



AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE & NATURE RECOVERY FUND

RESPOND, RESTORE, AND PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

JUNE 2020

Photo Credits

Cover: Family of kangaroos after bushfire in Jervis Bay © Bryce Harper / WWF-Australia

Page 3: Australian bushfire in Jervis Bay © Bryce Harper / WWF-Australia

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Page 6: WWF-Australia CEO Dermot O'Gorman meeting with Minty the injured possum © Matthew Harris / WWF-Australia

Page 7: Aerial of WWF walking through Kangaroo Island bushfire aftermath © Sii Studio / WWF-Australia

Page 8: Annie the koala gets her bandages changed © Veronica Joseph / WWF-Australia

Page 9: Bushfire impacted forest © Laurent Desarnaud / WWF-Australia

Page 10: WWF-Australia CEO Dermot O'Gorman meeting Ellie the injured echidna © Matthew Harris / WWF-Australia

Page 11: Tim Cronin & Jennifer Ford, WWF-Australia load vegetables into helicopter for food drop © Veronica Joseph / WWF-Australia

Page 12: Kangaroo in Latham Conservation Park © Paul Fahy / WWF-Australia

Back Cover: Bushfire in Bowraville © Adam Dederer



A NATION IN CRISIS

This year, the world was rocked by the devastating and unprecedented bushfire season in Australia. Koalas and other iconic species including kangaroos, kookaburras, wallabies, and honey eaters were killed, and many thousands more were left injured and homeless or without a food source. Over 80% of the species that call Australia home are found nowhere else, leaving them vulnerable to higher extinction risks. The WWF Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund was launched to boost Australia's capacity to **respond** to wildlife in need, **restore** damaged habitat, and **prepare for the future**.

The catastrophic fires have greatly exacerbated the species extinction crisis that the country is already facing. This is why WWF-Australia called for immediate global support to establish the AUD\$30 million Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund. Thanks to the generosity of donors, this goal has already been met, with **AUD\$9 million** coming from the US alone.

BUSHFIRES

Australia knows bushfires, as fires are a natural part of the country's ecology. Its hot, dry summers provide the perfect conditions for blazes to start. But this season was a departure from the normal fire season. It was the most devastating bushfire season the country has ever seen with horrific impacts. Australia's unprecedented dryness, low humidity, prolonged drought, and record-breaking temperatures created the perfect storm for catastrophic fires. Bushfires were reported in every state, with the hardest hit being New South Wales and Victoria. The fires scorched vast stretches of the country, leaving iconic species killed or injured. The losses were overwhelming; 33 people dead, over 3,000 homes destroyed, more than 42 million acres burned, and an estimated 1.25 billion native animals were killed. *

*This is a conservative estimate from January 2020. In reality, this number is likely to be greater, however, to ensure safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, fatality surveys are being conducted at a slower pace.

FIRES & CHANGING FIRE RISK

Across the globe, out-of-control fires are spreading with greater size, duration, intensity, and frequency. A number of factors, including hotter temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, long periods of drought, forest destruction and disturbance – all are converging to put both people and nature at greater risk. In addition, the escalation of global warming and lightning activity could increase the possibility of fire ignition.





THE WWF AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE & NATURE RECOVERY FUND

The WWF Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund was established to boost Australian capacity to respond to wildlife in need of urgent care, protect habitat that we have not yet lost, and restore the iconic ecosystem impacted by the bushfires.

RESPONSE: including partnering with wildlife response organizations, communities and scientists nationally for a swift and effective response and recovery at scale.

RESTORATION: including restoring forests and damaged wildlife habitat, and stopping deforestation—cultivating habitat connectivity, core habitat and Indigenous and rural fire management.

FUTURE-PROOFING AUSTRALIA: including driving innovative solutions to help mitigate climate change, driving climate preparedness, and long-term wildlife and nature conservation efforts towards securing Australia's natural resources for people and nature.

Key Themes of the WWF Australian Wildlife & Nature Recovery Fund

HOW YOUR DONATION HELPED MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As of May 2020, 80% of the funds have been allocated to responding to wildlife in need of urgent care, while the remainder helped restore critical habitat and prepare for the future. Through these generous donations, 64 bushfire response projects were approved, including those that provide veterinary services, food, and shelter for injured and homeless wildlife. Drones and detection dogs were used to help assess wildlife health and distribution.

May marked the first month without fires. As we move past the 2020 fire season, we turn our focus to protecting and restoring critical habitat and threatened species, and future-proofing Australia for future bushfire and climate-change related threats.

RESPONSE PHASE I (2019-2020 Fire Season)

Respond with Urgency

During this phase, WWF-Australia also gathered information and reported on wildlife fatalities, shared insights and advised the government on needed interventions, supported impacted conservation partners, and conducted threatened species abundance assessments.

Threatened species include: Koala, Greater Glider, Long-footed Potoroo, Kangaroo Dunnart, Glossy Black Cockatoo, Rufous Scrub-bird, Mountain Pygmy Possum, Yellow-bellied Glider, Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby





RESPONSE PHASE II (2020 Post Fires & Beyond)

Protect and Restore Wildlife and Landscapes

In order to restore and protect critical habitat, WWF-Australia will work to ensure unburnt habitat is protected, educate and de-bunk misinformation, and help restore priority fire-impacted species and habitats with a focus on connectivity and climate resilience. We will also innovate and scale specific adaptation interventions and replicate and scale effective conservation approaches.

RESPONSE PHASE III (2020 Post Fires & Beyond)

Future-proof Australian Society

We aim to improve Australia's "Nature Laws" by influencing the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act review and strengthening climate policy while enhancing traditional owner land management solutions. Through campaigns and funding, we will facilitate the transition to renewables and position Australia as a testbed for impactful, innovative and regenerative solutions capable of being scaled globally.

"Less than 5% of our funding comes from the government. Our ability to partner with organizations like WWF-Australia and to raise money through the community is what keeps us going and gives us the ability to help the 80 animals a day that we're receiving. Without WWF and the support of the community, we wouldn't be able to do the work we do, and that would be a real tragedy for the animals."

Darren Maier

CEO, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Queensland

KOALA REHABILITATION

Zoos Victoria and a network of partners, including the Philip Island Nature Parks team and Healesville Sanctuary Wildlife Hospital, have been monumental in wildlife triage efforts and incident control across the state of Victoria.

To aid in rescue efforts, a critical care center was established at Healesville Sanctuary Wildlife Hospital and a recovery facility was set up at the Philip Island Nature Parks' Koala Conservation Reserve. Each koala at the facility has its own unique rehabilitation plan and is monitored by specialized koala rangers. Koalas require very specialized veterinary care. Many of the animals require muscular strength development, burn, and trauma recovery. Here, animals are receiving round the clock care to ensure their health and wellbeing are looked after.

With the support of WWF-Australia, the Philip Island Nature Parks will be developing two large semi-wild rehabilitation facilities, where animals can live during their final stage of rehabilitation before being released into the wild.

“The devastating bushfires which impacted Australia and our unique wildlife so significantly throughout the summer of 2019/20 have written an unforgettable chapter in our history and left a lasting legacy”

Jessica McKelson

Conservation Manager, Phillip Island Nature Parks



Annie first arrived at the Healesville Sanctuary on January 16 with burns to all four of her feet. She was hesitant to climb in her enclosure, did not drink much, and would only eat when handfed. By March, Annie was eating well and was 'acting more like a wild koala' according to her veterinarian. Now, Annie is recovering well at the Koala Conservation Reserve, her new temporary home.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

JALI LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

WWF-Australia has formed a collaboration with the Jali Local Aboriginal Council on species detection in the Ngunya Jargoon Indigenous Protected Area on the northern coast of New South Wales. Indigenous Protected Areas are Aboriginal-owned land where traditional owners have entered into an agreement with the Australian government to promote cultural resource conservation and biodiversity.

In November 2019, more than 85% of the Ngunya Jargoon Indigenous Protected Area was devastated by the wildfires. The Jali lands are the largest and most significant wildlife corridors in the area, covering over 1,114 hectares and providing a critical refuge in an otherwise fractured landscape. WWF-Australia supported the Jali Local Aboriginal Council's acquisition of equipment for rangers – enabling rangers to survey and assess the impact of the fires and to detect wildlife and record the presence of threatened species, including the koala and long-nose potoroo.

WWF-Australia has been committed to working with Indigenous Aboriginal communities for more than 30 years. The stewardship of Australia's natural resources by traditional owners is vital to the conservation of natural and cultural resources across the country, the protection of threatened species, and ecosystem health.

OUR PARTNERS

We would like to acknowledge our front-line partner organizations who have been rescuing and treating injured wildlife in bushfire impacted areas, implementing projects to start the recovery process.

- Australian Veterinary Association
- Friends of the Koala, Lismore
- Biolink
- Ecological Australia
- Drone Detection of Koalas
- Wildcare Queanbeyan
- Rewilding Aust Booderee - Jervis Bay ACT
- Woolworths and Foodbank
- ACT Wildlife
- Bangalow Koalas
- Jali Local Aboriginal Council
- Total Environment Centre (TEC)
- The Great Eastern Ranges initiative (GER)
- Ecotourism Australia ACT
- RSPCA Queensland
- OWAD Koala Detection Dogs
- Kangaroo Island Land for Wildlife
- Nature Foundation SA
- Zoos Victoria Australian Wildlife Health Centre
- Phillip Island Nature Park
- Native Animal Rescue
- FAWNA Inc
- Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary





SAFEGUARDS FOR PEOPLE & NATURE

ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

At a concept level, risk assessments are a critical part of our decision-making prior to giving project approval. All partner projects supported by the WWF Australian Wildlife & Nature Recovery Fund were screened in advance of distributing funds and were found to be low risk for both people and nature.

PROGRESS IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has not had severe impacts on Phase I Response, as the majority of funds and support has gone to wildlife shelters and emergency wildlife care. Current restrictions have not kept workers from being able to tend to the animals in veterinary care.

Although there are some delays in contractual projects, most fieldwork is continuing as the work is deemed essential. WWF-Australia has requested COVID safety statements from those continuing to carry out work in the field. To date, adequate social distancing and precautionary interventions are being applied.

THANK YOU

We are extremely grateful for your generosity. Through your support we have provided Australia with the resources it needs to begin to recover. You helped care and feed injured wildlife. You helped restore critical habitat and prepare Australia for the future. The Australian bushfire recovery work is a massive, long-term effort that will require support for many years, and we thank you for making this work possible and for your commitment to protecting Earth's precious ecosystems.

For more details and stories, please visit www.worldwildlife.org/australiabushfires.



