



WWF

BUSHFIRE
RESPONSE

2020



Australian Wildlife & Nature Recovery Fund

BUSHFIRE CRISIS



Bushfire Crisis - Australia

Right now, Australia is being ravaged by the most devastating bushfire season the country has ever seen.

Record-breaking temperatures and months of severe drought have fueled flames in every state. Since the fires commenced in October 2019, more than 10.7 million hectares of land have been burned.

We are greatly saddened by the loss of life and property. Our hearts go out to the families who have lost loved ones, the communities who have lost homes, the brave firefighters battling the blazes and wildlife carers who are working tirelessly to save injured wildlife.

The impacts are devastating. Credible and conservative estimates are that more than 1.25 billion animals (inc. mammals, birds and reptiles) have been impacted to date, with several species presumed to be extinct. However, until the fires subside the full extent of damage will remain unknown. This catastrophic loss is a national emergency. Many forests will take decades to recover and some species may have tipped over the brink of extinction.

You can help WWF-Australia deploy emergency funds to care for our injured wildlife and when the fires clear, help restore the forest homes our koalas, kangaroos and other animals have lost, and protect what remains.

To date, 29 people, including firefighters, have died. Thousands of homes have been destroyed, and the mass evacuation of communities is one of the largest-ever emergency movements of people in Australia.

The impacts facing wildlife

Fires have burned across all Australian States, with New South Wales and Victoria experiencing some of the largest megafires. This has been devastating for Australia's wildlife, as massive areas of native bushland, forests and national parks have been scorched. It is a crisis with epic implications. Australia is filled with animals found nowhere else in the world. The fires have laid waste to vast stretches of earth, leaving our iconic species killed or injured.

Koalas across NSW and QLD have been severely impacted, with as many as 8,400 perishing in fires on the mid-north coast of NSW alone. Before this summer, WWF estimated that in eastern Australia koalas could be extinct in the wild in as little as 30 years, primarily due to excessive tree-clearing for agricultural and urban development, as well as the impacts of climate change. This is a devastating blow for a species in decline and has the potential to hasten the koalas' slide towards extinction.

Other threatened species severely impacted include:

- greater glider
- Kangaroo Island dunnart
- glossy black cockatoo
- rufous scrub-bird
- mountain pygmy possum
- yellow-bellied glider
- brush-tailed rock-wallaby

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Impact of the crisis

Estimates suggest the bushfire crisis will cost Australia at least \$5 billion in direct losses and cut between 0.2 and 0.5% from its economic growth. Major direct impacts will be felt by agriculture and tourism:

Thousands of livestock have been killed, downed power lines have disrupted dairy production and vineyards and other crops have been burned.

Tourism has taken a significant hit during what is normally peak season.

Indirect impacts will continue to be felt due to road closures and air pollution – the latter has affected 30% of the population, causing reduced worker productivity, increased health spending and lower crop yields.

The economic value of biodiversity loss due to the fires (based on fixed offset prices) is up to AU\$13 billion, and the economic value of carbon emissions due to the fires (based on carbon credit prices) is between AU\$4 and AU\$9 billion.

The impacts of climate change on bushfires

Australia knows bushfires. The hot, dry, summers make it easy for blazes to start, usually because of lightning strikes.

But this season's bushfire catastrophe is not normal.

While climate change does not cause bushfires, it does make them worse. Australia has been experiencing more frequent and intense heatwaves, prolonged droughts, and unusual wind patterns have created tinderbox conditions. We are in the midst of one of the worst droughts in recorded history, which has dried out the landscape and made it easier for fires to start, as well as easier for them to spread quickly. The devastation we are experiencing now is a clear departure from 'normal' to a hotter, drier world.

Extreme fire weather has increased over the last 30 years in southeast Australia, and the country has recorded four consecutive record-breaking summers in recent years. Fires are burning in places and at intensities never before experienced: rainforests in northern New South Wales, tropical Queensland, and the formerly wet old-growth forests in Tasmania.

Without help, critical habitat and our beloved iconic species may not survive. Even eucalyptus trees, which have evolved to survive bushfires, are dying in the extreme heat. In some places, it's hard to imagine recovery. For example, the damage on fire-ravaged Kangaroo Island may have pushed some native species over the brink. To date, more than 50% of the island's koala population has perished. But koalas are not functionally extinct and long term efforts can help them avoid that fate.

We must all do our bit to protect our world from climate disaster - failure to act will make extreme weather standard, with deadly consequences for people and nature.

BUSHFIRE RESPONSE



WWF-Australia's Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund

About the fund

We have been touched by the generosity of so many of our supporters and partners in Australia and around the world during this national disaster.

We are providing an immediate response to this bushfire crisis as well as ensuring there are long-term plans to restore what has been lost.

WWF-Australia is partnering with wildlife rescue and care organisations in fire-affected states and directing funds so they can respond at scale. We have committed \$1 million for immediate wildlife rescue, care and recovery - and that is just the beginning.

WWF funding will also help to protect critical unburnt habitat, restore forests and damaged wildlife habitat, and support innovative solutions to help mitigate climate change, drive climate preparedness and species adaptation.

The Australian Federal Government has committed an initial \$50 million to protect and support wildlife affected by the bushfire crisis. While this is a welcome start, we will need significantly more funding to meet the recovery needs of Australia's destroyed habitats and threatened species.

WWF-Australia is responding to the unprecedented scale of devastation by calling for global support to establish a AUD\$30 million Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund.

BUSHFIRE AFTERMATH, TOOWOOMBA, QLD. © PETER TIMBS



MARRANNE THE KOALA WITH BURNT PAWS © TRUDI TIMBS



BUSHFIRE RESPONSE



MARRIANNE THE KOALA WITH DARREN GROVER (HEAD OF HEALTHY LAND AND SEASCAPES, WWF-AUSTRALIA)

How WWF-Australia is responding

1. WILDLIFE RESPONSE

WWF-Australia is deploying a wildlife response plan - including partnering with wildlife response organisations in each fire-affected state and territory, communities and scientists across the country for swift and effective response and recovery at scale.

The number of injured animals has overwhelmed the capacity of wildlife care organisations, requiring a herculean response that will continue for months after the fires have burnt out. Environmental scientists harbour deep concerns that these fires may have triggered extinction events for a range of nationally threatened flora and fauna, and in addition to these concerns, species with low mobility, those that are poorly adapted to fire, or those who already have small and isolated populations are likely to require intensive long-term recovery support if they are to avoid extinction.

We will direct funds to wildlife response and care organisations that are reputable and require additional capacity to respond at scale and have supporting policies and procedures to demonstrate ethical approaches.

We will also establish and report on the number of wildlife deaths caused by the fires using scientific methodology and release a nationwide report to ensure accurate reporting and public awareness of the devastating mass loss of native wildlife. Additionally, we will conduct rapid threatened species assessments within affected areas to determine which species have been lost and which species are likely to now be listed as vulnerable, threatened or endangered.

Using these insights, we will provide advice to Australia's Federal and State Governments; calling for swift and effective interventions across wildlife response, nature protection and restoration.



BUSHFIRE RESPONSE



How WWF-Australia is responding

2. HABITAT RESTORATION

WWF-Australia is planning habitat restoration - including restoring forests and damaged wildlife habitat, stopping deforestation, including cultivating habitat connectivity, core habitat and Indigenous and rural fire management. On top of rampant tree-clearing, Australia's bushfire emergency is destroying homes and habitats, killing livestock, erasing livelihoods and releasing enormous volumes of carbon dioxide. Some forest communities have been largely destroyed.

When the fires clear we will help restore homes for koalas and other wildlife through our [Towards Two Billion Trees plan](#) to save and grow two billion trees by 2030. This starts with planting the first 10,000 urgently needed trees in critical koala habitat.



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BUSHFIRE RESPONSE



How WWF-Australia is responding

3. FUTURE-PROOFING AUSTRALIA

WWF-Australia's work will include driving innovative solutions to help mitigate climate change, driving climate preparedness, species adaptation and long-term wildlife and nature conservation efforts towards securing Australia's natural resources for people and nature.

With the increasing threat of species extinction, we will draw on innovative solutions to identify key species across high-risk landscapes within each Australian bioregion to identify and trial solutions that will better enable community preparedness, species adaptation and increased species resilience to warming climates.

The challenge ahead is to also ensure that protection interventions benefit both people and wildlife, for the ecological toll of these fires will only worsen if we fail to invest in protection interventions.

Australia is the 16th largest emitter of CO₂ globally and one of the largest exporters of coal and gas in the world. Our carbon emissions have increased in the past five years and nine of Australia's top ten warmest years on record have occurred since 2005. If Australia is to contribute to a global solution, we must transition our economy towards renewable energy and share our lessons of inaction internationally. WWF-Australia will focus on helping Australia seize the opportunity to become a world-leading exporter of renewable energy by 2030.



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BUSHFIRE RESPONSE



Join us.

Support the Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund

With your help, we can respond to the bushfire crisis not only in the short term – but we can address the issues at the core of this crisis.

Your donation to WWF will help support efforts to:

1. Address immediate needs - WWF is responding to the urgent needs of partner organisations dealing directly with fire impacts. Activities change daily but include providing extensive care to injured koalas and other species and deploying detection dogs in fire-affected areas to conduct assessments on koala habitat.
2. Recover critical habitats - The rescuers nursing fire-impacted koalas will not release them until their injuries have healed and the trees in their forest homes have grown new leaves. When the fires clear we will help restore homes for koalas and other wildlife through our Towards Two Billion Trees plan to save and grow two billion trees by 2030. This starts with planting the first 10,000 urgently needed trees in critical koala habitat.
3. Improve bushfire response - WWF seeks to expand the government's recovery and reconstruction responses to this and future fires by incorporating natural infrastructure and the best available science on climate resilience.

Contact Sophie Davidson, WWF-Australia Development Director

To donate to the \$30 million Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund, please visit www.wwf.org.au or contact Sophie Davidson, WWF-Australia Development Director, on 0488 425 325, or at sdavidson@wwf.org.au

Now is the time to redouble our efforts together with our partners and supporters around the world to repair what has been lost in a time of climate emergency. Help us save wildlife, and when the fires have cleared, restore our lost forests. Thank you.

WHAT WE'RE DOING

WILDLIFE CARE

WWF-Australia is deploying emergency care for wildlife.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Assessing the scale of the damage to species and habitat.

WILDLIFE REHABILITATION

Rehabilitating wildlife through food drops, water stations, and supporting care facilities.



SEARCHING FOR KOALAS IN NEED

In partnership with OWAD, we've deployed koala detection dogs who have located surviving koalas.

RESTORING HABITAT

When the fires clear we will help restore homes for wildlife through WWF-Australia's Two Billion Trees plan.

FUTURE-PROOFING AUSTRALIA

WWF-Australia's work will include driving innovative solutions to help mitigate climate change, driving climate preparedness, species adaptation and long-term wildlife and nature conservation efforts towards securing Australia's natural resources for people and nature.

	<p>Why we are here To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.</p> <p>wwf.org.au</p>
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WWF-Australia National Office

Level 1/1 Smail Street,
Ultimo NSW 2007
GPO Box 528
Sydney NSW 2001

Tel: 0488 425 325
sdavidson@wwf.org.au
[@WWF_Australia](https://www.facebook.com/WWF_Australia)
wwf.org.au