



Writing a Comment

Exercise 12

Comment on the following extract.

Koalas Aren't Extinct, but Their Future Is in Danger, Experts Say.

Claims that koalas were “functionally extinct” spread widely online as fires raged in Australia. With large areas of their crucial habitat ravaged, it is unclear what the future holds for a species that was already under threat before this round of bush fires. Some koalas have been rescued, and with blazes still burning, it is hard to know how many have been killed.

The phrase “functionally extinct” has recently made the rounds in news articles and on social media. The term refers to a species that no longer plays a role in an ecosystem or that is on its way to extinction, possibly irremovably.

In fact, koalas are not extinct. And some scientists warned that exaggeration can hurt, rather than help, conservation efforts. “What is particularly frustrating about the term ‘functional extinction’ is it indicates a population that is basically past the point of no return, so it means that nothing really can be done,” said Jacquelyn Gill, professor of Biology and Ecology.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List, says the koala population is declining and vulnerable — but not endangered. Estimates range wildly, and every region is different. In some places, scientists say, koalas’ numbers have declined by up to 80 percent. Koalas evolved to exist alongside wildfires, but the animals are facing new threats from human development, which has dislocated local populations and impaired their ability to survive fires, as well as climate change.

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