

# Bushfire Recovery for Wildlife and Habitat

## Overview

November 2021

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.

## Case studies

The Australian Native Bee Association and citizen scientists are installing bee 'hotels' in fire-impacted areas around the country. Bee hotels are artificial nests that mimic the pre-made holes and cavities in trees created by wood-boring beetles that cavity-nesting bees use. Monitored monthly during bee activity season to check occupancy, this is the first time that bee hotels are being used to support bees where fires have destroyed their nesting habitat. This habitat is a vital part of the equation for recovering pollinators, for even if they can move into fire-affected landscapes and forage on flowering regrowth, they will be unable to establish without nesting resources.

Image: Bee Hotel. Credit: Dr Kit Prendergast



In East Gippsland, Birdlife Australia and partners have installed 35 'cockatubes', or artificial hollows, to support recovery of the South-eastern Glossy Black-Cockatoo which is estimated to have had more than 35% of its range impacted by the Black Summer fires. This project focusses on unburnt areas, particularly where post fire numbers of the South-eastern Glossy Black-Cockatoo have increased, or in proximity to unburnt sites that have an abundance of the Glossy's favourite feed trees – Black She-oak.

Image: Glossy Black-cockatoos. Credit: Mike Barth



OceanWatch Australia has collaborated with 120 people from 71 organisations across 5 Australian states to help understand bushfire impacts on our marine and freshwater environments. An online survey and 6 interactive mapping tools were created to collect and record more than 60 observations of fire impacts to aquatic environments or businesses. The information, collected from numerous stakeholders including remote communities and the seafood industry, was critical to the drafting of the Fish Habitat Protection Protocol, which contains 50 recommendations for mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery related to bushfire impacts on aquatic environments.

Image: Burnt waterway. Credit: Rob McCormack



Dawul Wuru Aboriginal Corporation is undertaking several fire management knowledge exchange workshops in Cairns. The workshops aim to enable Yirrganydji custodians to plan and undertake cultural burns across all land tenures and country types according to their cultural obligations. Workshop components include burning before the wet season, seed germination, traditional tool-making, natural weed control, cultural burning, protecting cultural sites with fire breaks, and healing of country to support native animals, plants and ecological communities.

Image: Burning. Credit: DAWE



Across bushfire affected regions, the Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens is seed banking to future-proof native plant species. Of the 670 seedlings raised from 12 priority plant species by project partners, 476 have been reintroduced to the wild, placed in seed production orchards, or provided to community groups for planting in bushfire affected areas. The remainder will be distributed as they become more robust. The National Seed Bank now has multiple collections from recovering populations, providing ample material for research and to secure the plants' long-term survival.

Image: Seedlings. Credit: Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens



Targeted feral animal control over 1.4 million hectares has been undertaken in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, where more than 60% of the area was impacted by the bushfires, and in the Hunter region of NSW. Hunter Local Land Services and partners (including landholders) are protecting habitat and enabling recovery in fire affected areas and areas of unburnt refuge. A combination of aerial and ground-based programs is supporting animals including Koala, Manning River Helmeted Turtle and Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby, and Threatened Ecological Communities including Littoral Rainforest and Coastal Swamp Oak Forest.

Image: Fox trapping. Credit: Greater Sydney LLS

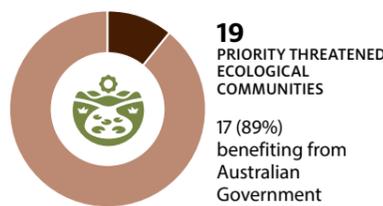
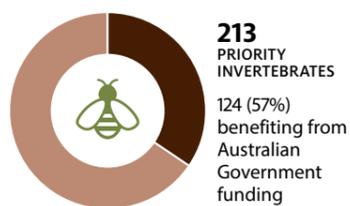
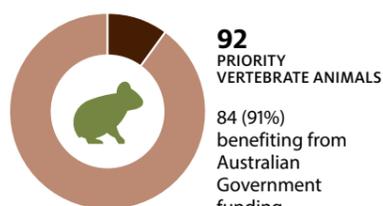
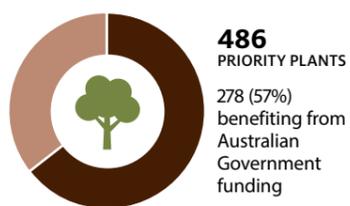


# Impacts

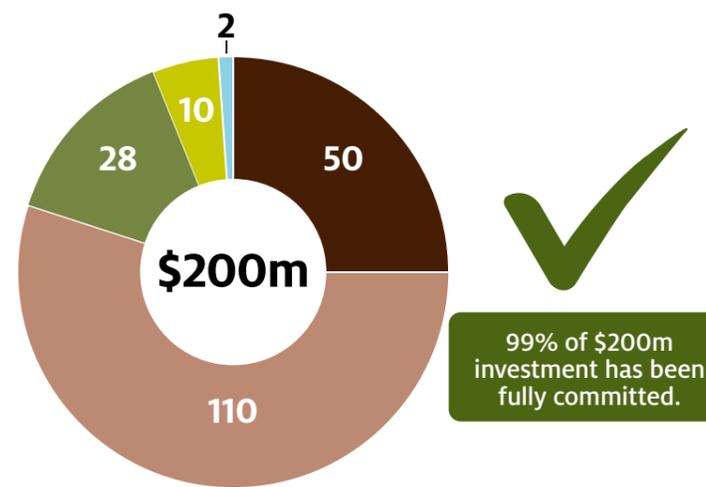


## Assessment of impacts on wildlife and habitats

Desktop analysis by experts has 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



✓  
99% of \$200m investment has been fully committed.

**\$50 million** for initial emergency bushfire response (Phase 1) has been fully committed

**\$150 million** Bushfire Recovery for Species and Landscapes fund (Phase 2)

**\$110 million** for on-ground support for the most impacted native species across seven bushfire-affected regions

**\$28 million** for further scientific assessment, species planning, coordination and monitoring, and program administration including \$2 million to support a national koala monitoring program

**\$10 million** in grants through 90 community projects to deliver on-ground bushfire recovery activities

**\$2 million** in grants through 13 projects to support knowledge exchange on Indigenous fire and land management

## What's happened in the last quarter?

- ✓ \$10.2 million to support multiregional species and projects
- ✓ \$2 million for Koala health research and veterinary support
- ✓ \$8.9 million for koala habitat restoration projects in SEQLD and NSW bushfire impacted regions
- ✓ Workshops supporting the exchange of Indigenous fire and land management knowledge between Traditional Owners and conventional fire management partners are underway. Workshops include hands on demonstrations in the use of traditional cultural burning methods.
- ✓ Release of Greening Australia's *Strategy for the Australian Native Seed Sector*, which provides a 10-year road map to grow and improve management of Australia's native seed and enable us to better manage the restoration and rehabilitation of landscapes nation-wide.

# Action

## Protecting burnt and unburnt areas and restoring habitat\*

- ✓ Over 3 million ha of pest animal treatment
- ✓ Over 21,000 ha treated for weeds
- ✓ Over 750 ha erosion control, and 210km of stream or coastline protection and repair
- ✓ Targeted flora and fauna surveys undertaken across 650,000 ha. This includes over 850 fauna surveys and over 270 flora surveys.
- ✓ Over 1,900 structures or installations completed, such as nesting boxes and habitat shelters<sup>^</sup>
- ✓ More than 700 post-fire baseline datasets created to support post-fire monitoring of impacted species.



## 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 immediate response projects with actions including pest animal and weed control, erosion control and stream bank revegetation
- 19 State and Territory government emergency projects targeting a range of threatened species and ecological communities
- 17 Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Grants projects with actions including introducing tree hollows as refuges for a variety of threatened bird and reptile species
- 2 wildlife rescue and captive breeding projects including construction of a Northern Corroboree Frog conservation centre and expansion of the Regent Honeyeater conservation program at Taronga Zoo.

### 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 figures below reflect the most recent data reported by grant recipients and third parties. Figures can change for individual projects from time-to-time, for example, as they reach completion and final reports are submitted to the department.

<sup>^</sup> This figure has reduced since the previous quarterly report to reflect a subsequent adjustment made by a grant recipient and reported to the department.

Images (Clockwise from left): Gangs gangs. Credit: AM Fraser. • Close Up Image of a Koala. Credit: David Thomson. • Adult Regent Honeyeater. Credit: Rick Stevens. • Two hands of the men were planting the seedlings into the ground to dry. Credit: kram-9.