

# AUSTRALIA'S ENDANGERED WILDLIFE GETS LIFELINE FROM INVENTION THAT HOLLOWS TREES

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Conservation Biologist Matt Stephens stands holding the Hollow Hog, a tool he invented that aims to save hollow-dependant wildlife by creating tree hollows, at his Sun Valley property in the Blue Mountains region, New South Wales, Australia February 6, 2023. | Photo Credit: Reuters

In the forested Sun Valley an hour west of the centre of Sydney, conservation biologist Matt Stephens looks into a tree hollow carved using the Hollowhog, a tool he invented to create new homes for Australia's endangered wildlife.

Australia's fauna is grappling with the loss of habitat created by logging and bushfires, including hundreds of threatened animal species that live in the hollows of trees.

While nest boxes can provide a temporary solution, a hole carved by the tungsten blade of a Hollowhog can create a hollow in less than an hour that can last for hundreds of years, growing in size with the tree.

"I can see the hollow going in and know that long after I'm gone, maybe three hundred years into the future that the hollow that we carved...it will still be there," Stephens said.

"I just think it's a really exciting thing."

To date, thousands of hollows carved by Hollowhog tools have been installed around Australia, with the technology in use by state and federal government agencies, as well as land care groups.

According to Stephens, a natural hollow takes a minimum of 70 to 120 years to start forming.

The Wilderness Society, a conservation group, estimates that in Australia, 303 native wildlife species rely on hollows to nest and shelter, including 31% of native mammals and 15% of native birds.

Though a camera installed at one of the hollows, Stephens has seen various animals use it, including parrots like Rainbow Lorikeets and Rosellas, marsupials like Antechinus or gliders and even a Lace Monitor lizard taking a peek inside.

Eamon Dempsey, an arborist, or person who cultivates and manages trees, has carved more than a thousand hollows using the tool.

"It really filled me with hope that my career doesn't have to be all about cutting trees down and that there is actually potential have a more positive environmental impact." he said.

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