

Out of the ashes: lessons learned from bushfires and how we can better manage our fauna -editors' introduction

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After cancelling our annual forum in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Royal Zoological Society of NSW was able to host a forum on the 4th September 2021. The forum was entitled “Out of the ashes: lessons learned from bushfires and how we can better manage our fauna”. Again, due to concerns about COVID-19, the forum was held online. The presentations—both talks and posters—were online, some had been pre-recorded and were available to registrants prior to the forum, and five were presented live on the day.

The papers from the forum are presented in this theme edition of *Australian Zoologist*. The forum was a response to the extensive fires in 2019–2020 which affected much of the east coast and ranges and southern regions of Australia. While Australia regularly experiences bushfires, the severity and extent of the fires in 2019–2020 were without precedence and the evidence indicates that such fires will become more frequent as climate change intensifies. Prior to these fires, much of Australia had experienced an intense although reasonably short lived drought, and again all the evidence points to more droughts of increasing severity, although some northern parts of Australia can expect more rain. It is critical not only to document the impact of the 2019–2020 mega-fires, and indeed all fires, but also to learn from these events so that we can develop new management strategies to minimise the impacts of high severity fires.

This theme edition of *Australian Zoologist* contains papers that were presented as talks or as posters on the day of the forum. In addition, at the end of the day of the forum, there was a plenary session hosted by Paul Willis, who asked questions from the chat box about the talks on the day as well as on the presentations submitted earlier. This resulted in an interesting discussion on a wide range of topics and additional perspectives.

This edition of *Australian Zoologist* contains 21 papers that cover a range of topics, and the final paper by the editors reflects on the forum and the lessons that emerged.

We would like to thank all the reviewers of the papers in this theme edition, and we also thank all our fellow councillors of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW for their sustained support that made the forum such a success.

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(The editors are also councillors of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW).

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