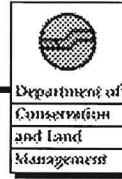


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# News

R E L E A S E



December 6, 1996

## Numbats make a comeback

Numbats have returned to part of their former home range on the outskirts of Perth.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) today released 20 of the small native marsupials in the forest around Mt Dale, east of Karragullen where foxes have been controlled under Operation Foxglove, a joint initiative between CALM and Alcoa of Australia.

CALM Executive Director Syd Shea said the numbats were the fourth species of native mammals to be reintroduced into the northern jarrah forest between Mundaring and Collie since Operation Foxglove began in November, 1993. The others were woylies, western ringtail possums and tammar wallabies.

"The success of Operation Foxglove in reducing fox populations has been one of the great nature conservation victories ever undertaken anywhere," Dr Shea said.

"The program has provided the scientific basis that today is enabling CALM to extend its feral predator control initiatives to almost 5 million hectares under the Western Shield banner.

"Western Australia is now leading the rest of the nation in combating the havoc wreaked by foxes and feral cats on native wildlife.

"Programs such as Operation Foxglove, and Project Eden in the World Heritage Listed Shark Bay area, are showing that where introduced predators are controlled, populations of native animals can recover from the brink of extinction.

"For example, one native animal, the woylie, has been taken off the State, Federal and international (IUCN) species lists because its numbers have rebounded dramatically following fox control in areas such as Perup Nature Reserve east of Manjimup and in the Dryandra Woodland north west of Narrogin."

Dr Shea said fox control in the northern jarrah forest also was resulting in an increase in sightings of native species such as chuditch and quokkas.

"Last year, a new population of quokkas was found near one of Alcoa's rehabilitated bauxite mines at Jarrahdale while there has been a steady increase in the number of chuditch around the Mundaring Weir area," he said.

The numbats released today were transferred from the wild population in Dryandra Woodland where fox baiting since 1983 has led to a big increase in numbers of animals such as numbats, woylies and tammars. For example, in the early 1980s, numbat sightings in Dryandra were around one every 1000 km driven. Since fox baiting began, the rate of sightings has increased to one every 25 km driven, an increase of 40 fold.

The species also is found at Perup Nature Reserve east of Manjimup and wild populations of numbats have been re-established at Dragon Rocks, Boyagin, Tutanning and Karroun Hill nature reserves in the WA wheatbelt, at the private Karakamia Sanctuary in the Darling Ranges and a private sanctuary in South Australia.

The numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*) is WA's faunal emblem and is the only member of its genus and family. It was last recorded in SA in 1933 but once inhabited much of southern Australia including western NSW.

The species is unique among marsupials as they are the only members of the order that eat solely termites. Numbats also are one of the very few marsupials only active in daylight.

They are reddish brown with a sprinkling of white hairs with prominent white bars across the rump. Their tails often are carried erect with the hair fluffed out like a bottlebrush.

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