

# Wildlife Carer Escapes Unprecedented Fire to Look after Native Animals

Wildlife carer Rena Gaborov evacuated her home and wildlife shelter with an eight-month-old wombat named Fred, a six-month-old ringtail possum named Ginger, and three joeys named Satin, Lenny and Link, as a great wall of fire approached their property. Residents from Goongerah, East Gippsland, were urged to leave on Friday when fire authorities' door-knocked expressing imminent danger. Since then Rena and her partner Joe Henderson have set up a temporary shelter for wildlife in Sarsfield, over two hours away from their home. "There haven't been many animals come off the fire ground, I think it's because at the moment we can't get access to it." However, with 15 years of wildlife experience up her sleeve and a compassionate community, local landowners are helping feed animals with pellets, hay and lucerne from their properties. Rena, who also lost her home in the fire, felt deeply about the vast loss of animal life but knew she couldn't let the thought overwhelm her and distract her from her current task of looking after the animals already in her care. "In East Gippsland we have a third of the States threatened species such as the long-footed potoroo, brush-tailed rock-wallabies, and glossy-black cockatoos." The glossy black cockatoo is endangered and very particular about what it eats, they only eat casuarina seeds. "The whole area has been burnt including their food supply, so I don't know what will happen to those birds," she said. A staggering one billion animals have perished in the National bushfires however Rena says that number sounds conservative. "The number of animals that have been impacted is absolutely devastating." "I know it's horrible to say but some would have died slowly due to smoke inhalation as well as some quickly from being burnt." "These fires are unprecedented, a huge devastation to wildlife, their homes, and their food stock." Rena is also concerned about the impact of climate change on Australia's native animals. As a member of Goongerah Environment Centre Office (GECO), a community group who campaign for the protection of East Gippsland's forests using a variety of strategies including education, political lobbying, nonviolent direct action, citizen science and forest monitoring, she feels equip to talk about Climate Change. "With a hotter climate drying out the vegetation and more frequent bushfires how will the animals survive?" "Pademelons, rock wallabies and potoroos are highly endangered or extinct, but these animals were once considered pests. Wallabies and wombats can quickly become uncommon or even extinct given the right or wrong circumstances." "The fires that went through our place started in areas that previously burned in 2014. The time between fire seasons is getting shorter and shorter, way more frequent than the natural cycle, and the flora and fauna have not evolved to deal with this new pattern," she said. Australia is ranked the 57th worst-performing country on climate change policy a report prepared by international thinktanks revealed. The report criticised the Morrison government of being a "regressive force" internationally. "The federal government has done nothing to cut the pollution that causes climate change and now we are seeing the terrible consequences," she said. Rena said for example if you take a serious accident where someone is bleeding out, the first thing you do is control the bleeding. "In the case of trees replanting or keeping seed stocks would mean a firm hand and rag controlling the bleeding. But what's causing the bleeding? You need to stop that or else it will overcome you and soak the rag. You must stop the cause and the cause is our carbon footprint. We need to get rid of that or at least lower it." "We can't recolonise the wildlife and plants if the land is going to keep burning and some species take a really long time to get back on their feet!" "It's really scary and disgusting and if there is no government leadership and our Prime Minister is not prepared to lead, then he should just quit," she said. Victorian Bushfire Appeal Donations to the Victorian bushfire appeal will be distributed to wildlife shelters and carers to help rebuild enclosures and equipment that have lost in the fires so they can continue their lifesaving work. <https://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au/> To Report a Wildlife Emergency in Victoria <https://www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au/wildlife-information/report-a-wildlife-emergency> Volunteer Wildlife Victoria are unable to accept or train any new volunteers currently. They have been inundated with hundreds of volunteering requests in the last few days and cannot get to them all. Please follow them on social media or sign up to their newsletter.

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