



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Heritage

Green Kids guide to threatened species

9 ways you can help

No one will ever again see a paradise parrot flash its rainbow colours across the sky or see the Tasmanian tiger slink through the wet Tasmanian forest. They are gone forever – they are now extinct. There are more than 50 types, or species, of Australian animals and more than 60 species of Australian plants that are extinct. It is very sad, but it is too late. Extinction is forever.

More than 380 species of native animals and 1300 species of native plants may become extinct in the near future. These animals and plants that are in danger of dying out completely are called threatened species.

They need
our help **now!**

The main reason that animals and plants become extinct or threatened is because their habitat has been destroyed or changed. Their habitat is the place where they live. It contains all that they need to survive: space, light, water, food, shelter and a place to breed.

Humans have a lot of power to change and destroy habitats. Pollution from cars and trucks, chemicals and introduced animals and plants that have gone wild all have an effect on natural environments. So does clearing native vegetation to make way for farming, building roads and cities, and damming rivers to provide water for people.





What can kids do to help save threatened species?

Conserve habitats

One of the most important ways to help threatened plants and animals survive is to protect their habitats permanently in national parks, nature reserves or wilderness areas. There they can live without too much interference from humans. It is also important to protect habitats outside reserves such as on farms and along roadsides.

1 You can visit a nearby national park or nature reserve. Some national parks have special guided tours and walks for kids. Talk to the rangers to find out whether there are any threatened species and how they are being protected. You and your friends might be able to help the rangers in their conservation work.

When you visit a national park, make sure you obey the wildlife code: follow fire regulations; leave your pets at home; leave flowers, birds' eggs, logs and bush rocks where you find them; put your rubbish in a bin or, better still, take it home.

2 If you have friends who live on farms, encourage them to keep patches of bush as wildlife habitats and to leave old trees standing, especially those with hollows suitable for nesting animals.

3 Some areas have groups which look after local bushland or nature reserves. They do this by removing weeds and planting local native species in their place. You could join one of these groups, or even start a new one with your parents and friends. Ask your local parks authority or council for information.

By removing rubbish and weeds and replanting with natives you will allow the native bush to gradually regenerate. This will also encourage native animals to return.



Control introduced plants and animals

Non-native plants and animals are ones that come from outside your local area.

Some parks and reserves, beaches, bushland and rivers are now infested with invasive plants, and native species often cannot compete with these plants. Many environmental weeds come from people's gardens. Sometimes, the seeds are taken into the bush by the wind or by birds.

Do not dump weeds in the bush



Green kids can make a difference

4 Plant native plants local to the area rather than introduced plants



Ask your parents if you can plant native plants instead of non-native ones in your garden.

You don't want seeds from introduced plants escaping into the bush. Native grasses, flowers, shrubs and trees are more likely to attract native birds, butterflies and other insects, and maybe even some threatened species.

Many of the animals that people have brought to Australia, particularly foxes and cats, are very good at killing native animals. Cats climb trees or enter burrows to catch their prey.

They hunt and kill native birds, as well as other small animals such as possums, bandicoots and lizards. Aquarium fish which have escaped or been released from people's homes have gone into rivers and now cause problems for native fish and frogs. Wild rabbits eat the food of native animals and even live in their burrows.

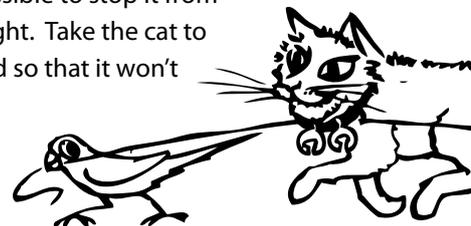
5 Do not dump pets in the bush

If you have a pet that you no longer want, do not dump it. Fish, cats, dogs and other animals can survive and breed. They can end up in the bush or in rivers and feed on or compete with native species. Give the pet to a friend, sell it or take it to the RSPCA. If you have a native pet, contact your local wildlife authority for information on how to care for it.



6 Control cats

If you have a cat, make sure it does not catch native birds or other animals. You can do this by attaching three small bells to its collar to warn animals that it is coming, and keep the cat inside as much as possible to stop it from roaming, especially at night. Take the cat to the vet to have it desexed so that it won't have unwanted kittens.



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If you go fishing, throw back fish that are too small. Also be careful not to lose your nets, lines, hooks and sinkers in the water. Fish and birds can get tangled up in these things and may die because they cannot breathe, move or eat.

Many things that we use or make in our lives have an effect on our native plants and animals. Building a large dam so that people in cities can have water, building roads and houses, producing plastics and metals – even growing food – takes up land that was originally habitats for native plants and animals. So we must be very careful not to waste these resources and not to create a lot of rubbish. Cities now have a big problem because people are making more and more rubbish.

You can do a lot to help solve this problem. Many things we throw away can be reused or recycled.



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Reuse or recycle whatever you can

At home and at school, you can help sort rubbish into things that can be recycled and things that can't. Many things can be recycled, including steel and aluminium cans, glass bottles and jars, milk bottles, some plastics, paper and cardboard.

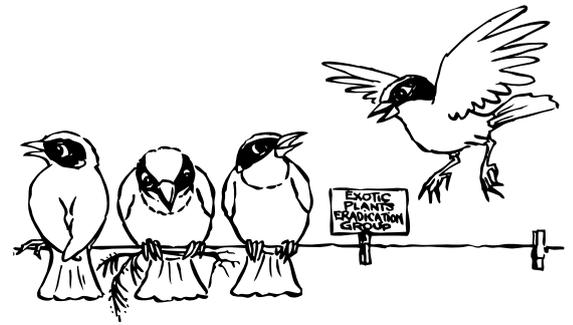
If you have old books, toys or clothes in good condition that you don't want, you can give them to a charity instead of throwing them away.



9

Make compost

About one-third of your rubbish is made up of things that will rot away naturally in the garden – this is called organic or biodegradable waste. Ask your parents to help you make a compost heap where you can throw all your organic waste – fruit and vegetable matter, garden scraps and lawn clippings. When it has rotted down, put it on the garden and it will help plants grow.



Join a group

There are many community groups working on conservation activities.

Join one of these groups and assist with conservation activities.



The future

Australians are now aware of the problems facing our threatened species. We are aware that we should change the way we do things. We need to recycle, create less rubbish, use less water and not destroy the bush.

With help from everyone, Australia's threatened species have a greater chance of survival.

For more information contact:



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