National Feral Deer Action Plan

NEWSLETTER
October 2021

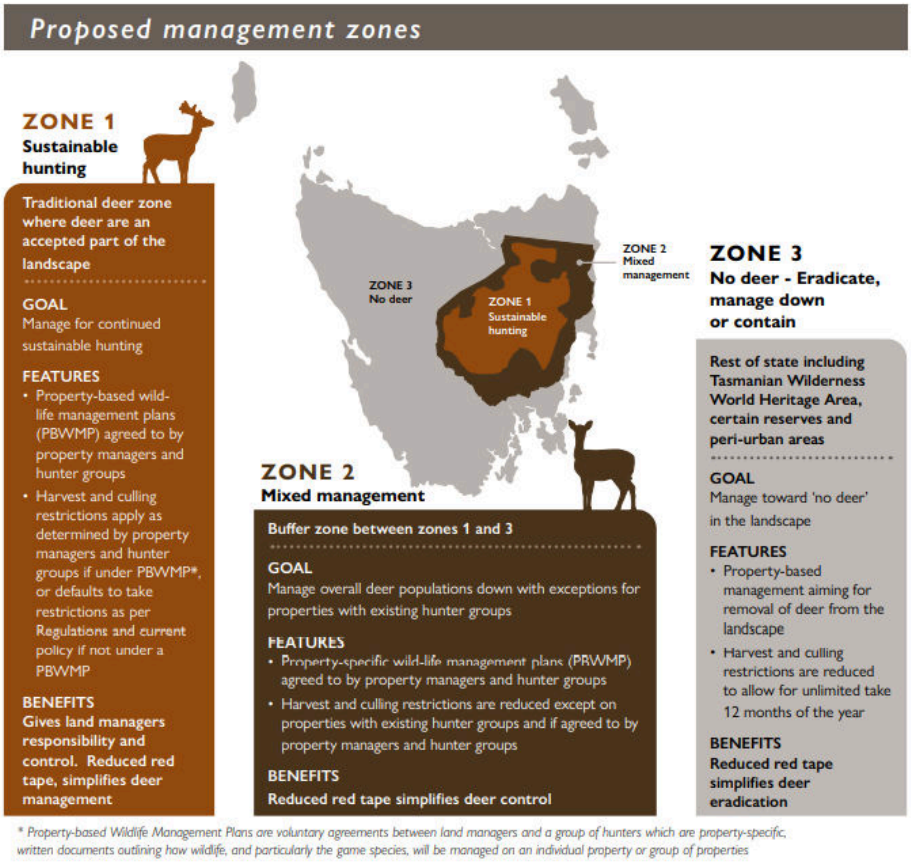
Have your say on the Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan Project in Tasmania

The Draft Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan has been released for public comment. The draft Plan is an important step in developing a 5-year plan for the management of wild fallow deer in the state.

The draft Plan aims

- to minimise the wild fallow deer population in areas with significant natural values
- to address the agricultural, commercial, environmental and public safety impact associated with the growth and increased distribution of deer populations in Tasmania
- to recognise that deer are an important recreational hunting resource.

Read more here



How to have your say
You can provide your feedback on the draft plan

- by email to DeerManagementPlan@dpipwe.tas.gov.au
- by phone. Call FarmPoint on 1300 292 292
- in person at a community forum (details of these sessions will be published here soon)

Your feedback must be received by **5pm on 3 December 2021.**

Read the Draft Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan: Draft Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan (dpipwe.tas.gov.au)

A summary of the Draft Plan is also available: Draft Tasmanian Wild Fallow Deer management Plan Summary (dpipwe.tas.gov.au)

Read more about feral deer at www.feraldeerplan.com.au
Visit the *In The News* page to view past newsletters

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STAY INFORMED

Did you know?

- Feral deer consume 1.8 to 3.6 times more pasture than sheep, forcing some farmers to significantly reduce stock numbers due to decreased feed availability. Additionally, feral deer jump fences and continually consume fenced off pasture, undermining the attempts and benefits of rotational grazing of livestock.
- After the bushfires in Royal National Park in 1994, local deer densities rose from <500 to 2500 in just five years. Currently, areas impacted by the Black Summer bushfires are experiencing similar growth rates of feral deer populations, which poses an increasing threat to the environmental, economic, and social recovery of fire-affected communities.
- Spotlight counts of fallow deer populations in Tasmania increased by 11.5 per cent annually, resulting in a 40 times increase from 1985 to 2019. The distribution increased 2.9 times during this period, and now spans almost a third of the state. Habitat and climate models predict that more than half of the state is suitable for deer under the current climate.

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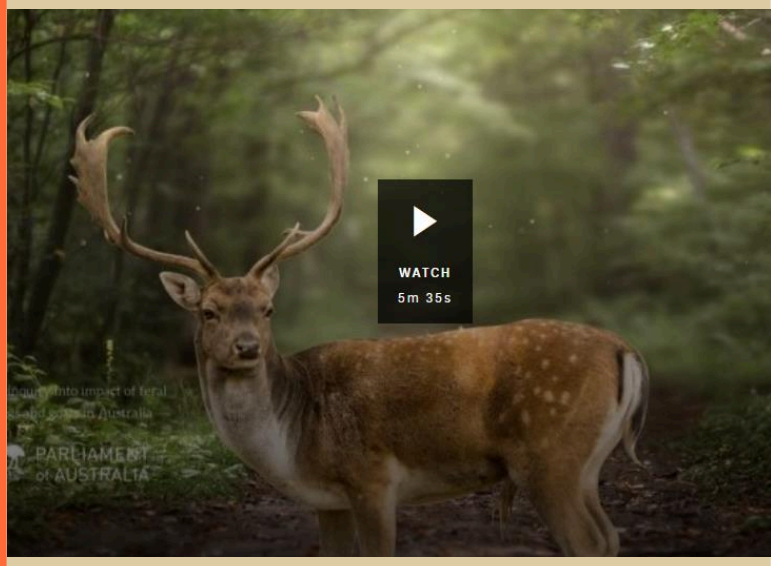
In the media



[Feral deer causing major problems for farmers - 7.30 (abc.net.au)]

[High and rising economic costs of biological invasions worldwide – Nature]

[New research sheds light on feral deer as disease transmitters – GetFarming]

[In Tasmania, deer aren't classified as pests. That's causing problems for farmers like Julian - ABC News]

[Gold Coast motorcycle rider injured after hitting and killing a feral deer - ABC News]

[Lyrebirds find refuge in rainforests, even during the Black Summer bushfires - ABC News]

[Support key to halting spread | Stock Journal | South Australia]

Project Partners

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

CENTRE FOR INVASIVE SPECIES SOLUTIONS

Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries and Regions

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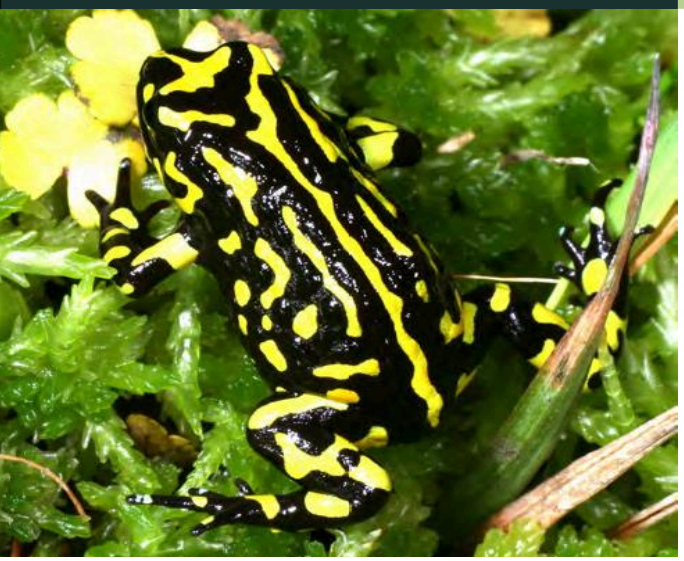
IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

This month, we highlight the Critically Endangered Northern Corrobboree Frog



Northern Corroboree Frog and Feral Deer

The Northern Corroboree Frogs are distinctive and among Australia's most iconic frogs. They are small, growing to 2.5-3 cm, and have striking colour patterns consisting of bright yellow or green vertical stripes alternating with black stripes.

As of 2010, the Northern Corroboree Frog was listed as Critically Endangered under the EPBC Act.

The range of the frog was once widespread in suitable environments (bogs, fens and surrounding woodlands), however, due to habitat loss it is restricted to forests and national parks in NSW and the ACT such as Kosciuszko National Park and Bondo State Forest.

The species has seen considerable reduction in population size with ongoing declines, as assessed by the NSW Scientific Committee. For example, in 1988 the number of adult males in the Brindabella Ranges of Northern and Southern Corroboree Frogs was 2,000-3,000. In 2009 just 25 to 75 adult males were detected. This represents a decline of 96-99 per cent over 21 years, in just three generations. Many of the previously known breeding sites in the Brindabella Ranges no longer contain these frogs, or the frogs are in extremely low numbers.

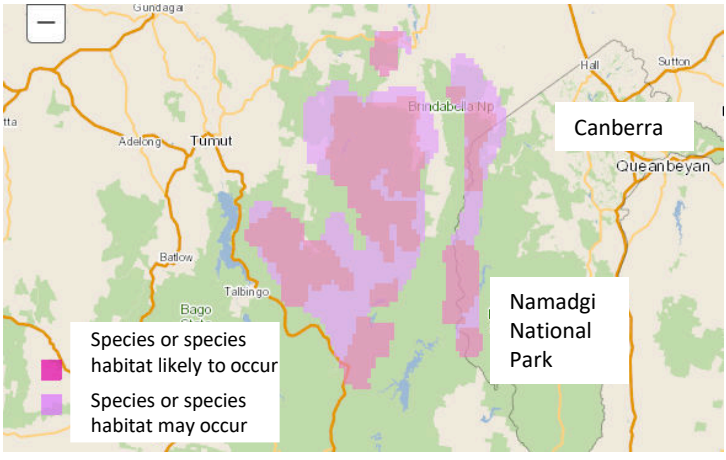
The primary cause of decline is the introduced Amphibian Chytrid Fungus, which has caused population reduction and in some cases extinctions of frog species world-wide. Other threats include climate change, drought, inappropriate fire, disturbance from introduced animals and weeds.

Feral deer are encroaching on the diminishing habitat for the Northern Corroboree Frog, adding another layer of stress for the vulnerable populations.

Physical damage caused by trampling, wallowing, herbivory, and track formation compromise the habitat of the critically endangered frog. Sambar presence has recently been documented in the frog's breeding habitat, in 17 of 23 breeding sites in the north of Kosciuszko National Park.

After the 2002-2003 fires in NSW the deer populations exploded and spread to Northern Corroboree Frog habitat. Similar population spread is expected after the 2019-2020 bushfires.

Feral deer have the potential to cause serious damage to breeding sites, and are a cause of great concern.



Northern Corroboree Frog Distribution

The distribution shown is generalised from the Departments Species of National Environmental Significance dataset. This is an indicative distribution map of the present distribution of the species based on best available knowledge.

Pseudophryne pengilleyi — Northern Corroboree Frog (environment.gov.au)

Do you have a story about a species or question about a species impacted by feral deer for the newsletter?
Please contact coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au

FERAL DEER IN THE LITERATURE

Effectiveness of different herbivore exclusion strategies for restoration of an endangered rainforest community

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Forest recovery and revegetation efforts can be heavily impacted by feral deer browsing pressure.

A study sought to determine which herbivore exclusion method is most effective for protecting seedlings from damage, and how browsing pressure varies amongst species (including deer).

Methods

Exclusion fences and guards were erected on private property on the Illawarra Escarpment NSW, including

1. Small corrugated plastic guards around single plants.
2. Tall wire guards around single plants (pictured)
3. Fenced exclusion plots of 5 x 5m around groups of revegetated and regenerating plants.
4. Unguarded plants.

Levels of herbivore damage for 54 native rainforest tree and shrub species (both regenerating and revegetated) were compared among the different exclusion methods.

Results and Discussion.

The tall wire guards around single plants were most effective at reducing browsing damage by herbivores. They reduced browsing by 60 per cent compared with unguarded plants.

Corrugated plastic guards reduced browsing by 25 per cent compared with unguarded plants.

Fenced exclusion plots achieved the best overall forest restoration outcomes and were the most cost effective option. The fences supported higher densities and biodiversity of plants including climbers and herbs and enabled regeneration of seeds that had fallen inside the fence.

Fenced exclusion plots were also much cheaper to install per plant (in time and materials) compared with individual wire guards, and were easier to construct and maintain through time. Tall wire guards needed to be adjusted as each plant grew.

The study also found some unguarded plant species were less palatable to herbivores, which may help managers prioritise which plants should be protected with guards, or could be clumped within exclusion fences for protection from browsing.

Reference:

Nilar, H., Maute, K., Dawson, MJ., Scarborough, R., Judson, J., Reay, J., Gooden, B., 2019, 'Effectiveness of different herbivore exclusion strategies for restoration of an endangered rainforest community', *Forest Ecology and Management,* vol. 435, pp. 18-26.

Access the full article here:
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2018.12.041

If you would like any more information please contact author of the paper Ben Gooden at Ben.Gooden@csiro.au

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DEER CONTROL PROJECTS

This month, we share the Lake Tyers Project Written by Tom Crook.

What is the issue?

The Lake Tyres area (39,00 ha), East Gippsland, Victoria is rich with biodiversity. Of particular importance is the Littoral Rainforest, listed as critically endangered under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Deer populations have increased across the region and within the Lake Tyers area to levels that are causing damage to this threatened ecosystem.

What is being done?

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning have partnered with the East Gippsland Conservation Management Network (www.egcmn.org.au) and established the Lake Tyers Deer Management Trial.

Based on stakeholder interest, we are monitoring the effectiveness of using coordinated recreational hunting as a management intervention to mitigate the environmental impacts of feral deer to allow vegetation recovery.

The aims of this trail are to build novel partnerships with various stakeholders including Traditional Owners, community environment groups, reactional hunting organisation, farmers, and government land management agencies to see if we can control deer abundance and their environmental impacts at a landscape scale

What are the project activities?

Coordinated hunting efforts have been implemented in designated areas in a cross-land tenure approach. This is the first trail of its kind in the area.

Two distinct monitoring approaches will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Lake Tyers Deer Management Trial:

1. camera traps to monitor spatial and temporal changes in the relative abundance of deer in response to deer management
2. measurement of vegetation structure and density, regeneration, and growth in open plots.

What are your future plans?

The current three-year study will enable the cross-land tenure, partnership-based approach, and vegetation survey methods to be assessed with respect to ease and efficiency of implementation. This information will be used to inform future control programs.

The third and final hunting season is currently ending, and the project team have been busy retrieving our network of 80 IR cameras with the help of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, one of our key project partners.

Additional control works, as part of our project, but also funded through bushfire recovery works will continue in the area for the next few months, with recreational hunters also continuing to operate within the private land and state forest components of our project area.

We look forward to analysing the data from our camera and vegetation condition monitoring efforts to inform future coordinated control activities and will continue to collaborate with project partners to ensure we work cooperatively toward solutions to what has become one of the most significant environmental management problems.

Are you engaged in a deer control project and would like to share your story?
Please email: coordinator@feraldeerplan.org.au

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WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND AUSTRALIA?

Trapping Trials

Developments in humane trapping and culling is essential for urban and peri-urban control of feral deer.

North Coast Local Land Service began testing a new trapping technique for Rusa deer in Port Macquarie after similar methods proved successful on the state's south coast. Other trapping trials are taking place in South Australia and in the Snowy Mountains.

Enclosures, about 40 metres wide, are left open to allow feral deer to become comfortable and after several weeks, the deer found inside are trapped and shot. The first trial was a success with eight feral deer captured and culled.

This method is a humane culling method. The size of the closure restricts the movement of the deer and the dark conditions keep them calm right up to the point of the cull which is done quickly and humanely.

The hope is to expand the trial to other areas and to test it on other species of feral deer.

Read more at: NSW feral deer trapping trial hailed a success and seen as more 'humane' - ABC News

Victorian Deer Control Community Network

The first Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Deer Control Community Network (VDCCN) happened on the 6th of October.

The VDCCN has taken on an important role in the Victorian deer sphere and encourages every group and organisation affected by or involved in management of deer to join. The VDCCN focuses on sharing information, learning from and with each other in order to substantially reduce the impact and distribution of rapidly and dangerously increasing numbers of deer in Victoria

Click on the link below to fill out a membership form
Victorian Deer Control Community Network (invasives.org.au)

invasive species council

Limestone Coast Aerial Cull

Over 600 feral deer were recently removed from the Limestone Coast, SA as part of a coordinated effort to reduce the pest's impact on the region's agriculture, native habitats and public safety.

The five-day aerial culling operation was conducted across 57 private properties and 22 Department for Environment and Water reserves throughout the Limestone Coast.

The operation is held twice a year and provides essential support to participating landholders to reduce impacts of feral deer.

Read more at: Over 600 feral deer removed from the Limestone Coast | Border Chronicle | Bordertown, SA

Project Partners

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

Centre for Invasive Species Solutions

Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries and Regions