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NUMBAT BANDED ANTEATER



SCIENTIFIC NAME: Myrmecobius fasciatus

IDENTIFICATION: Small marsupial with a squirrel-like tail. Body with red-brown fur above, paler below. The rump is darker than upper back, often jet black, with prominent, white, transverse bars. The number of white bars varies from four to eleven. The numbat has a narrow head with a pointed snout and a conspicuous dark horizontal eye-stripe. The jaw has between 50 and 52 teeth, the largest number recorded in any Australian land mammal. The teeth are poorly developed, and many do not protrude above the level of the animal's gums. The tongue is exceptionally long. The fur is very coarse and the long tail hairs are often erected to give a 'bottle-brush' appearance. Head and body length 200-274 mm (males) 200-272 mm (females) Tail Length 164-210 mm (males) 161-195 mm (females) Weight 0.3-0.7 kg (males) 0.3-0.7 kg (females)

HABITAT: Numbats generally inhabit eucalypt forests and other dry, open woodlands where fallen, dead trees are present.

DIET: Consists almost exclusively of termites. Numbats make characteristic small shallow excavations in the soil to reach underground termite galleries and then extract termites with the aid of their sticky tongue.

STATUS: Vulnerable

INTERESTING FACTS: Numbats can live up to five years in the wild, but generally only live two to three years. The numbat's diet of termites is so specialised that it is placed in a family of its own. Unlike most other marsupials that are nocturnal, the numbat is active during the day. Numbats eat up to 20,000 termites daily.

