

MEDIA RELEASE

From Chair Person Vicki Power

Project Numbat Inc.

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Radio-tracking boosts efforts to save endangered numbats

Portfolio: Environment

Efforts to save Western Australia's mammal emblem, the numbat, from extinction have been boosted by a radio-tracking project funded by community group Project Numbat.

Environment Minister Donna Faragher said the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), with Perth Zoo, the Australian Wildlife Conservancy and Project Numbat, had worked to save numbats by baiting foxes and through breeding and translocation programs.

"It is estimated that just 1,000 numbats exist in the wild, following population declines caused by the effects of foxes and feral cats and loss of habitat," Mrs Faragher said.

"Numbats, classified as 'vulnerable' on State and Federal lists, were recently elevated to Endangered on the World Conservation Union's Red List of Threatened Species."

The Minister said that funding had provided radio-collars for Project Numbat and enabled two radio-tracking flights over Cocanarup Timber Reserve near Ravensthorpe.

The flights allowed DEC to search for radio-collared numbats and gather information about the distribution and status of the translocated population at Cocanarup.

As a result, the department found five numbats that it had previously lost contact with, including an adult captive-bred numbat that was released in 2007 but not located since the 2009 mating season.

The funding also supported an on-ground survey of the numbat population in Dryandra Woodland near Narrogin. Mrs Faragher said Project Numbat played an important role in supporting the numbat recovery program.

"Protecting numbats from feral predators and loss of habitat is a massive undertaking, and the contribution made by Project Numbat is invaluable for the future survival of this unique marsupial," she said.

Perth Zoo has bred numbats for release into the wild since 1993. More than 140 have been released, with 20 going into Cocanarup in the past three years.

In December 2008, 13 numbats were released into Cocanarup in the third release of numbats at the reserve since 2006.

Cocanarup Timber Reserve was chosen as a numbat translocation site as it is baited each month for foxes under DEC's 'Western Shield' baiting program, and because it is an area of eucalypt woodland with good densities of hollow logs and termites, both of which are required by numbats.

The numbat translocation has also been funded by the 'Western Shield' translocation plan and the Federal Government's Caring for our Country program through South Coast Natural Resource Management.

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