



What's going on?

Bushfires have been causing huge devastation across Australia over the past few months, leading to thousands of people having to leave their homes. A heatwave has seen temperatures go higher than 40°C in every state in the country. In many places, the skies have turned red because of the fires and many people are wearing masks to make sure they can breathe. Raging temperatures, strong winds, and storms have created dangerous conditions in many places. Amidst the devastation, a small zoo has managed to save all its animals through incredible bravery from staff. Mogo Zoo houses primates, along with zebras, rhinos and giraffes. When it was right in the line of a bushfire, the keepers managed to protect all 200 animals from harm. While most were sheltered at the site, monkeys, pandas and even a tiger were kept in temporary lodgers at a keeper's home.

Question:

What's happening in Australia?

Listen, think, share

-  Ask the children if they have heard about the bushfires in Australia. Talk about what they know already. Do we know anyone who lives there, or have we heard any information from the news?
-  Explain that it is normal for bushfires to take place during summertime in Australia, but this year's deadly fires are much worse due to a combination of extreme heat, period of drought (no rain) and very strong winds. In the middle of December, the nation saw the hottest day in history - the average temperature was 41.9°C! Experts have said that the changing climate is linked to the extreme nature of this year's fires, as it has been hotter and drier, the conditions are making the country's fire season longer and much more dangerous.
-  In terms of tackling the fires, explain that Australia has been relying on hundreds of thousands of volunteer firefighters, who have been working 24hrs a day for months to try and bring the fires under control - without being paid! The Australian army are now also helping to fight the fires and evacuate people and the United States, Canada and New Zealand have also sent resources including firefighters to help reduce the fires.
-  Tell the children that many people have not been happy with how the fires have been handled. Some experts have said that there should be a review of building standards in places close to the bush to create fire resilient homes. There have also been calls for having more firefighters so that not as many volunteers are required to help. Do you think more should have been done before to reduce the amount of fires?
-  Read through the resource which explains how the staff at Mogo Zoo managed to keep the animals safe amidst the devastating fires. Were you surprised by their actions?
-  Watch the useful video (link below) which shows some of the news and warnings given to people in Australia. How do you think it would feel to live in an area affected by the bushfires? What would you find most difficult?

Reflection

The bushfires in many parts of Australia are causing huge damage and devastation for the people and wildlife who live there. We can all learn from the bravery and courage of some, whose actions have protected the lives of others. During incredibly difficult times, it's important to listen to the advice of experts, to keep ourselves and others safe.

Useful Video – Australian Fires travel warning

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-50876469