



Media Coverage of Wildlife Affected by Wildfires in Brazilian Protected Areas

Leticia Koproski^{1*}, Éder Ricardo Paetzhold¹, Johann Georg Goldammer²

ABSTRACT– Brazil is host of almost 120,000 animal species and therefore classified as “megadiverse”. Although fire is a natural agent in some Brazilian ecosystems and fauna historically evolved with its presence, nowadays it can be a potential hazard to fauna conservation as wildfire trends worsen, wildlife populations facing extinction and non-disturbed natural areas are becoming smaller and isolated. Wildlife affected by fires urge emotions, and are used by media to capture public attention. Media coverage may influence people’s perception about fire effects on fauna. This study analyses news available online of five wildfires that occurred from 2014-2018 in protected areas and are representative for fauna species conservation: Poço das Antas Biological Reserve (2014), and the National Parks Chapada Diamantina (2015), Jaú (2016), Chapada dos Veadeiros (2017), and Serra da Canastra (2018). The majority of news reported protected areas’ location and burned extension, but only half indicated their importance for fauna or flora biological conservation. Half of the reports addressed fauna affected by wildfires, 40% presented dead animals, 12% burned animals and 8% trapped ones. Only 24% mentioned wildlife rescue. Despite Brazilian fauna species amount, wildlife’ images were presented in 35% of the communications, and they were focused on dead animals. Wildlife affected by fire cited were *Leontopithecus rosalia*, *Bradypus torquatus*, *Nasua nasua*, *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*, *Dasyprocta azarae*, *Peltocephalus dumerilianus*, besides alligators, snakes, birds and insects that were not specifically identified. Scientifically-based fire ecology aspects were not disclosed in any of the news. Overall there is a lack of information for society. This arouses challenges and opportunities of communication about fire ecology and its effects on wildlife in Brazilian protected areas. There is an urgent need for building public awareness on conservation in Brazil. Wildfires can be used to build environmental perception, and media, scientifically supported, address a crucial role for communications’ success.

Keywords: Media; fauna; animals; fire effects; fire ecology; protected areas

¹Instituto Brasileiro para Medicina da Conservação, Tríade, Brazil, ² Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Freiburg, Germany, * Corresponding author: leticia@triade.org.br