

Bushfire crisis spells trouble for Aussie insects

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Associate Professor Michael Braby from The Australian National University.
Credit: Australian National University

Australia's current bushfire crisis could wipe out some of our rarer insect species, according to a group of experts.

Associate Professor Michael Braby from The Australian National University (ANU) says the bushfires will have a huge impact on our

native insects, as well as the plants and animals that rely on them.

"Insects are critical for a healthy environment," Associate Professor Braby said.

"They are food for many other animals, and contribute to processes like pollination, decomposition, [nutrient cycling](#) and soil aeration, which is vital because if the flowers of certain plants are not pollinated they can no longer reproduce.

"Sadly, few insects have strategies to escape fire. This means most are killed in the event of a bushfire, and their recovery relies on recolonization from unburnt areas."

Associate Professor Braby says the severity and extent of the current fires means insects would have few, in any, refuges for survival.

"Many [species](#) may well go extinct, especially rare species, or those with specialized requirements, such as specific host plants."

Associate Professor Braby is a member of the Australian Entomological Society's Conservation Committee.

The group of insect experts say human-induced climate change is the overriding factor responsible for the unprecedented scale of these [fire](#).

"More action needs to be taken at the national and international level to prevent further [climate change](#)," Associate Professor Braby said.

"Surveys are also needed to determine the extent of loss, and plan the recovery of insect species after these fires.

"We'd also suggest the total area of protected habitat—like [national](#)

[parks](#)—needs to increase in order to mitigate these losses."

The Australian Entomological Society's Conservation Committee aims to provide the best available scientific evidence on the conservation of insects and invertebrates in Australia.

More information: For more information, see [www.austentsoc.org.au/AES/Home ... c4-b957-33028495efa9](http://www.austentsoc.org.au/AES/Home...c4-b957-33028495efa9)

Provided by Australian National University

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