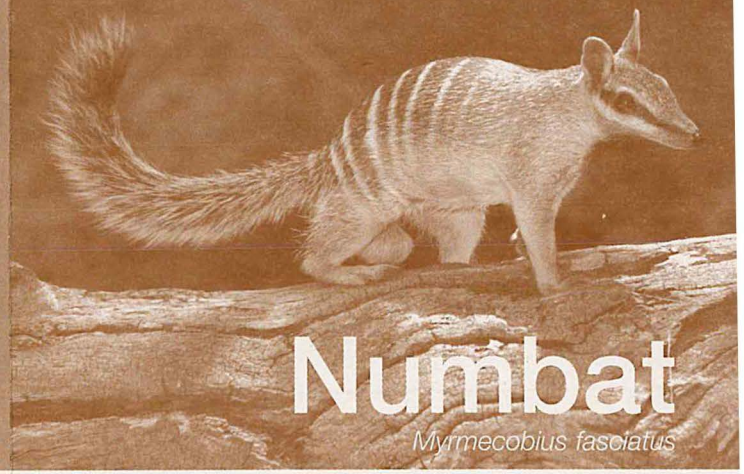
- Take care not to start bushfires.
- Never remove hollow logs from the bush.
- Never let your pets roam in bushland areas.
- Take care not to disturb the Numbats' habitat when visiting the bush.
- Report all sightings of Numbats to your local CALM office.
- Support the work of Perth Zoo by adopting a Numbat. Phone Adoptions on (08) 9474 0350.

Further information on Perth Zoo's Native Species Breeding Program is available at **www.perthzoo.wa.gov.au/conserve_breed** and information on CALM's Western Shield Program can be found at **www.calm.wa.gov.au/west_shield**.

DEPARTMENT OF Conservation AND LAND MANAGEMENT
Conserving the nature of WA

Alinta

Native Species Breeding Program
breeding for biodiversity



Numbat

Myrmecobius fasciatus

Perth Zoo and the Department of Conservation and Land Management are working together on a Numbat breeding program to assist in the long-term survival of this species.

PAM02217

PERTH ZOO

Western Australia's mammal emblem

The strikingly coloured Numbat stands out amongst Western Australia's extraordinary wildlife because of its appearance, specialised diet and unique habits. The Numbat has a flat head and long nose and its fur is mostly reddish-brown with black and white bands across the rump and a black stripe through each eye. Individual Numbats can be identified by their unique pattern of bands. This small marsupial weighs between 450 and 700 grams when fully grown and is the only Australian mammal to feed exclusively on termites. One of only two diurnal (active only by day) marsupials, the Numbat searches the woodland floor for the 20,000 termites needed by each adult every day.

The only member of the Myrmecobiidae family, the Numbat is a solitary and territorial animal that shelters in hollow logs found in the eucalypt woodlands in the south-west of Western Australia.

Numbats breed in summer and females give birth to up to four tiny young following a gestation of just 14 days. These young are independent by the spring of the same year.

Prior to European settlement, the Numbat was found across much of southern Australia. By the early 1980s only a few hundred animals remained, occupying less than 1% of the former range of the species.

What has brought the Numbat to the brink of extinction?

The three main factors that have contributed to the decline of the Numbat are:

- **Habitat destruction**
  The Numbat was widespread throughout the wheatbelt of Western Australia until the early 1960s. However, increased clearing of bush for agriculture saw only small areas of vegetation favoured by the Numbat remain in a system of reserves. The few individuals that survived were isolated in these reserves and such small populations were extremely vulnerable to introduced predators.

- **Introduced predators**
  Foxes and feral cats introduced to Australia are efficient predators and have had a significant impact on Numbat numbers in the wild. Abandoned domestic dogs and cats are also likely to attack and eat Numbats.

- **Fire**
  Desert dwelling Aborigines used fire as a tool for hunting, burning small areas of vegetation and creating a mosaic of burnt and unburnt areas. However, when these traditional practices ceased, a single wildfire was able to burn very large areas of bush leaving very little refuge for the Numbat. The combination of introduced predators and large fires saw the end of the Numbat in the desert.

Lending a helping hand

The Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and Perth Zoo are working together to prevent this unique marsupial from becoming extinct.

By the late 1970s, Numbats had become so rare that research was undertaken by CALM scientists to identify the species' requirements and the problems they faced. The research, conducted in Dryandra and Perup—the last strongholds of the Numbat—involved the use of radio-tracking equipment to learn more about where and when the Numbats fed and rested; individual Numbat home ranges; and the impact of predators.

An 'insurance policy' in the form of a captive breeding program was initiated and a recovery team was formed. Headed by a CALM scientist, the Numbat Recovery Team comprises a group of specialists, including representatives from Perth Zoo, who together ensure the implementation of the Numbat Recovery Plan.

As part of its wildlife recovery activities, CALM manages fire frequency and intensity in protected areas, and has introduced broad-scale predator control as part of its successful Western Shield program. Numbats bred at Perth Zoo have been reintroduced in six reserves where they once occurred in the south-west of Western Australia. Through collaboration with private conservation groups, they have also been reintroduced into South Australia and New South Wales. There are now around 2,000 Numbats in the wild.