



AS IT IS

Australia to Set Aside 30 Percent of Land Mass for Conservation

October 08, 2022

Australia's Environment Minister said on Tuesday it will set aside at least 30 percent of its land mass for **conservation**. Tanya Plibersek said the plan will help protect plants and animals on the continent where many animals are found nowhere else.

Australia has lost more **mammal species** than any other continent. And an Australian government environmental report released in July showed that the country has one of the worst rates for species loss among the world's richest nations.

That report showed the number of species added to the list of threatened species or in a higher class of risk grew on average by eight percent from the former report in 2016.

Plibersek said, "The need for action to protect our plants, animals and ecosystems from **extinction** has never been greater."

Plibersek said the conservation areas will increase by 50 million hectares under the 10-year plan, which will be reexamined in 2027.

The recently elected federal Labor government has set \$146 million to help protect Australia's threatened native plants and animals.

Australia is the sixth largest country by land area in the world. And it is home to animals found nowhere else. Those animals include koalas and platypus. But their numbers have been falling due to extreme weather events and humans moving into areas where they live.

Koalas along much of the east coast were listed as endangered in February. This was after nature experts estimated Australia has lost about 30 percent of its koalas over the past four years.

Australia suffers extreme weather events on a usual basis. Such happenings include the deadly wildfires in 2019 and 2020 in the east that killed 33 people, billions of animals, and burned a huge area.

The non-profit group World Wildlife Fund-Australia has welcomed the government's conservation efforts. But it is also urging officials to invest in recovery plans for every threatened species.

Rachel Lowry is the group's chief conservation officer. She said, "Australia has more than 1,900 listed threatened species. This plan picks 110 winners. It's unclear how it will help our other 'nonpriority' threatened species."

I'm Faith Pirlo.

Reuters staff reported this story. Gregory Stachel adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

conservation – *n.* the protection of animals, plants, and natural resources

mammal – *n.* a type of animal that feeds milk to its young and that usually has hair or fur covering most of its skin

species – *n.* a group of animals or plants that are similar and can produce young animals or plants

ecosystem – *n.* everything that exists in a particular environment

extinction – *n.* the state or situation that results when something (such as a plant or animal species) has died out completely

prioritize – v. to make (something) the most important thing in a group

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