

Fire damaged parks – ideal conditions for myrtle rust

Australian National Parks that were badly damaged by last November's fires are now providing ideal conditions for the spread of *Austropuccinia psidii* (myrtle rust), warns Geoff Pegg, team leader for the Forest Production & Protection group within Queensland Department of Ag & Fisheries.

"While fire is considered an important selection agent in the development of Australia's native flora, the development of new shoots and branches and young seedlings en masse are ideal for the development and spread of *Austropuccinia psidii*," says Geoff, who is also a member of the [Myrtle Rust Strategic Science Advisory Group](#).

"Recent extreme fire events have resulted in significant impacts on a range of different ecosystems, and widespread epicormic and seedling regeneration of a range of species is now being affected by myrtle rust."

Geoff says myrtle rust levels in fire affected coastal heath and woodland sites have increased exponentially since monitoring commenced in late March.

"A range of myrtaceae have been affected, including the ecologically and commercially significant *Eucalyptus pilularis* (blackbutt). Other species affected include a range of *Melaleuca* (paperbark) and *Leptospermum* (tea tree) species.

Photos by Geoff Pegg

There is now massive regeneration happening in the NSW Bundjalung National Park, with both reshoots and seedlings creating perfect conditions for rust.



New infections on *Melaleuca quinquenervia*.



Myrtle rust related dieback on *Eucalyptus pilularis*, something Geoff says hasn't been seen before on any eucalypt.

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