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## Experts in Greece Fear “Ecological Disaster” After Major Forest Fire Outside Athens

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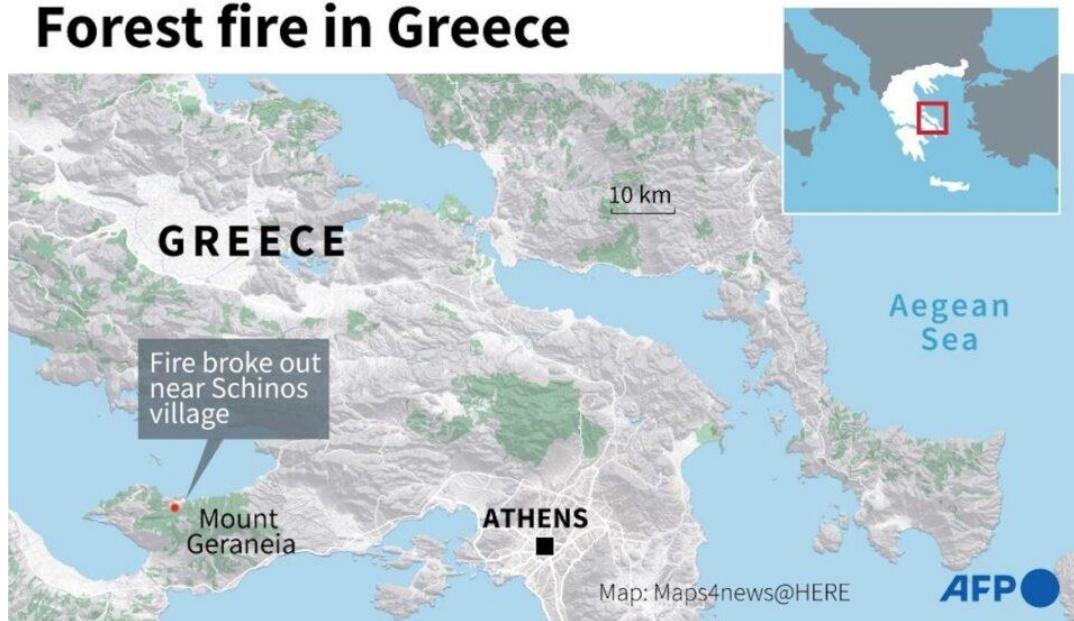
Experts in Greece are warning of a “huge ecological disaster” in the nature conservation area outside Athens after a major forest fire ravaged the area this past week.

On Saturday, more than 270 firefighters backed by 16 aircraft and the army fought the fires which broke out last Wednesday in the Geraneia mountains, approximately 55 miles west of the capital.

Greek Fire Chief Stefanos Kolokouris told ANT1 television that the fire came early in the season and was one of the country’s biggest in the past 20 to 30 years.

Greece’s civil protection agency said the fire started near the village of Schinos when someone burned vegetation in an olive grove.

### Forest fire in Greece



Euthymios Lekkas, professor of environmental disaster management at the University of Athens, told ERT public television that the fires burned more than 21 square miles of pine forest and other land — including agricultural.

“It’s a huge ecological disaster that needs work to avoid landslides and terrible flooding in the autumn,” he said.

Non-profits and rescue organizations responded to the fire by helping injured animals and supplying food, water and first aid.

Greek environmental non-profit ANIMA [wrote about the events on Facebook](#), stating that the fires took place during the “worst season” — the spring — when animals give birth to their young.”

“The fire in Schinos is happening at the worst time when babies are still in their nest, branches and burrows,” the organization wrote. “Unfortunately, few of the little creatures will be saved.”

The World Wide Fund for Nature’s Greece-based office [started a petition](#) which has received more than 5,000 signatures urging the government to take “serious prevention measures” against forest fires.

Such events have been historically common in [Greece](#) during the summer, as fires are fanned by the country’s dry weather, strong winds and temperatures that climb into the high 80s and 90s.

The worst forest fire struck the Attica region in July 2018, killing 102 people in the coastal resort of Mati.

*Featured image: Local residents near the village of Pefkaneas, west of Athens, look on as the forest fire rages in the Geraneia mountains. Photograph: Louisa Gouliamaki/AFP/Getty Images*