



It is difficult to begin to list what is wrong with the Guardian article, '**How kangaroos could be jeopardising conservation efforts across Australia**'. The article displays an astonishing failure to understand the current plight of wildlife in Australia, and especially our kangaroos, who are well positioned to become the world's next Passenger Pigeon.

Like the extinct Passenger Pigeon, kangaroos are being persecuted to extinction in their own homeland. They are driven, or fenced out or shot across almost the entirety of their native habitat, namely the 4.5 million km<sup>2</sup> that has been purloined as farmland.

Additional millions more each year are permitted to be killed under commercial licences. The reason these quotas cannot be filled anymore is not because it's a tough life for the shooters, it is because the population estimates used in setting the quotas are wildly exaggerated. The quotas would be impossible to fill without killing every kangaroo left in the country, and then some.

Millions more kangaroos died during the 2019-21 bushfires, and will continue to die as Australian bushfires worsen with climate change: burned to death, killed on roads fleeing the fires, or starving in the burnt-out moonscapes that used to be their feeding grounds.



It would be hardly surprising if many kangaroos are concentrating in "conservation areas"; they have nowhere else to go. However, given their talent for suspending procreation (they do not conceive, or form sperm, during periods of food stress and they can suspend the development of a foetus until the mother no longer has an older joey to feed), it is unlikely that unusually high densities would remain high for long, even in the absence of predators.

Despite claims by governments and government beholden "scientists", so far no one has produced a single plausible study to support the assertion that kangaroo densities anywhere in Australia have ever reached densities that have caused any damage to native plants or animals. All such claims seem to be referenced to the "authority" of previously published, unsupported claims by the same people. It seems extremely likely that the study promoted in your article is more of the same.

By contrast, there is strong independent evidence that kangaroos are a keystone species of the Australian environment. They maintain the habitats of the other plants and animals that live in Australia's native grasslands and open forests. When the kangaroos are gone, many other animals and plants will disappear.

If the Guardian wanted informed readers to believe that the study discussed in your article is fair dinkum, it was up to your reporter to at least make an attempt to examine the methodology used, to identify the baseline data used for



comparisons, to ask exactly how biological richness and diversity were measured; and to determine the actual expertise of the researchers involved, specifically in relation to kangaroos in their natural habitat (eg conservation areas) rather than on agricultural land.

The article is desperately disappointing for the many Australians who are calling at both the state and national level for a genuinely independent audit of the ecological impact of reducing this essential species to its current shattered and scattered remnants.