An illustration of Smokey Bear and his cub in a forest. Smokey Bear is on the left, wearing a green hat with a 'Y' and blue jeans with a 'KEY' buckle. The cub is sitting on his back. The background shows a large green tree, a stream, and various animals including a raccoon, a turtle, and two birds. The sky is blue with white clouds.

were
YOU
tricked
by
smokey
bear?

By Carlisle Land



We know that Smokey Bear is VERY POPULAR...Here's a look at his achievements...

Smokey Bear History

1945: During WW2, the Smokey Bear Wildlife Prevention Campaign was created to educate U.S citizens at home on fire safety.



Figure 1. Smokey Bear Cub In 1950s

Bear cub was rescued from a New Mexico wildfire.

Cub flown to the National Zoo in Washington D.C and became physical embodiment of Smokey Bear!

1950: Smokey "Junior Ranger" Campaign created. Dramatically increased Smokey's popularity in the United States

:1952

Famous Smokey Bear received so much fan mail he received his own zip code!

1962:

Figure 2. "Only You" Poster 1989



Smokey Bear taught the world...

Put out fires
IMMEDIATELY!

Fires are all **BAD!**
NO such thing as a
good fire!

But we've been
using fires **FOREVER!**
Does that mean
they're all bad?

Fire Usage Timeline

9000 BC: 11,000 years ago Indigenous groups in North America used burning methods like control burns to manage and sustain lands.

1492: European settlers began using fire domestically as a heating and light source. Also used to forge weapons and machinery.

1793: Industrial Revolution. Fire used in large factories, leading to more devastating fires in factories and spreading in urbanized areas.

1905: The Forest Service created in the United States with the main objective of suppressing all fires on forest reserves.

1940s: Smokey Bear's message popularized and trends of fire suppression increased therefore so did number of wildfires and their severity.

Fires are an essential process! They have been used for **FOREVER**



Figure 5. 1947 Poster

We use fires to...
COOK, CLEAN, CREATE.

These are ways of utilizing **HEALTHY** fires

So... If fires are **ESSENTIAL** to humanity, why would they **NOT** be essential to forests and ecosystems?

Power of Mother Nature

Black-Backed Woodpecker

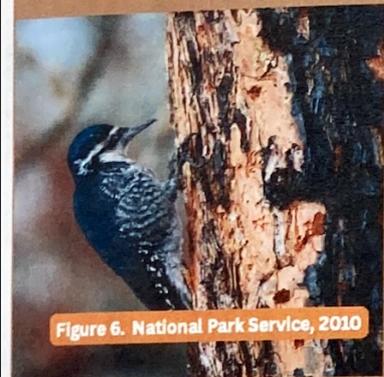


Figure 6. National Park Service, 2010

The Black-Backed Woodpeckers rely on wildfires! They feed on organisms, like beetle larvae, inside of recently burned trees. They also nest and build their families in recently burned forested areas.

But...due to changes to these natural fires...it has become difficult to find food and shelter. As a result, these birds are at risk of going EXTINCT.

The Lodgepole Pine NEEDS fires in order to reproduce! Their pinecones, which are how trees germinate and spread, are covered with a waxy-resin seal. This seal can ONLY melt away with fire heat and allow the pinecones to germinate!

These species NEED wildfires to SURVIVE.

Lodgepole Pinecone



Figure 7. WERC 2010

1988 Yellowstone Fires

In 1988, Yellowstone National Park experienced unprecedented fires during their fire season. These fires burned across the park for over THREE months. But everyone seems to forget how **POWERFUL** nature is!



Before



After

Fig 9. Jim Peaco 1988.

Yellowstone Photo Collection

Fig 10. Jim Peaco 1989.

Yellowstone Photo Collection

These two images were only taken a year apart. Already vegetation has taken root, flowers are growing, and the forests prove fires are natural.

But still... Wildfires are a natural and needed cleansing process for an ecosystem!

In a forest ecosystem...

Underbrush (pine needles and leaves) builds up on the ground as they fall from trees, etc...

LAYERS of underbrush are so **THICK** that other plants on the ground are **UNABLE** to get *Food, Nutrients and Sunlight*.

Along with invasive species and other factors...

This makes the ecosystem **WEAK** and more **PRONE TO DISASTERS**.

But...

When **FIRES** come in, they **BURN AWAY** all of the underbrush as well as plants that **AREN'T** supposed to be there!

FIRES also releases *pent-up nutrients* in the soil, creating a **STRONGER** foundation for native vegetation in the **ECOSYSTEM!**

So... If fires are GOOD, maybe we can create controlled fires that burn underbrush... to avoid BIGGER FIRES

But, we still know some fires ARE BAD!

Statistics In California This Year ALONE

521,988 acres were **BURNED**
16,479 structures **DESTROYED**
7,340 wildfires **DETECTED**

GLOBAL WARMING removes moisture from the soil and ecosystems...

Making forests **DRIER**, allowing more **SEVERE** wildfires to **SPARK**. These are called **DESTRUCTIVE** fires.

DESTRUCTIVE fires:

- Very Severe
- Difficult to Control
- Spark in dry and unhealthy conditions
- Occur during lack of healthy fires
- Detrimental to human livelihoods

Smokey Bear Effect

Figure 8. Smokey Wildlife Campaign



Although we **SHOULD** still prevent campfires and sparks from spreading... Smokey Bear taught us that we need to put out **HEALTHY** fires as well!

The Smokey Bear Effect has contributed to much greater destructive fires.

Let It Burn!

But **LUCKILY**...we are shifting away from the Smokey Bear Effect. In the early 70s, policies began shifting to "Let It Burn". This policy let naturally occurring fires rage until they burned out... as long as they were small and controllable! This policy has grown with education through the years.

Now we're **SMARTER** and use **CONTROL** or **PRESCRIBED Burns**



Figure 3. Prescribed (Control) Burn

Control burns are man-made **HEALTHY** fires. But **CREATING** fires, and **CONTROLLING** them in areas, we can help avoid larger fires!



Figure 4. Sneed Prairie - Center for Environmental Studies

Even Austin College is using control burns annually, in Sneed Prairie to help restore the native Blackland Prairie ecosystem!

In light of “Let It Burn” ideas and public education on forest fire importance...

In 2001, Smokey’s famous slogan was changed to..

“Only **YOU**
Can Prevent
WILDFIRES”

Although wildfires are a terrifying and real issue, forest fires have too many ecosystem benefits for us to ignore!

if Smokey Bear can change his mind about wild and forest fires....

Can you?

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Figure 11. "Smokey The Bear: Vintage Forest Fire Prevention Poster
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Painted by...