

Bushfire Recovery for Wildlife and Habitat

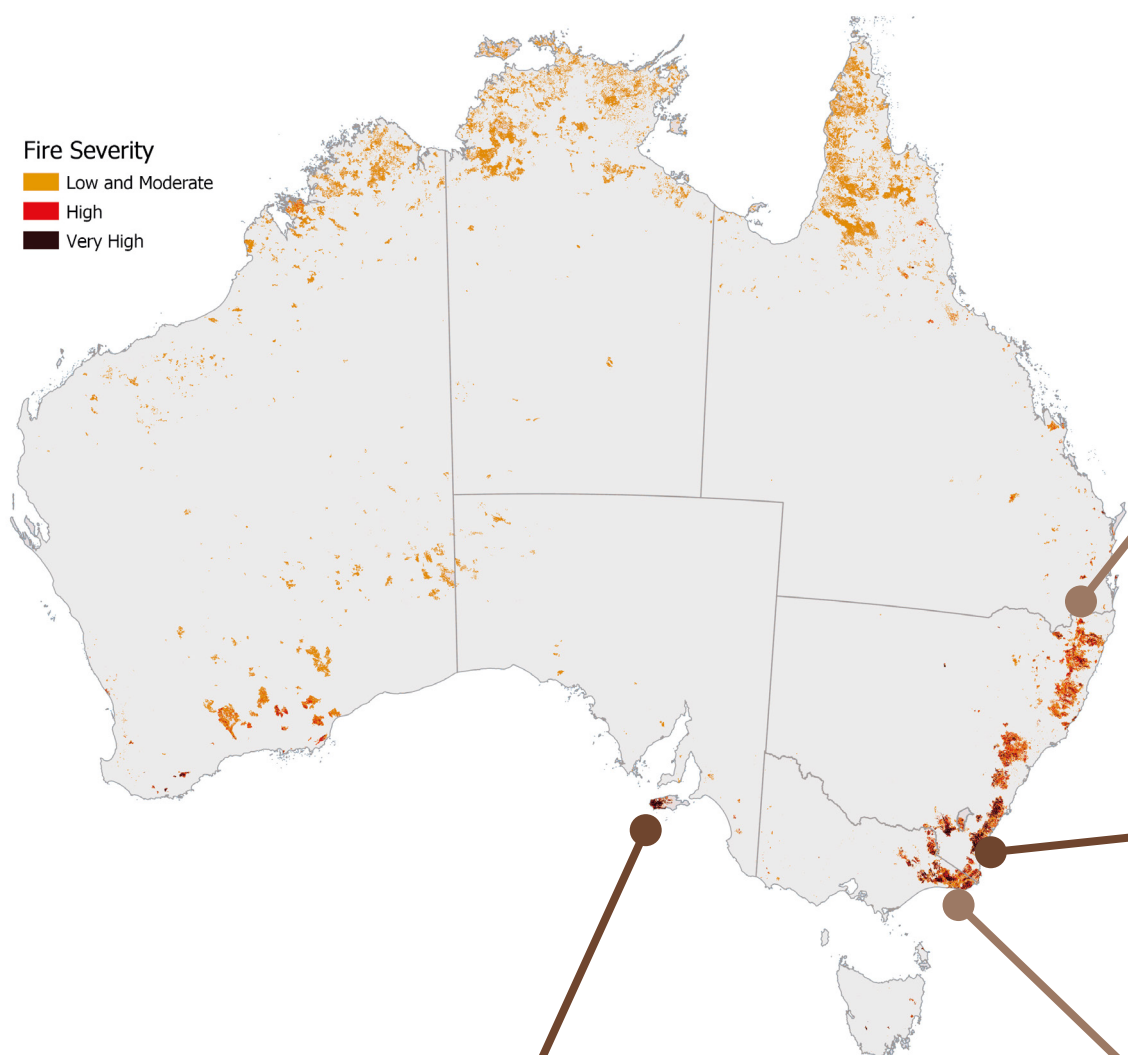
Overview

February 2022

The Australian Government is investing more than \$200 million to support the recovery of our native wildlife and their habitats from the devastating Black Summer bushfires of 2019–20.

To undertake on-ground recovery activities the government is working with:

- local communities
- wildlife carers
- zoos
- natural resource management organisations
- Indigenous organisations
- conservation groups
- universities
- state, territory and local governments.



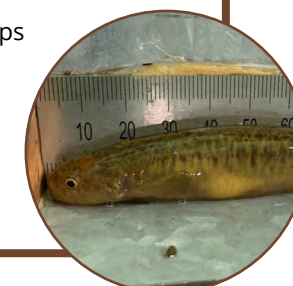
Approximately 36% of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area in south-east Qld was burnt during Black Summer. Healthy Land and Water has since undertaken over 100 hectares of weed control in the critically endangered Lowland Subtropical Rainforest ecological community. Fencelines across 7 km have been erected to exclude cattle across 1,400 hectares of bushfire affected and unburnt refuge areas. These actions protect species including Koala, Giant Barred Frog, and hundreds of plants. Of the 100 rainforest and wet sclerophyll species studied post-fires, 93% have resprouted and 5% have regenerated exclusively from seed.

Image: Weeds. Credit: Healthy Land and Water



The Stocky Galaxias had 56% of its habitat severely burnt in the fires. At Lake Eucumbene in the Snowy Mountains, teams from NSW Fisheries, South East Local Land Services, Charles Sturt University and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service have collected Galaxias eggs for hatching off-site in order to boost numbers of the tiny fish. While the hatchlings grow, habitat restoration has been underway—fencing to prevent feral animal access, solar-powered pumps and tanks to manage water flow and rocks and revegetation to re-build instream habitat. The translocated fish will be returned to the project site when the habitat is healthy again.

Image: Stocky Galaxias. Credit: Chris Walsh



Case studies

The Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife's Wildlife Friendly Vets Program has supported wildlife volunteers around the country with training and expertise essential to effective treatment, handling and care. Funding has gone to more than 100 wildlife rehabilitation groups around the country and the foundation is supporting the mental health of wildlife carers through Caring for Carers. The project has helped to create new major wildlife care infrastructure, build capacity and preparedness to respond to future emergencies, and improve community awareness of wildlife rescue and wildlife needs.

Image: Wildlife carer. Credit: Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife



The Kangaroo Island Dunnart lost over 95% of its habitat in the Black Summer bushfires. Motion sensor camera monitoring and surveys by Kangaroo Island Landscape Board have discovered something wonderful—a female dunnart with several jelly-bean sized babies! Since that first spotting, researchers have monitored the babies' growth. Dunnarts have now been detected at nearly 70 sites in conservation areas and on private properties on the western end of the island since the bushfires. Citizen scientists assisted researchers by analysing thousands of motion capture images which have also benefited other fire-affected native species including KI Whipbird and Southern Emu-wren.

Image: Pregnant KI Dunnart. Credit: Josh Mulvaney KILB



East Gippsland Landcare Network and partners, BirdLife Australia and Wildlife Unlimited, are revegetating properties in East Gippsland with high priority native vegetation to maximise the chances of long-term recovery of native plant species and provide ongoing habitat for native animals and birds. The Bush for Birds project works with local landowners in an effort to protect and enhance habitat on private land. So far, several kilometres of fencing have been installed and 22,000 native seedlings have been supplied to over 30 landholders from areas heavily impacted by the bushfires.

Image: Regent Honeyeaters. Credit: Birdlife Australia

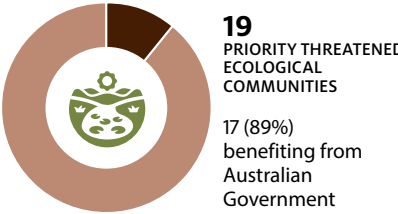
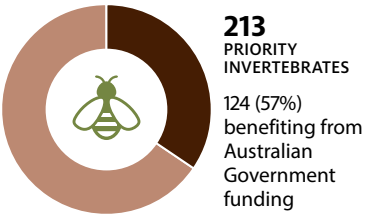
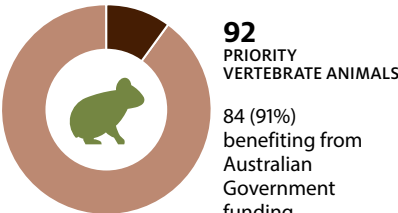
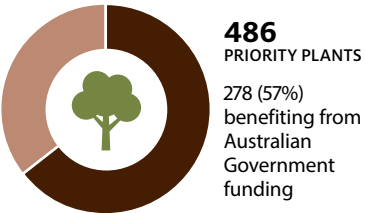


Impacts

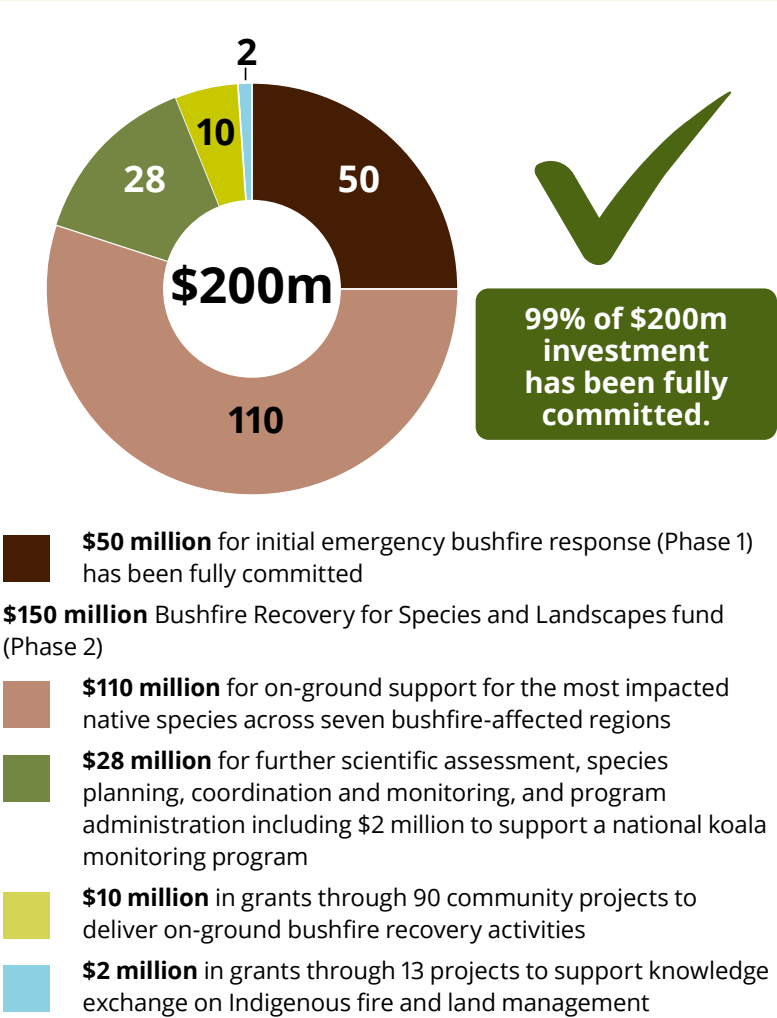


Assessment of impacts on wildlife and habitats

Desktop analysis by experts identified 810 priority matters (native plants, animals and ecological communities) for immediate management following the bushfires. On-ground surveys are underway to assess the condition of native plants and animals, pest animals and weeds.



\$200 million funding



What's happened in the last quarter?

- ✓ Training is underway for vets and veterinary nurses across Australia to treat and classify burns and understand the importance of nutrition in the treatment and recovery of bushfire-affected wildlife, including Koalas. The training also provides vet and vet nurses with guidance on how to stay safe while on a fire-ground and how to capture injured animals safely.
- ✓ CSIRO began a series of weekend long 'BioBlitz' events in bushfire-affected regions across NSW to generate new evidence on the impacts of large-scale fire on biodiversity. A BioBlitz is an event to discover and record as many living things as possible within a set location and period of time and involves both scientists and the general public.
- ✓ The OceanWatch Fish Habitat Protection Protocol was launched. The Protocol will act as a blueprint for industry and communities to mitigate the range of issues which arose during and after the fires, including runoff from ash and land-based pollutants after the fires impacted aquatic ecosystems and downstream coastal environments.

Action

Protecting burnt and unburnt areas and restoring habitat*

- ✓ Over 3.8 million ha of pest animal treatment
- ✓ Over 28,000 ha treated for weeds
- ✓ Over 750 ha erosion control, and 210km of stream or coastline protection and repair
- ✓ Targeted flora and fauna surveys across 650,000 ha. This includes over 850 fauna surveys and over 270 flora surveys.
- ✓ Over 2,000 structures or installations completed, such as nesting boxes and habitat shelters
- ✓ More than 800 post-fire baseline datasets created to monitor species impacted by the fires
- ✓ 960 hectares of fire management action by Natural Resource Management groups and state governments to reduce the impact of future fires.



Conservation

17 priority animal species are being bred in new or expanded conservation facilities with genetic analysis underway for many of these to inform future management actions.

Completed projects

Phase 1

- 13 Natural Resource Management projects, with actions including pest animal and weed control, erosion control and stream bank revegetation
- 21 State and Territory government emergency projects targeting a range of threatened species and ecological communities
- 21 Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Grants projects with actions including introducing tree hollows as refuges for a variety of threatened bird and reptile species
- 4 wildlife rescue and captive breeding projects including the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife's Wildlife Heroes, and Walkabout Wildlife Park's wild brush-tailed rock wallaby enclosure
- Greening Australia's Project Phoenix and 10-year strategy for the native seed sector.

Phase 2

- 3 Bushfire Recovery for Wildlife and Habitat Community Grants projects with actions including the installation of nest boxes to support recovery of species including gliders, possums and Eastern and Crimson Rosellas
- The Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation's Indigenous Fire and Land Management Workshops project, which highlights the importance of bringing stakeholders together to strengthen and share knowledge and to ensure Traditional Owners are at the table for fire and land management planning and on the ground leading implementation.