

# Deer Control Program 2024-2025 Report



# Victorian Deer Control Program

*Working together to minimise the impact of deer in Victoria*

In Victoria, deer are impacting our state's biodiversity, water quality, public safety, agriculture, and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The [Victorian Deer Control Program](#) aims to minimise the impact of deer in Victoria. We are working with and supporting key stakeholders to help undertake an integrated deer control program.

The Deer Control Program delivers the Victorian Deer Control Strategy and 3 regional deer control plans.

The Strategy was released in 2020 as the first step toward providing a clear and coordinated approach to deer control in Victoria.



# Deer Control Program 2024-25 Key Achievements



**\$0.82 million** co-investment from project partners, other agencies and grants from State and Commonwealth Governments



**12 on-ground project delivery partners** including Victorian Deer Control Community Network, Australian Deer Association and Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia



**32 staff and contractors** employed and contributing **over 38,000 hours** of project management and on-ground delivery



**91 volunteers** contributed **690 hours** of monitoring, engagement, education, ground control and project facilitation



Deer control activities have progressed from information-gathering, with a focus on research, monitoring and education into **on-ground action**.

**18** projects across Victoria delivering control, monitoring, research, education and engagement and coordination

**466,000** hectares of ground control

**411,000** hectares aerial control

**6** Traditional Owner groups engaged in project planning, monitoring, training and delivery of control

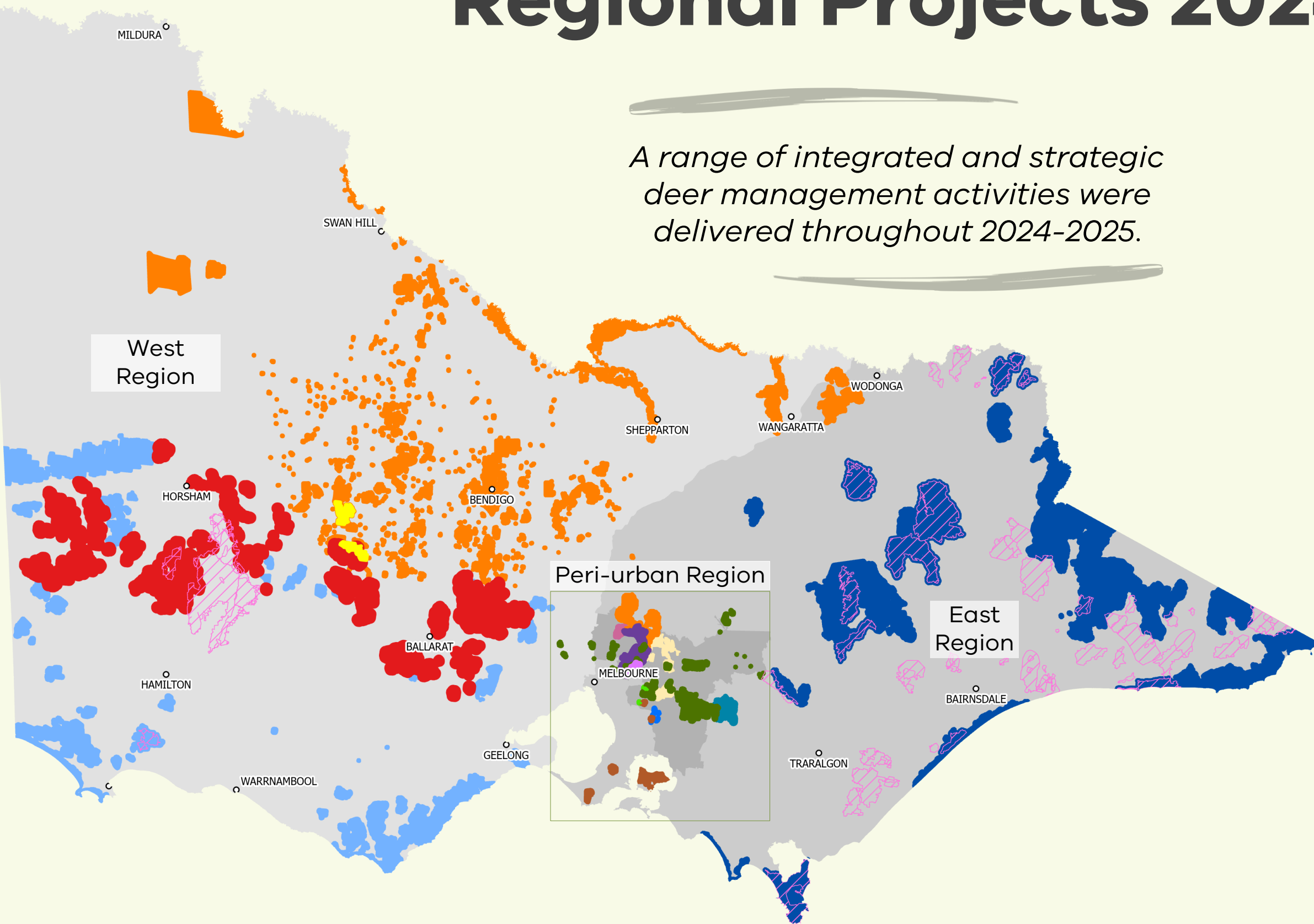
**24** community engagement, education and training events building capacity and capability in almost **415** attendees\*


















\* Plus others, attended by project partners but not funded by the Deer Control Program

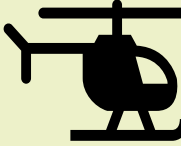





# Regional Projects 2024-2025

*A range of integrated and strategic deer management activities were delivered throughout 2024-2025.*



			Managing emerging populations and biodiversity hotspots
			Dit Dit Djina (hard-hooved animals) Management Program
			Grampians Region Deer Management Program
			Western Victoria Deer Control Program
			East Region Deer Control Program
			Protecting Biodiversity Deer Control Projects

## Activity legend:

					
Aerial Control	Ground Control	Fencing	Engagement Events	Research	Monitoring

# Deer Project Activities 2024-2025



Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*)  
Credit: Parks Victoria



Brolga (*Grus rubicunda*)  
Credit: Nevil Amos (ARI)



Alpine bogs  
Credit: Arthur Rylah Institute



Manna Gum woodlands  
Credit: DEECA



Mount Cole Grevillea (*Grevillea montis-cole*)  
Credit: Steve Sinclair



Baw Baw Frog (*Philoria frosti*)  
Credit: DEECA



Pookila (*Pseudomys novaehollandiae*)  
Credit: Parks Victoria

## Deer Control Program

- Aerial Shoot
- Ground Shoot
- Assessment

## Protecting Biodiversity

- Aerial Shoot
- Ground Shoot

*Integrated strategic deer management activities delivered through the Deer Control Program and Protecting Biodiversity are protecting our precious habitats and wildlife.*

# Key Results: East Victoria

Approximately **66,000 hectares** of ground control and **374,000 hectares** of aerial control of deer was successfully and safely delivered across both private and public land.

**Parks Victoria** continues to work closely with hunting organisations to minimise impacts from control operations. Aerial control in the Howitt and Wellington high plains focused on the headwaters of major rivers and high elevation peatlands, excluding the entire Wonnangatta valley and all access tracks so that visitation to the Valley is not impacted.

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and thermal drones have increased effectiveness of operations in Cape Liptrap Coastal Park by allowing better access to dune systems.

The use of **boats with thermal drones** to access Mallacoota, Tamboon and Wingan Inlet has enabled effective control in previously inaccessible areas. Aerial control enabled control in dune systems in Croajingolong NP and Gabo Island, complementing ground shooting efforts.

The first deer control program at **Mt Samaria** was delivered in partnership with Taungurung Land and Water Council and Biik Environmental, with TLaWC and Biik engaged in information sharing, training and mentoring with Parks Victoria staff and shooting contractors.



# East Victoria Deer Control

In 2024-25 deer control in the east of Victoria was delivered by **Parks Victoria** and DEECA, with funding through both the Deer Control Program and Protecting Biodiversity Program).

Deer Control Program funding delivered aerial deer control across inaccessible alpine areas, whilst a combination of ground and aerial control was used in coastal areas.

Protecting Biodiversity funded ground control on lower elevations across DEECA and Parks Victoria estate, timed to complement Parks Victoria's activities.

As in previous years, control is strategically targeted around alpine and coastal regions to protect sensitive vegetation including alpine bogs and peatlands, rainforest sites of significance and coastal marshes.

Strong partnerships and collaboration with landholders around Cape Liptrap Coastal park has increased private property access which has enabled deer to be targeted as they travel between the public and private land interface, increasing successes.

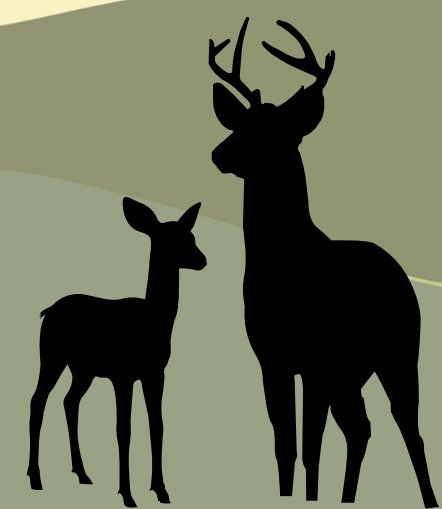
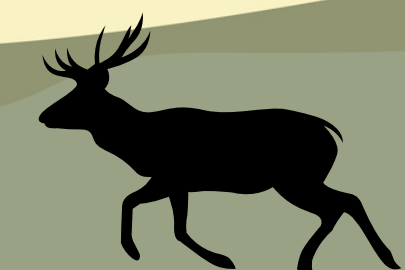
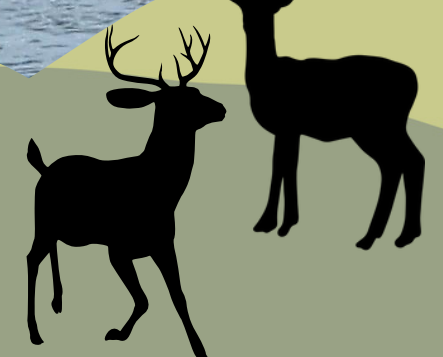
Ongoing vegetation monitoring and analysis of camera trap data in fenced and unfenced areas is providing valuable information on recovery after sustained control efforts.



Fence checks and repairs.  
Credit: Parks Victoria



Pelican rookery. Credit: Parks Victoria



# Key Results: West Victoria

Over **250,000 hectares** of ground control and **37,000 hectares** of aerial control was successfully and safely delivered, with control by professional controllers, accredited volunteer shooters, Traditional Owners and in-house operational staff.

**Parks Victoria** continues to build **partnerships** for coordinated deer control across tenure, including Barwon Water, Alcoa, HVP and Trust for Nature and over 50 private properties.

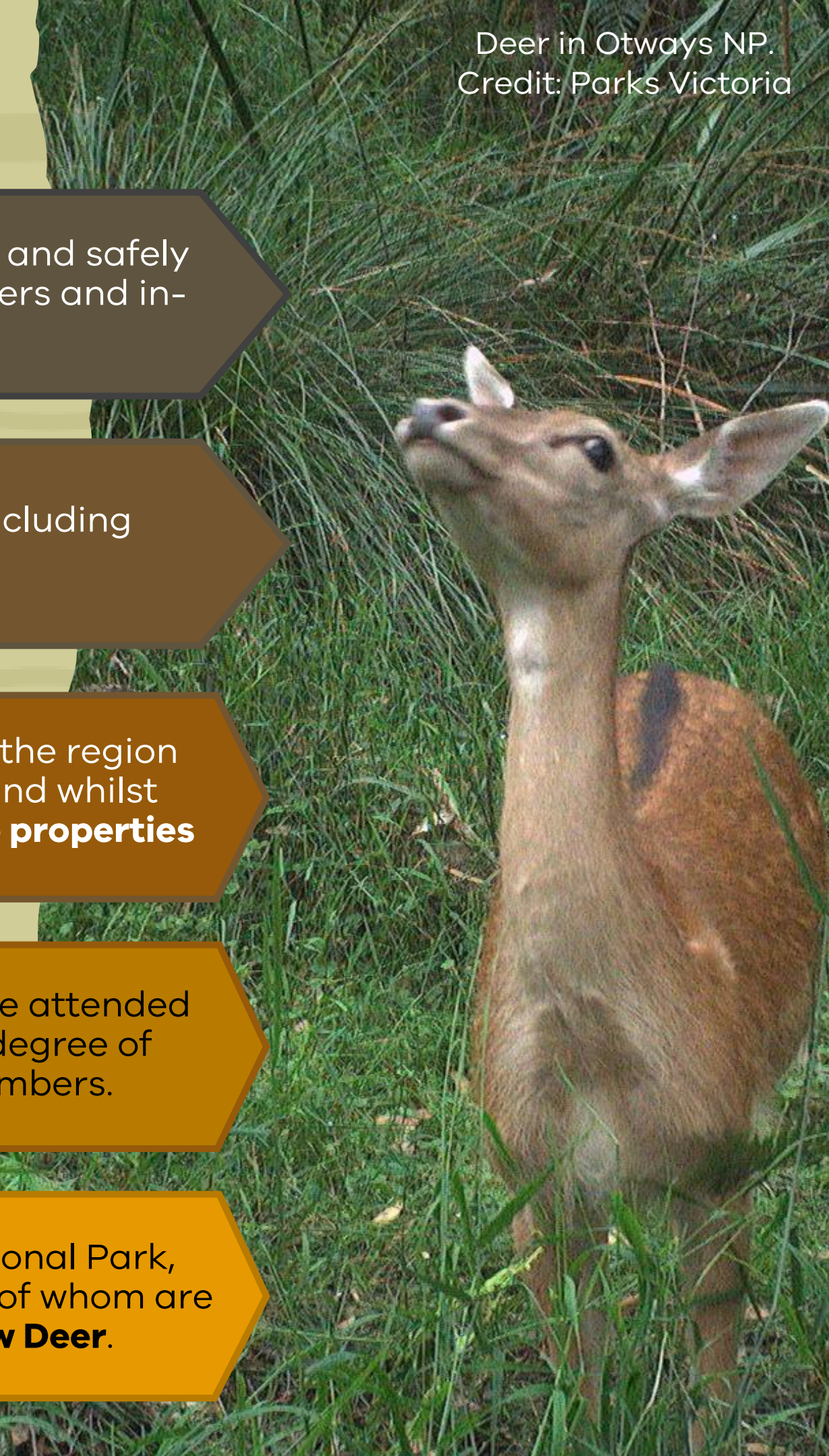
**Cross tenure** ground control activities across the region have helped protect biodiversity on public land whilst reducing impacts on **over 50 adjoining private properties**

**14 engagement and training events** were attended by **144 attendees** – indicating a high degree of interest in managing rising deer numbers.

Following bushfires in Little Desert National Park, **volunteer shooters** from the SSAA (some of whom are park neighbours) removed **10 Fallow Deer**.



Deer at Mt Cole State Park  
Credit: Parks Victoria



# West Victoria Deer Control

Deer numbers are still relatively low in west Victoria, however new deer populations are being identified through increased monitoring. In many areas in the west there is still the opportunity to reduce deer numbers if all landholders play their part in managing numbers and reporting sightings.

Parks Victoria are leading the way in surveillance and rapid response programs in the west. SSAA provided staff with specialized firearms training to build capacity and capability to undertaken control in-house. This has enabled staff to respond to community reports of deer with camera monitoring and immediate control actions if deer presence is confirmed. The ability to work on private land has delivered optimal results, targeting deer as they move into grassy feed areas at night. At Fryers Ridge NCR this has resulted in all the functional eradication of the Fallow Deer population, with all female deer identified through camera monitoring successfully removed during 2024-25. Continued monitoring and follow-up control will ensure the reserve remains deer-free.

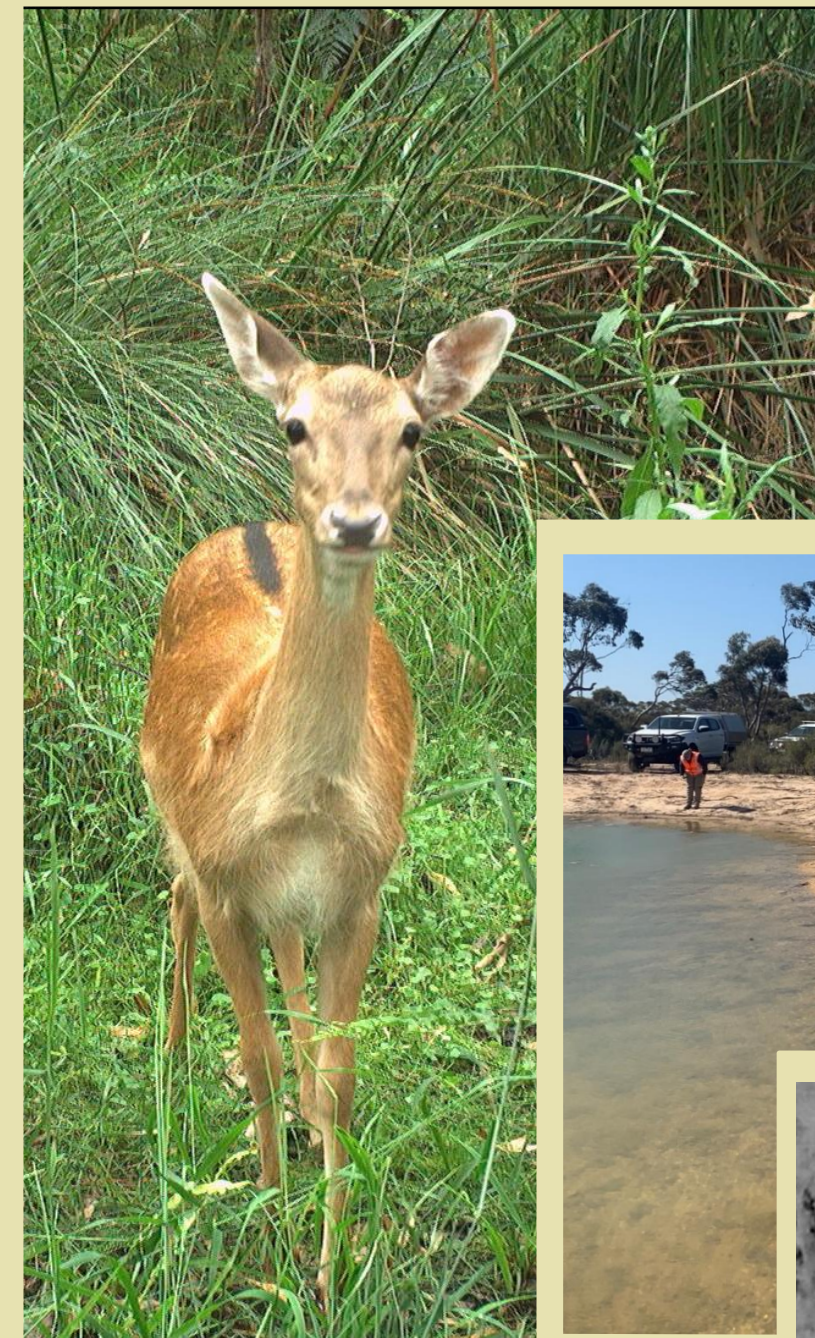
Volunteer accredited shooters have also been upskilled, now able to use suppressors and undertake night-time shooting. This greatly increases their control success rates.

Ongoing stakeholder engagement has increased the number of park neighbours allowing access to their land for ground shooting deer control. Some of these properties have yielded impressive numbers, which is mutually beneficial.

Ground shooting at Langi Ghiran and Mt Buangor State Parks detected 3 species of deer in previous years, however only Sambar were detected in 2024-25, with a noticeable decrease in numbers too. This may be the result of scheduling operations post-fires at Mt Buangor and after aerial control operations.

Ground shooting at Lake Connewarre saw 83 deer controlled over 7 nights, following a drone survey which counted 108 deer. With complementary efforts from City of Greater Geelong on surrounding private land, the deer in Connewarre are very close to becoming contained, with potential for elimination. This is a tremendous outcome given the initial resistance of the local community to allow control, when the program commenced.

Aerial shooting was delivered at Budj Bim National Park and surrounding Indigenous Protected Areas showing a continued decline in deer numbers. The first joint aerial operation with DEECA was undertaken at Langi Ghiran and Mt Buangor State Parks and nearby state forests. Despite some opposition from some deer hunters and locals, it was a successful operation.



Red Deer, west Otways  
Credit: Parks Victoria



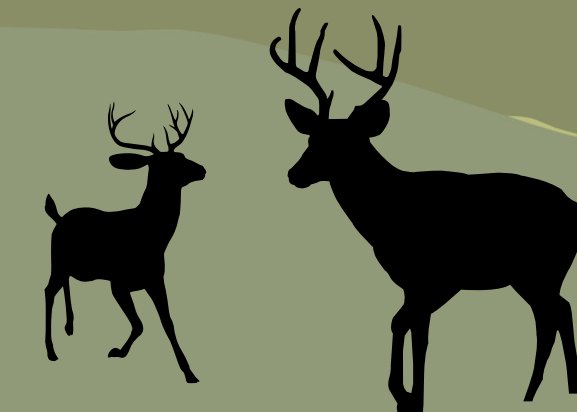
Scoping deer prints with SSAA,  
Little Desert  
Credit: Parks Victoria



Fallow Deer, Central Victoria  
Credit: Parks Victoria



Thermal drone operation at Lake Connewarre.  
Credit: ProCon



# Partnering and engaging with Traditional Owners

## **DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation)**

Capability of DDWCAC was increased through training of field staff to undertake deer control and monitoring.

A successful control program, targeting dit-dit djina (hard-hooved animals) at Kara Kara National Park was undertaken. In recognition of the increased capability and demonstrated proficiency with systems, approvals and processes, Parks Victoria will look to engage DJARRA to undertake contracted ground shooting of pest animals in Joint Managed Parks.

Control activities were informed by cultural knowledge, values, and priorities of DJAARA. Knowledge and information was shared both ways.

## **Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC)**

Parks Victoria are mentoring TLaWC staff to build their capacity to undertake deer control at Mt Samaria State Park, including workshops with contractors.

*All projects funded through the Deer Control Program must engage with Traditional Owners in the development of on-ground and research projects. This enables groups to incorporate cultural knowledge and practice into our western approaches to environmental management.*

## **Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC)**

Yorta Yorta facilitated the inclusion of their freehold estate within Barmah National Park in the Parks Victoria deer control program which enabled effective control over larger areas. Yorta Yorta Ranger staff undertook mentoring for operational support roles in on ground delivery as part of the project.



Deer rub on Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*) - Credit: DJAARA

# Peri-urban Projects 2024-2025

## Activity legend:



**Ground Control**



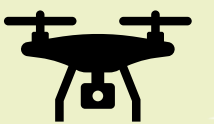
**Aerial Control**



**Fencing**



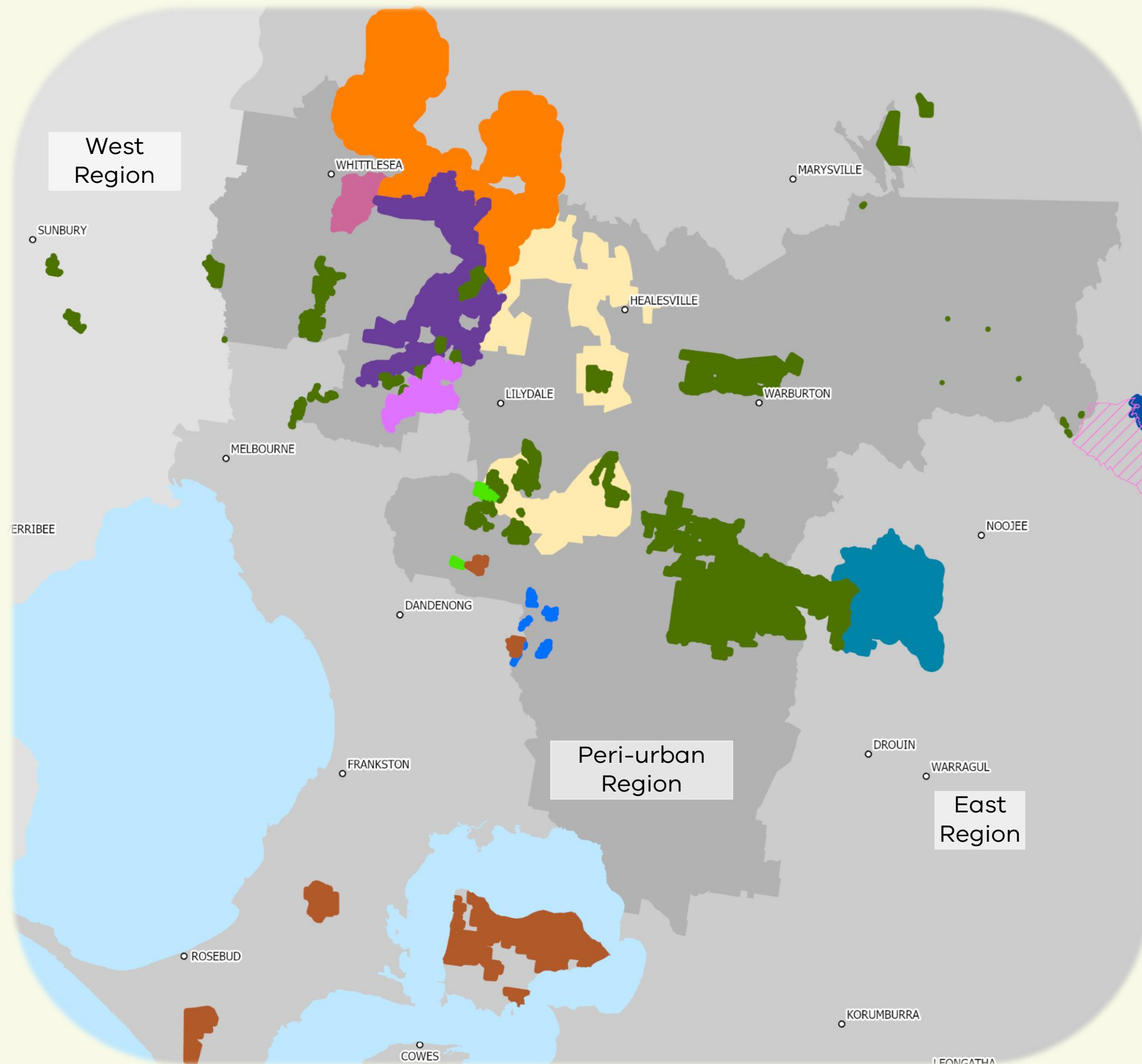
**Engagement Events**



**Monitoring**



**Research**



Managing emerging populations and biodiversity hotspots



Yan Yean Deer Control



Nillumbik Deer Control



Deer Neighbour – Building community capacity in Yarra Ranges



Protecting Manningham's biodiversity values through strategic deer control



Knox Deer Control



Cardinia Creek Deer Partnership Project



Melbourne Region Deer Control Program



Central Highlands Eden – Tarago Catchment Deer Management



Southern and Maritime Region Deer Control



Protecting Biodiversity Deer Control Projects

# Peri-urban Activities 2024-2025

Yan Yean Reservoir  
Credit: Melbourne Water



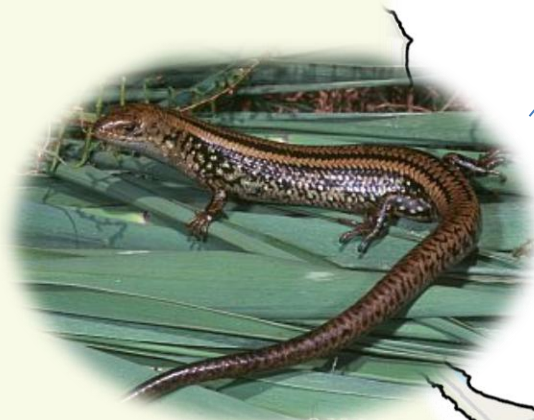
Rosella Spider-orchid  
(*Caladenia rosella*)  
Credit: Micheal Keogh



Clover glycine  
(*Glycine latrobeana*)  
Credit: Melbourne Water



Platypus  
(*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*)  
Credit: Zoos Victoria



Swamp skink  
(*Lissolepis coventryi*)  
Credit: Nick Clemann



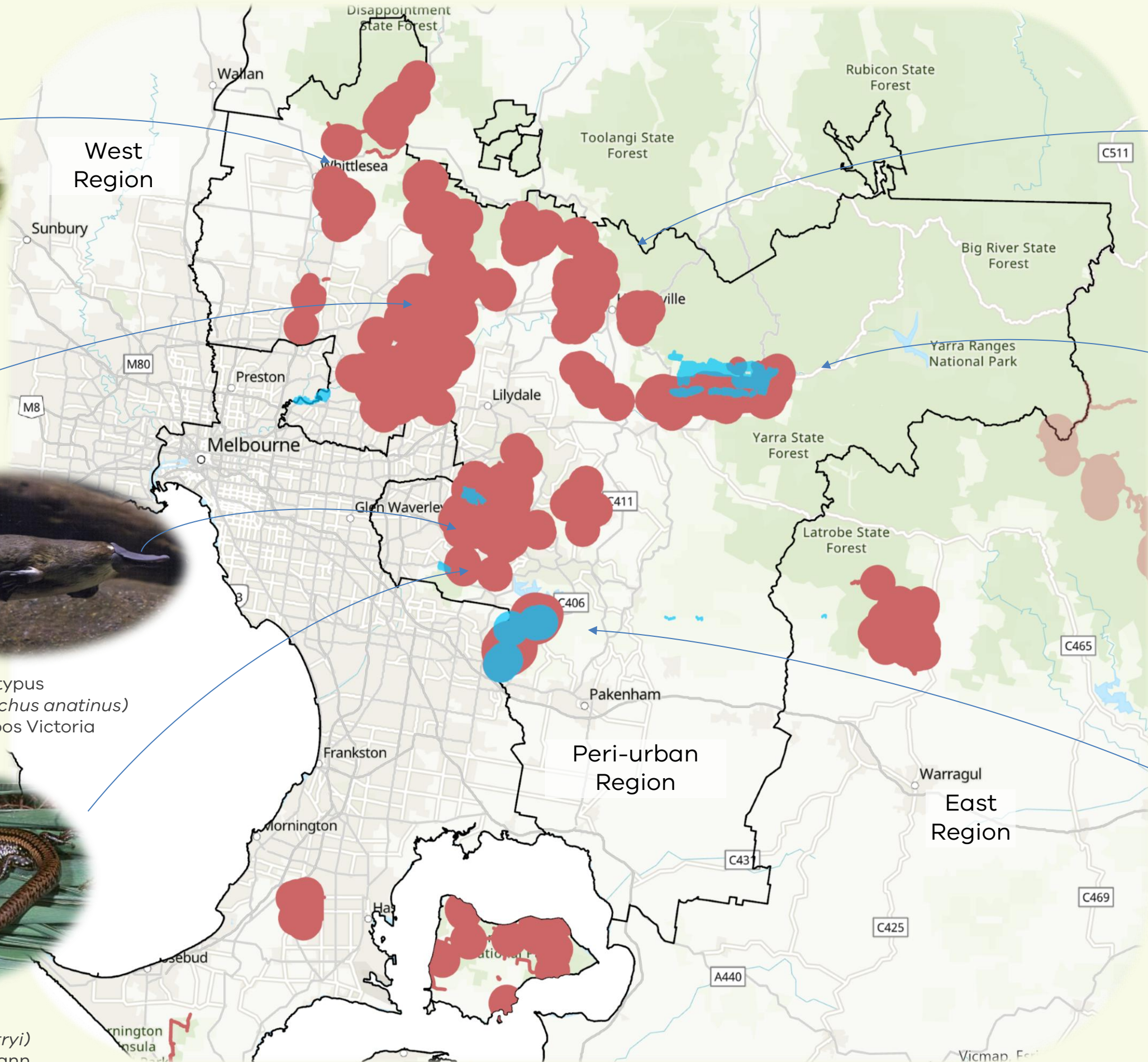
Round-leaf Pomaderris  
(*Pomaderris vacciniifolia*)  
Credit: Marilyn Bull



Superb Lyrebird  
(*Menura novaehollandiae*)  
Credit: David Cook - creative commons



Helmeted Honeyeater  
(*Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*)  
Credit: DEECA



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# Key Results : Peri-urban Area 2024-2025

**Nearly 1,900** deer removed from private and public land across more than 170,000 hectares, including the first deer control program undertaken at French Island (recently added to the Peri-urban region), removing 90 deer.

Control programs at Devilbend Natural Features Reserve and Cardinia Creek Parklands continue to demonstrate positive collaborative relationships, with both accredited volunteer shooters and professional controllers working on these sites.

Deer control is having a positive impact on flora recovery across Yarra Ranges. This is evident even on properties where deer control is not being undertaken. This demonstrates that control at landscape scales is beneficial to everyone..

Yarra Ranges National Park has a high density of deer. **10 nights** of ground shooting successfully removed **176 deer**, despite a number of bad weather nights.

Community support for professional deer control continues to rise, with overwhelming support from residents and requests to be part of private land deer control, coordinated by local councils.

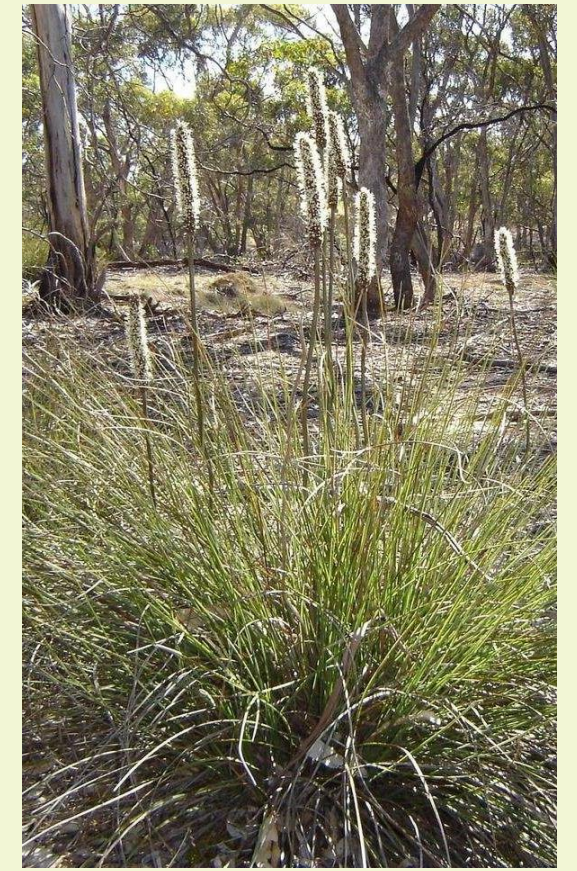
## Signs of Recovery

Residents have seen significant improvement in wildflower numbers in the Yarra Ranges.

Monitoring is showing an abundance of Chocolate lilies and *Xanthorrhoea minor* are flowering for the first time in years, as the deer have not been around to eat the flower spikes.



Chocolate Lily  
(*Arthropodium strictum*)  
Credit: Annie Preston



Small Grass-tree  
(*Xanthorrhoea minor* ssp. *Lutea*)  
Credit: Louise Nicholas

# Peri-urban Deer Control – across the ranges

Sambar Deer, Pantom Hill  
Credit: Nillumbik Shire  
Council



Deer Wallow, Bolin Bolin billabong, Yarra  
Valley Parklands. Credit: Rhyl Shaw.



Camera trap  
installation and  
maintenance  
Credit: Arthur Muchow



Gippsland Weed and Pest Fest  
Credit: H. Ween-Lawrence

Across Melbourne's peri-urban local government areas of Whittlesea, Nillumbik, Manningham, Knox, Yarra Ranges and Cardinia, deer continue to be an issue, browsing gardens, orchards and vineyards, reducing grazing potential on farms, trampling soil and waterways, damaging high-biodiversity areas and remnant vegetation and causing an increase in road safety concerns.

On-going coordinated and collaborative actions from Councils and public land managers, closely engaging with community to raise awareness of deer issues and management options, building capacity of landholders and Traditional Owners to undertake deer monitoring and control, and coordinating cross-tenure ground-shooting activities is helping to stem rising deer numbers.

## **Just some of our success stories....**

A deer control implementation plan has been prepared to help protect billabongs in the Yarra Valley Parklands. Parks Victoria has demonstrated safe control can be undertaken safely in linear parks with high visitation, such as along the Yarra River, and these learnings have been shared with other delivery agents.

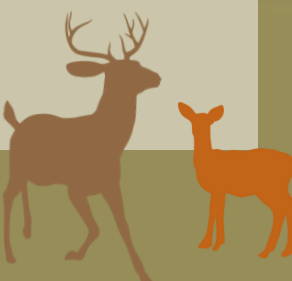
A Deer Vegetation Impact Survey at Bunyip State Park shows reduced browse damage following sustained control efforts, whilst a Melbourne Water flora survey at Yan Yean Reservoir found new populations of critically endangered Matted flax-lily (*Dianella amoena*) and the vulnerable Floating swamp wallaby-grass (*Amphibromus fluitans*)

Deer control by Parks Victoria on private properties on the edge of Mt Donna Buang in the Yarra Ranges National Park is removing high numbers of Sambar deer, protecting farmlands and reducing deer on nearby roads.

Coordinated, simultaneous ground control by Parks Victoria in the Warrandyte-Kinglake and Yarra River corridors and by Manningham and Nillumbik councils on adjoining private properties and in council reserves is reducing the places for deer to hide resulting in more effective deer control.

Yarra Ranges Council's deer control program continues to expand, delivering control across private properties, including around Healesville and Dandenong Ranges, reducing Fallow Deer numbers for improved road safety.

All Councils are receiving positive feedback from residents and support deer control actions, with increased interest in program participation – landscape-scale control will result in even better outcomes in the future.



# Statewide Capacity and Capability Building

Deer Control Program grants and other government funding is helping to build capacity and capability of agency staff, professional and volunteer deer controllers, recreational hunters, Traditional Owners, community groups and landholders. Collaborative engagement is at the core of all that we do.

We do this by delivering and financially supporting training and educational programs, research (like kinship analysis and disease transmission risks), building websites and developing guidelines to help build knowledge and skills in deer identification, monitoring, control, and community engagement.

Support for the Australian Deer Association (ADA) and Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Vic.) (SSAA) is provided for training and operational delivery, increasing the number and skills of over 280 accredited volunteer shooters, enabling enthusiastic hunters to be part of conservation efforts.

The Victorian Deer Control Community network works closely with Landcare and other landholders to provide information about deer and their management through their website ([www.vdccn.org.au](http://www.vdccn.org.au))

Deer Expo.  
Credit Australian Deer Association



Deer forum - Credit: Victorian Deer Control Community Network



Training and Guides to build knowledge and capability. Credits: SSAA, ARI, Parks Victoria

Fallow Deer, Great Otway National Park,  
Credit: Conservation Ecology Centre.

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Energy,  
Environment  
and Climate Action