



## Nature's perfect creatures

**When Australia had terrible bushfires, people gave money to help the animals. Schoolchildren sold cakes and sports stars donated money, too. The fires were worse than others in the past.**

Koalas are slower than animals like kangaroos, so the fires are more dangerous for them. Many died and many were very sick. One koala hospital needed \$25,000. It asked people to give money online and they sent millions of dollars!

People love koalas. They are cute. But what about more unusual and unattractive animals? There are species with bigger problems than koalas, for example, the Mary River turtle, also from Australia.

This turtle looks stranger than others. It's got two 'fingers' under its chin and green 'hair', so it's also called the 'punk turtle'. The hair is actually a plant that grows on its head and parts of its body. Unfortunately, it's harder to get money to help animals like this. The Mary River turtle's problems began in the 1960s, when people took the baby turtles from the river to sell them in pet shops. Now, people live closer to its home than before and their dogs kill the turtles for food. The Mary River is dirtier than before and more polluted, too. A few years ago, scientists believed there were very few turtles living in the area. We don't know how many there are now.

Destruction of the places animals live in is putting them in danger – we kill the plants they eat, we make the air and water dirty, our pets eat them. All animal species on Earth are important because if one species dies, that changes the habitat for all other animals. We need to look after all animals – not just the more popular ones.