

Who is affected? People? Animals? Ecosystems?

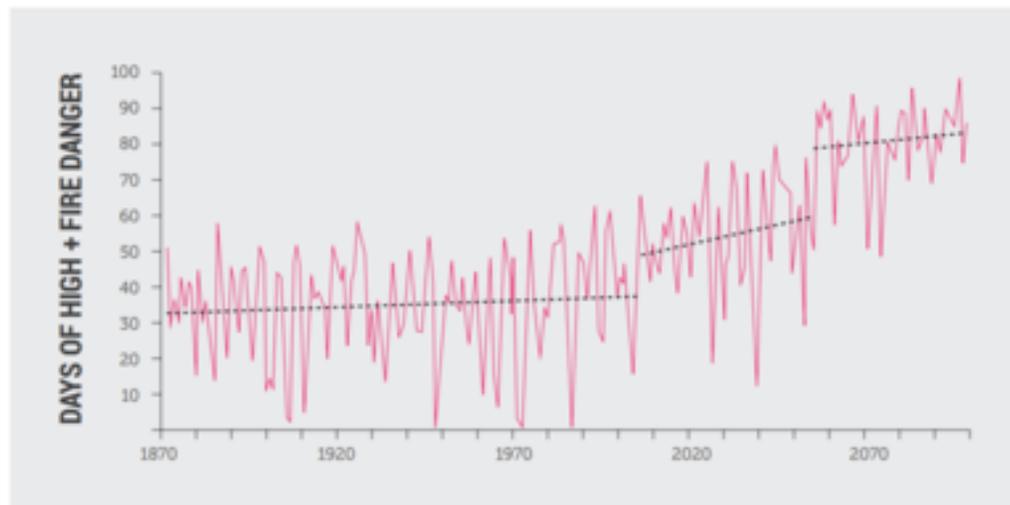
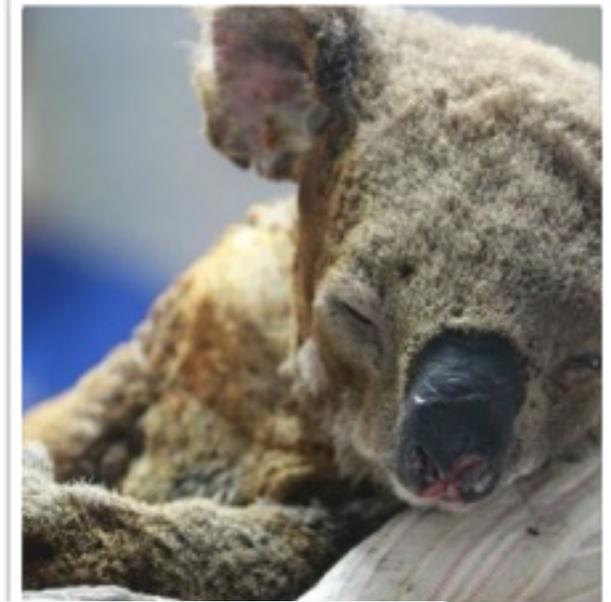
So far six people have died from the bushfires and over 500 homes have been lost. The effects of these bushfires have a huge impact on wildlife. Over 500,000 acres have burned in Queensland and New South Wales in Australia so far. Many animals escape death from the fires by burrowing underground or flying away, but sadly some animals cannot escape because their potential habitats have already been destroyed from human activity. "Koalas are typically slow-moving and their normal danger-avoidance strategy - curling into a ball atop a tree - has left them trapped in extreme fires. For anyone within earshot, there's one clear indicator that an animal is in trouble." says Prof Chris Dickman, an ecology expert at Sydney University. "Males only make booming noises during mating season. Other than that they're quiet animals. So hearing their yelps is a pretty bad sign things are going catastrophically wrong for these animals." Over 350 koalas have perished in the bushfires this year. While frogs and lizards have been able to outrun the fire, their food and shelter is destroyed which leaves them vulnerable to non-native feral cats and red foxes which thrive from picking off injured animals from the bushfires. Kangaroos and Wallabies are quick and can also flee the fires but can become trapped and take a long time to recover from burns.

What could be done to mitigate the hazard?

Consider what is being done currently, and what could be done, perhaps better.

This year, the components that contribute to fire dangers have been worsened by climate change. Australia is the 16th largest emitter globally and one of the largest exporters of coal and gas in the world according to the climatecouncil.org.au. Climate change has brought about the lowest rainfall in Queensland ever recorded this year, elongating the bushfire season and resulting in year long bushfires. There needs to be a plan and policies from the government to reduce the burning of fossil fuels that cause climate change and a way to prepare emergency and health services as well as aid for these unprecedented bushfires.

Catastrophic Brushfires in Australia





What geographic area is affected?

Queensland and New South Wales have been hit with the worst of the bushfires. Which is concerning considering this is the area according to the Goode's World Atlas receives the most annual precipitation. The vegetation in the area consists of largely Eucalyptus, acacia, and shrubs as well as tall grass and even tropical rainforests. David Bowman, a fire ecologist and geographer and director of the Fire Centre at the University of Tasmania in Hobart, spoke with Science about the crisis. The flames have charred even moist ecosystems once thought safe, he says. The fires are unusual in that they are burning swamps because the organic matter in the soil under the swamp will burn. The tropical forests are wet and burning which some is considered fire proof vegetation.

"Australia Fires: 'Catastrophic' Alerts in South Australia and Victoria." BBC News, BBC, 20 Nov. 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-50483410>.

"Australia Bushfires: Which Animals Typically Fare Best and Worst?" BBC News, BBC, 22 Nov. 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-50511963>.

Climate Council. "The Facts about Bushfires and Climate Change." Climate Council, 14 Nov. 2019, <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/hot-normal-climate-change-bushfire-web/>.



My thoughts, ideas and personal reflection on the issue

The loss of animal life is heartbreaking and everyone on the planet needs to do their part to curb climate change and advocate for new policies to protect the planet we call home.

"We need urgent emissions reductions, and a coordinated national effort on coping with worsening extreme weather disasters". Greg Mullins, Climate Councillor, member of the Emergency Leaders for Climate Action and Former NSW Fire and Rescue Commissioner (Climate Council 2019).



What are the effects of the hazard?

There is a massive loss of animals, animal habitat, reduced soil fertility, and water and air contamination. So far six people have died from the bushfires and over 500 homes have been lost. Many more people will die from inhalation of dangerous smoke.

