

Fires have repeatedly made it to the headlines in the past few years, whether they be natural or human-made. A photograph by Frans Krajcberg published back in 1985 and an article from *The Guardian* by Robyn Vinter and published on 12 October 2021 denounce human-made fires respectively in Brazil and in the UK while an educational article from *National Geographic* published on 15 January 2020 explains that fires can have ecological benefits. In an article from science.org published on 19 December 2017, Lakshmi Supriya reviews a study showing that because of climate change, the damage caused by wildfires may become permanent but may also help build the environment of tomorrow. What do fires reveal about the effectiveness of existing land management strategies and the ideals that ought to shape them?

Human activity significantly influences the occurrence and impact of fires, often serving as both a trigger and a manager.

Vinter highlights the deliberate burning of peatlands in England for grouse hunting, a practice that causes ecological damage despite its legality in some areas. Similarly, **Krajcberg's** haunting photography of deforestation in Brazil portrays fire as a weapon used to clear land for agricultural expansion, reflecting exploitation of natural resources. The *National Geographic* article adds that 85% of wildfires globally are caused by human activity, from accidents such as unattended campfires to intentional arson. Yet, humans have also employed fire as a tool for centuries, notably through controlled burns, which mimic natural processes and maintain ecosystem health. This duality highlights humanity's complex relationship with fire.

The ecological damage caused by uncontrolled or mismanaged fires is vast and multifaceted.

Supriya details how climate change exacerbates the inability of forests to recover after fires, particularly in the Rocky Mountains, where prolonged droughts and rising temperatures hinder tree regeneration. This leads to lasting landscape changes, such as the transformation of forests into grasslands, which further contribute to global warming by reducing carbon sequestration. **Vinter** underscores the damage caused by peatland burning in the UK, where these natural carbon sinks release greenhouse gases and destroy habitats for birds, insects, and rare plants. **Krajcberg's** portrayal of Brazilian deforestation visually illustrates the loss of biodiversity and the irreversible harm caused by fire-driven exploitation. In addition, the *National Geographic* article notes how wildfires fueled by human negligence have destroyed vast tracts of land, with devastating consequences for wildlife, human communities, and infrastructure.

Efforts to address the challenges of fires involve a combination of regulatory policies, ecological interventions, and public awareness campaigns.

National Geographic advocates for prescribed burns, which reduce the buildup of organic material that fuels larger, uncontrolled wildfires. These planned burns promote soil fertility, control invasive species, and prevent devastating natural fires. However, as **Supriya** suggests, these strategies must adapt to changing climates by planting tree species better suited to hotter and drier conditions. **Vinter** critiques the UK government's weak regulations on peatland burning, calling for comprehensive measures to protect carbon-rich ecosystems and meet climate goals while **Krajcberg's** work adds a moral dimension by using art to urge society to confront the destructive practices that fuel deforestation and ecological collapse. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns, such as Smokey Bear's in the *National Geographic* article, remind individuals of their role in preventing fires caused by negligence, emphasizing humanity's dual role as both the cause of the problem and the key to its solution.

558 mots – 8 mots (sources et auteurs comptabilisés comme un seul mot chacun) = 550 mots