Vanessa Cole

Vanessa Cole completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree at Murdoch University and after working in accountancy for two years returned to Murdoch to complete a BSc in Biological Sciences. By choosing appropriate elective units in her degree, she specialised in molecular genetics. After being awarded First Class Honours in Molecular Biology, Vanessa gained employment as a Medical Scientist in the Department of Haematology-Coagulation at Royal Perth Hospital where she is carrying out molecular biological research on the causes of thrombosis. Her work involves isolating and characterising genes responsible for producing receptor proteins on the surface of platelets - cellular elements in the blood involved in clot formation.

Vanessa is looking at how these genes and the receptor proteins produced by them vary between healthy people and those who have suffered strokes or heart attacks. The aim of the work is to identify the genetic risk factors involved so that those people seen to have a higher likelihood of suffering a stroke or heart attack can take appropriate preventative measures. Vanessa says she chose Murdoch University for both of her degrees because of its student friendly reputation, the high quality of its teaching and the flexibility of its courses.
Blair Parsons

Blair completed a Bachelor of Science degree at Murdoch University with a double major in Biological Sciences and Environmental Science. Subsequently, while working with the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), Blair expanded his already keen interest in conservation biology through involvement in a range of native species reintroduction programs. These included monitoring the Shark Bay Mouse on Bernier Island and participating in a Woylie reintroduction project on Peron Peninsula in Shark Bay. Blair then returned to Murdoch to complete an Honours year sponsored by Australian Geographic and the CSIRO. After being awarded First Class Honours, he was appointed to the position of Technical Officer Sustainable Ecosystems at the CSIRO, a position he currently holds. His work involves studying the reintroduction of locally extinct mammals at Heirisson Prong in Shark Bay. Blair is concentrating on the burrowing bettong, the western barred bandicoot and the greater stick nest rat. Blair says that the success of the project depends on controlling introduced predators such as foxes and cats. He aims to develop and implement management strategies which will allow the native species to become self-supporting. Much of Blair’s work is field-based and involves spotlighting, trapping and radio tracking.

His research is assisted by Earthwatch which attracts members from all over the world who volunteer their services in the field; so Blair gets to interact, not only with the animals, but with people from many different countries and backgrounds. Blair says that his interest in conservation biology was stimulated by the information provided and the experience gained in his degree program, and by the expertise of the Murdoch staff and their contacts with the scientific community.