

When the image of fire is thought of what is normally seen? Houses burning, charred forests of the world covered in a grey smoke? While all those associations are true, what if a fire could be favorable for wildlife instead of dangerous, a symbol of rebirth? Prescribed fire, also known as a controlled burn or prescribed burn, can be great for ecosystems when used correctly. Prescribed fire is when land is intentionally set on fire, usually with the cause of preventing future and unmanageable wildfires. When a prescribed burn is done correctly, the ecosystem can bounce back with a stronger environment than ever, causing new growth and expanding biodiversity. With the ever-growing news footage of the world that is seemingly on fire, using prescribed burns is needed now more than ever before. Prescribed fire can help to prevent these natural and devastating wildfires by creating fire in optimal conditions that make it not only safe but beneficial to the ecosystem.

A version of prescribed fire can date back to the days of Native Americans, often using fire to free land for farming or running game to find food. European colonists who would end up in America would take up the Natives' practice, using fire to create areas for livestock and to provide access to other communities. This old method is now carried into the modern age as trained professionals use prescribed burns to create a safe environment for fire unlike the conditions of a natural wildfire. When starting these controlled burns, professionals must consider weather conditions, local safety, the fuel they will use, and knowledge about the land they intend to burn.

Many ecosystems are reliant on fires as many things can come to flourish with new prosperity following a fire. Most animals will go unscathed as they will simply move out of the area and relocated. Prescribed burns are helpful as they burn off the leaf litter that would cause uncontrollable wildfires in unideal circumstances. Fire can clear out overabundant brush, trees, and any overtaking or invasive plants. Many times plants will germinate after fire allowing for lots of insects and even birds to fall into the new ecosystem because of new food. In other situations with leaf litter gone, insects and bugs below the decaying leaves are unmasked creating a new predator-prey relationship for animals to create an ecosystem in.

Overall while fire is usually connotated with news footage of mountains blazing and houses destroyed, prescribed fire can be extremely good for an environment. Preventing future devastating wildfires, encouraging fresh growth, and creating a new environment for a diverse mix of species to live in, prescribed fire can be excellent. Controlled and safe, under professional hands wildfires can be prevented and lives can be saved as a controlled burn is less dangerous and does more help than harm.