



A Day in the Life of...

Dani Jose, Native Species Breeding Program Keeper

Dani works in the Native Species Breeding Program at Perth Zoo with a special focus on one of Australia's most unique marsupials, the Numbat.

Dani's work with animals began while she was at university and volunteered at Kanyana Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. While there, she worked on the Bilby breeding and release program run by the then Department of Conservation and Land Management as part of its Western Shield Program. She also worked on predator awareness training for the marsupials as part of a university Honours project.

After finishing university, Dani set her sights on Perth Zoo. It took a while to get her foot in the door but her persistence finally paid off when she was offered a seven-week contract in the Australian section. Within a year, she was a permanent member of staff and was working in all areas of the section, including penguins, Wetlands, Bushwalk and birds.

A few years later she moved to the Zoo's Native Species Breeding Program (NSBP). While she spends most of her time with Numbats that are bred for release, she also takes care of frogs and Dibblers as part of the NSBP.

Since 1993, a total of 135 Numbats bred at Perth Zoo have been released into the wild.

"It's great to work with animals that are bred for release," Dani says. "It feels wonderful to be involved in this kind of conservation work."

7.30am We have a quick meeting to see if there is anything important we need to know about and then we do some stretching before we start our day's work. We spend a lot of time bent over the edge of tanks or under lights so stretching helps us a lot. Most of my work takes place in off-display areas. I check on the Numbats in the outside enclosures, which usually houses the male and non-breeding Numbats, to make sure they are okay and then check the Numbats kept inside in what we call 'the tunnel'. For four to five months of the year, the female Numbats live in the tunnel which is warmer and allows us to take better care of them while they have young. The next thing I do is open the Numbat exhibit in the Australian Bushwalk and feed the Splendid Fairy Wrens and Rufous Whistlers in the exhibit.

Then it's time for food preparation. Our Numbats receive a special feed known as 'Numbat Custard' which is a mixture of water, eggs and a low lactose milk powder. First, I prepare the custard for the next day. That goes in the fridge and I take out what was prepared the day before. I then mix in termite mound powder, calcium and vitamin supplements and place it into individual dishes. Live termites are added. I serve it for the Numbats' 9am feed. At the moment we have 12 adults and 12 young so it's a lot of dishes and weighing to get it just right.

9.00am After feeding the Numbats, I collect the food bowls from the day before to see how much each Numbat has eaten. It's a good indication of a Numbat's general health. I clean dishes and do some odd jobs before presenting the Numbat talk at 10.30am (during the warmer months) which is also when we feed the female Numbat on display.

Numbats eat up to 20,000 termites a day. While we use Numbat Custard as a supplement to an all-termite diet, we still need a good supply of live termites to keep our Numbats happy. For about an hour-and-a-half, I harvest termites from wood-filled drums delivered to the Zoo. It can be pretty intensive work knocking termites out of bits of wood.

1.00pm After lunch (mine, not the Numbats') I prepare the Numbats' afternoon feed and then do odd jobs including weeding in the exhibits, fixing reticulation, collecting nest material and enrichment items, and doing paper work—there are always reports to write.

3.30pm Afternoon feed time. The Numbats receive a crumb feed for enrichment. This enrichment feed is a mixture of leftover termite mound and termites. The Numbats in the tunnel are fed Numbat Custard. I then feed the birds in the Numbat exhibit before I head back to the office and complete reports.

