



DRYANDRA WOODLANDS NATIONAL PARK

**TRIP REPORT
2025**



Last year I was fortunate enough to be recommended this forum by fellow wildlife photographer and mammal watcher Jannico Kelk. It's funny, as for a long while before then I had been wishing that there was some form of central location for information exchange between like-minded individuals when it came to planning trips overseas to spot wildlife. So it is safe to say I was over the moon to find this community and have found it incredibly helpful so far.

It got me thinking about how I was able to give back to everyone and contribute to the forum and so ive decided to write this trip report/summary of my time spent in Dryandra Woodlands National Park over the past 5 years.

As a wildlife photographer based in the South-West of Western Australia, I'm lucky enough to live relatively (in Australian terms) close to this fantastic little island of native wildlife. I've just clocked my 60th day within the park on my last trip and thought I would share what I have learnt about Numbats and how to find/photograph them in that time.

Dryandra is probably the best mammal watching location that the Southern Half of WA has to offer. Surrounded on all sides by a sea of degraded agricultural land, this remnant woodlands is the closest thing we have left to what the wheatbelt region of WA might have looked like prior to the widespread land clearing and monoculture cropping that occurred with colonial settlement over the last 200 years. It's one of the only places that I know of in the southern half of the state where you can be sitting around a campfire at night and have more than 5 different native marsupials hopping around your feet.

A true gem of WA that's for sure !



The park's status hasn't come without its attention though, as there has been a big increase of visitors in the past few years as the park gains traction on social media and through word of mouth.

It's still nowhere near what I would call busy, but it was only a few years ago that you could easily drive around a whole day and see no other cars, especially on a weekday. With that attention has come some bad behaviours and I'm hoping that this guide can act as not only a reference on how to find the critters that call the woodlands home, but also how to act around them to help avoid impacting their daily lives and ultimately to help preserve the species found there from being "loved to death"





Where is it?


If you've clicked on this trip report, then you probably have a rough idea of Dryandra's location, and perhaps are planning on visiting the park during a mammal watching trip to Australia or the state of Western Australia. But for those of you completely new to the park, it's located about 2.5 hours South-East of the main city in WA, Perth.

What can you see there?

The park is most famous for its healthy population of Numbats, a once common, now endangered marsupial found in only a handful of reserves in the country. But the list doesn't stop there, with Dryandra being home to a really impressive array of native wildlife, some of which are near impossible to see elsewhere in the region.

Whilst this is nowhere close to an exhaustive list, the following page is a list of the species I'd expect to be able to see on a well timed productive trip to the park.





Numbat (Myrmecobius fasciatus)
Echidna (Tachyglossus aculeatus)
Mardo (Antechinus flavipes)
Woylie (Bettongia penicillata)
Chuditch (Dasyurus geoffroii)
Phascogale (Phascogale calura)
Western Grey Kangaroo (Macropus fuliginosus)
Tammar Wallaby (Notamacropus eugenii)
Black gloved Wallaby (Notamacropus irma)
Brush tail possum (Trichosurus vulpecula)



No doubt if you're interested in visiting Dryandra, it's because you're keen to see a Numbat. A small, squirrel sized marsupial that can be very hard or very easy to find, depending greatly on your luck.

If I was to average my Numbat sightings over the past few years, I'd probably say that I come across about 4 of these striped termite eating critters per day of searching. The challenging part about this, is that for each 4 sightings, maybe only 1 of them is a scenario where you can photograph them. The majority of the time they bolt off into the woodlands the minute you open your car door. So with one chance per day for a photograph you can see why they can be a pretty tricky animal to build a portfolio of.

How you find them is actually pretty simple, it just takes a keen eye and a whole lot of time and patience. Whilst you can see them on some of the marked walk tails within the park, the best option is to cruise slowly in your car around the small roads and tracks that Criss Cross the woodlands.

Having a couple passengers greatly increases your chances of spotting them, as often you're busy concentrating on the road instead of logs and hollows that litter the forest floor. My advice would be to stick to about 10-15kmph (either 1st or 2nd gear) and search with your windows down.



You're looking for something about the size of a squirrel, it's well camouflaged and you'll often miss them if they are standing still. Their response when they hear a car coming depends on the individuals, but 80% of the time it is to find some shelter and hide their body behind it, posing like a meerkat over the top of a log and watching you as you drive by.

So a lot of the time you're looking for just the face of one of them sticking out from behind a log which can make it very tricky when you consider they are the same colour as the log. Sometimes however, you can get lucky and find an individual that doesn't care about you or your car and will continue to forage around the fallen logs for termites.

If you're not into photography, or aren't too fussed about getting an image with plenty of eye catching bokeh, then this is by far the best scenario to observe them. You pull up in a car alongside them and they go about their day, Numbling around the woodlands in search of their daily termite quota. If you turn off your engine and sit quietly, you can often observe them acting naturally for half an hour or so without disturbing them.





This is where it starts to get complicated, as photographing a Numbat from a car whilst it explores the forest floor very very rarely makes for a good image, especially once you take into account that they are diurnal, which means you'll often be shooting them at midday !

Ethics

If you must get out of the car, you'll need to know a few things and follow a few rules/guidelines.

Firstly, at least three quarters of the time that you leave your vehicle you'll scare the Numbat off. It will bolt for the nearest log and hide inside until it believes that it's safe again. How long that can be will depend on the individual Numbat and how used to human presence it is. But a good rule to follow when it comes to ethically photographing them is never wait more than about 5 minutes for a Numbat to come out.

If it hasn't reemerged within 5 minutes then it's scared of you. Not only are you stopping it feeding during that time, but even when it does eventually come out, then one snapped twig or one move of the arms to change the camera settings will scare it again! It can be tempting to push this limit slightly, especially on days where this might have been your only Numbat sighting (which happens a lot).

From experience, it's without a doubt the best thing for the Numbat and usually means you have more time to find one that doesn't mind your presence, making for better photos anyway.



If photographing Numbats is your goal whilst visiting the woodlands, then I'd recommend at least 3 full days in the park, allowing you plenty of time to not only find one, but to find the right one...

These stunning marsupials have been put under a fair bit of pressure in recent years as visitor numbers to the park increase. Whilst most people do the right thing and have absolutely no intention of causing the Numbats harm, they are often blissfully unaware of how much foraging time is taken up by being holed up in a log for half an hour. Especially in winter, when the daylight hours are shorter and the mums are often trying to fatten up to feed bubs on board.

Providing you are quiet and respectful with your approach, you can often find that the Numbats seem to go about their business unphased by your presence. These are the wildlife encounters that always end up leading to the best images, with the animals displaying their natural behaviour and not just meerkating on a log staring into the camera.

If the photographer in this image had tried to approach the Numbat to this proximity, there's absolutely no chance it would have allowed it. These kind of encounters take time and respect, sitting quietly on the forest floor and allowing the animal to come to you.






Numbubs

Extra caution and consideration is needed if you find yourself lucky enough to photograph baby Numbats, affectionately known as Numbubs.

During baby season, as the bubs grow and gain confidence, they will spend more and more time away from their nests. This exploration is without a doubt their most vulnerable time as Mum spends all day away foraging for termites, leaving the babies unsupervised at the nest site. Considering numbers are thought to be as low as 2000 individual Numbats left on our planet, each of the 4 babies of a litter is of vital importance to the species.



Within the woodlands, thankfully due to the incredible work of a handful of dedicated individuals and organizations, there is a very low feral predator density.

These introduced predators are the reason that Numbats are endangered and have vanished from most of the country. Cats and foxes find these cute little critters irresistible and the Numbats have never evolved to deal with them as predators.

There is however still a strong presence of the Numbats natural predators:

Western Quoll

Wedge Tailed Eagles

South-West Carpet Python



So considering these little babies have the odds stacked against them, there are an extra couple of guidelines we try to adhere to when it comes to Numbub season.

Firstly, make sure to always give a nest site a wide berth, you don't want the bubs feeling threatened or like they can't explore and forage due to the fear of your proximity.

Secondly, people have been caught in the woodlands moving sticks and foliage that block the entrance to the nests to get a better shot. It goes without saying that this is bad for the Numbubs survival, with Mum often choosing nest sites with foliage above the entrance to help avoid predation from eagles above.

Lastly, always make sure to be gone from the nest site early in the morning and late in the afternoon as this is when Mum leaves and returns to and from the nest. If she comes home and sees you there, she'll sometimes think that the nest is compromised, moving the bubs to a new site and exposing them to unnecessary risk from predators.



Logistics

You can stay at the following three places within the park:

Dryandra Lions Village

Gnaala Mia Campgrounds

Congelin Campgrounds

The closest towns for fuel, food and firewood are:

Williams

Narrogin



The Lions Village has self catering cabins available for rent if camping isn't your thing.

With a fireplace, kitchen and your own toilet per cabin this can be a great option if you are travelling internationally without camping gear or just enjoy a solid bed after a day of wildlife spotting

Both campsites offer similar facilities, which is a level gravel campsite and firepit (which can be used during the cooler months) and then drop toilet facilities for ablutions. If you haven't been lucky enough to use the Aussie drop toilet yet, then be prepared for a pretty grim situation in summer and something not too bad in the cooler months of the year.

There is water available at the campsites but it is rainwater and I am yet to pour a cup without getting at least 5% mosquito larvae by weight content...

So best to bring your own and just use the rainwater for the washing up. There is no power or bin facilities so campers must be fully self sufficient and bring everything out of the park that they brought in. I much prefer the campsites when staying as they are brilliant for the nocturnal mammals in the evenings.

In recent years it has become very common for Western Quolls to visit the sites at night, scavenging campers' scraps and although it may be tempting to leave out some food, keep in mind that feeding any native wildlife in Western Australia is illegal. There are also plenty of Woylies and Quenda that visit and can often be first noticed as they bump into your feet around the fireplace.



Spotlighting in the sheoak thicket near the Congelin campground is a really good spot for turning up Red tailed Phascogales on the trees and you are almost guaranteed to find a Brush tailed Possum there too. Keep in mind the phascogales are seasonal and are a heck of a lot easier to find with a thermal, but you're looking for a heat signal that is moving super erratically and is about the size of a mouse, perhaps a tiny bit bigger.



A misty forest scene with tall, thin trees and a dirt path leading into the distance. The trees are mostly eucalyptus, with some showing characteristic white bark. The ground is a reddish-brown dirt path. In the background, a signpost is visible on the left side of the path.

Best Season?

By far the best months to visit Dryandra are September and October or the Australian Spring. The forest has been drenched in a healthy amount of rain all winter and is just beginning to come to life with wildflowers, orchids and grasses.

The Numbats are active when their prey, the termites, are at the surface, where they can easily dig for them. Termites are fussy buggers, not enjoying anything too hot or cold, so there tends to be peak numbat activity during the winter and spring months when the digging is easy and the termites are busy.

Late spring also coincides with Numbub season, so its a nice time to be there, but be careful not to leave it too late as it can start to warm up in the woodlands pretty quick. Once summer hits it is quite an uncomfortable place to camp, with an infuriating amount of flies blown in from the surrounding farm land and temperatures climbing above 35deg celsius pretty quickly each morning.

I've usually had my most productive trips from around June - October each year. Although if you are planning a trip to Western Australia specifically for its nature, then I would without a doubt recommend September. You'll have no dramas finding Numbats and Echidna in Dryandra and it will also be peak season for Honey Possums on the South Coast and Orchids in the Stirling Ranges! When combined with Quokka on Rottnest island and the Ringtail Possums of the South-West capes region it ends up being a pretty awesome trip.



Regarding time of day, thankfully being a diurnal marsupial, the Numbat isn't an early riser. In fact in winter when the night time temperatures drop it can take quite a while for the termites and therefore the Numbats to wake up, meaning you get to sleep in. It's refreshing not needing to be up at the crack of dawn!





I usually start my morning drives around 9am, with a lunch break around midday and then an afternoon drive until about 4pm. Much earlier or later than that and you start to have diminishing returns on sightings. But it obviously means that the light isn't great for photos and therefore if you have the luxury of planning a trip with a bit of flexibility then cloudy overcast days are the best to avoid the harsh midday shadows.

I really hope that this trip report has been helpful in some way to your planning of a wildlife trip to Western Australia. We're really lucky to have such prolific wildlife here in WA and I'd love for everyone to be able to have a successful trip to find and photograph it!

If you have any more questions about Dryandra or any of the other amazing wildlife we have here in Australia then make sure to get in touch via the links below.

Cheers,

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