



2025 National Landcare Conference

Landcare: Nature, Agriculture, Land and People Positive

Sunday 21 to Wednesday 24 September, 2025

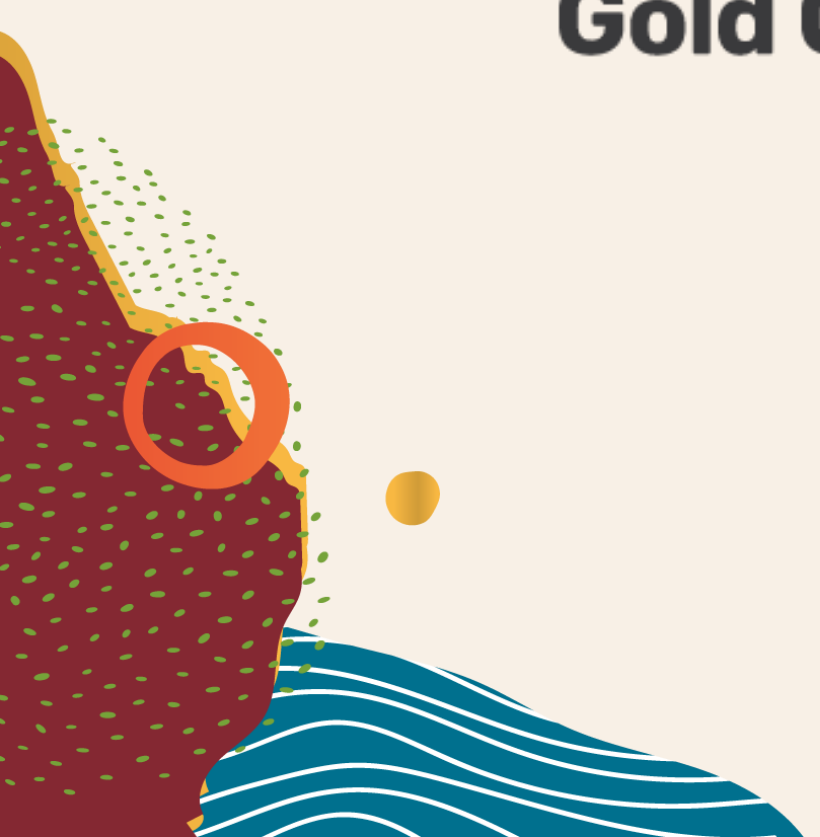
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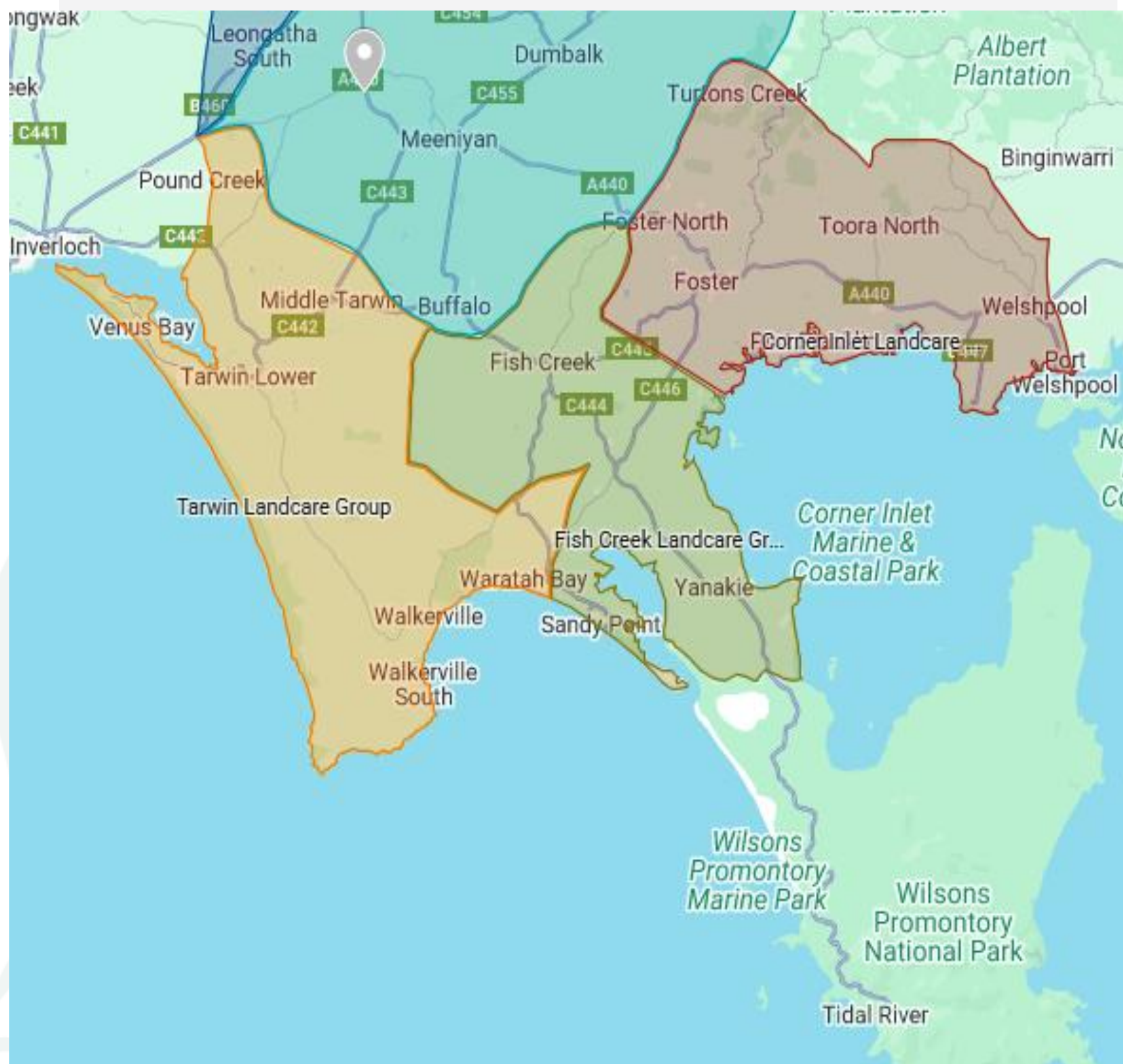


Experiences using a range of technology in community-led deer control.

Nick Stephens, Landcare Facilitator,
South Gippsland Landcare Network



Our Deer Control Journey



Action triggered by a landcare member whose revegetation attempts were being eaten by deer.

- 1st Meeting March 2022 (Foster Nth)
- 2nd area soon followed (Pest & Weed Control project - Tarwin Lower)
- 3rd area followed in 2023 (Fish Creek)
- Anecdotal evidence of deer sightings and damage to fences, horticulture, nurseries and reveg efforts



FERAL DEER CONTROL STRATEGY

Aim:

To raise awareness of the impacts of deer and facilitate deer control in South Gippsland through an adaptive management (action learning) approach

Vision:

By 2030, a healthy and respectful collaboration of community, interest groups, institutions and government has substantially reduced the impacts and distribution of feral deer within the local communities, the environment and on the rural economy of South Gippsland

Values:

Landholders drive control measures on THEIR properties, learning & adapting through their activities

We listen to ALL views respectfully

Our primary considerations are safety of people and animal welfare

We will work to protect our unique biodiversity and reduce the impact of deer

Objectives:

Facilitate Feral Deer Control Across Our Region

Raise Awareness of the Problem of Feral Deer

Monitor the Impacts, Reach, Habits & Control of Feral Deer

Monitor & Evaluate the Outcomes of Our Programs

Key Initiatives & Programs: (Detail overleaf)

Facilitate deer control programs by:

- Encouraging on-property control by landholders
- Facilitating appropriately accredited shooters onto individual properties
- Applying for grants to assist regional deer control
- Investigating the opportunities for commercial harvesting of deer

Working with partners raise awareness of the:

- Impact of feral deer
- Need for control activities
- Opportunities to participate
- Inform and educate our local communities
- Progress of our control programs

Monitor the impacts of feral deer and the outcomes of our program by:

- Encouraging the use of FeralScan to report sightings, environmental damage & controls
- Work with partners to assess numbers of feral deer & their movements
- Trial programs to evaluate environmental impacts of feral deer

Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of our control programs:

- Assess the results of the control programs
- Evaluate the impacts of the program on deer numbers, distribution & impacts
- Learn and adjust our program

Metrics:

- Feral deer controlled in each region
- Landholders conducting control programs
- Licensed and accredited shooters in our programs
- Social activities promoting deer control
- Coordinated commercial deer harvesting

- Local network meetings & people attending
- Geographic reach of programs
- Media articles about our program
- Engaged landholders

- Reports to FeralScan – Aim: 80% of all animals sighted, controlled and environment impacted
- Deer monitoring programs across the groups
- Change in vegetation in exclusion plots
- Monitoring outcomes from 4 g cameras program

- Reporting activity including to FeralScan
- Number of deer controlled across the groups
- R & D Program lead vs copper ammunition
- Research into community led control programs



Landholder logic sequence & relevant technology

1. Acknowledging there are deer present

DeerScan +
Camera Trapping

2. Acknowledging that deer cause damage & have a negative impact

DeerScan +
Camera Trapping

3. Acknowledging that deer are a real problem, which will only get worse

YouTube

4. Acknowledging that something must be done

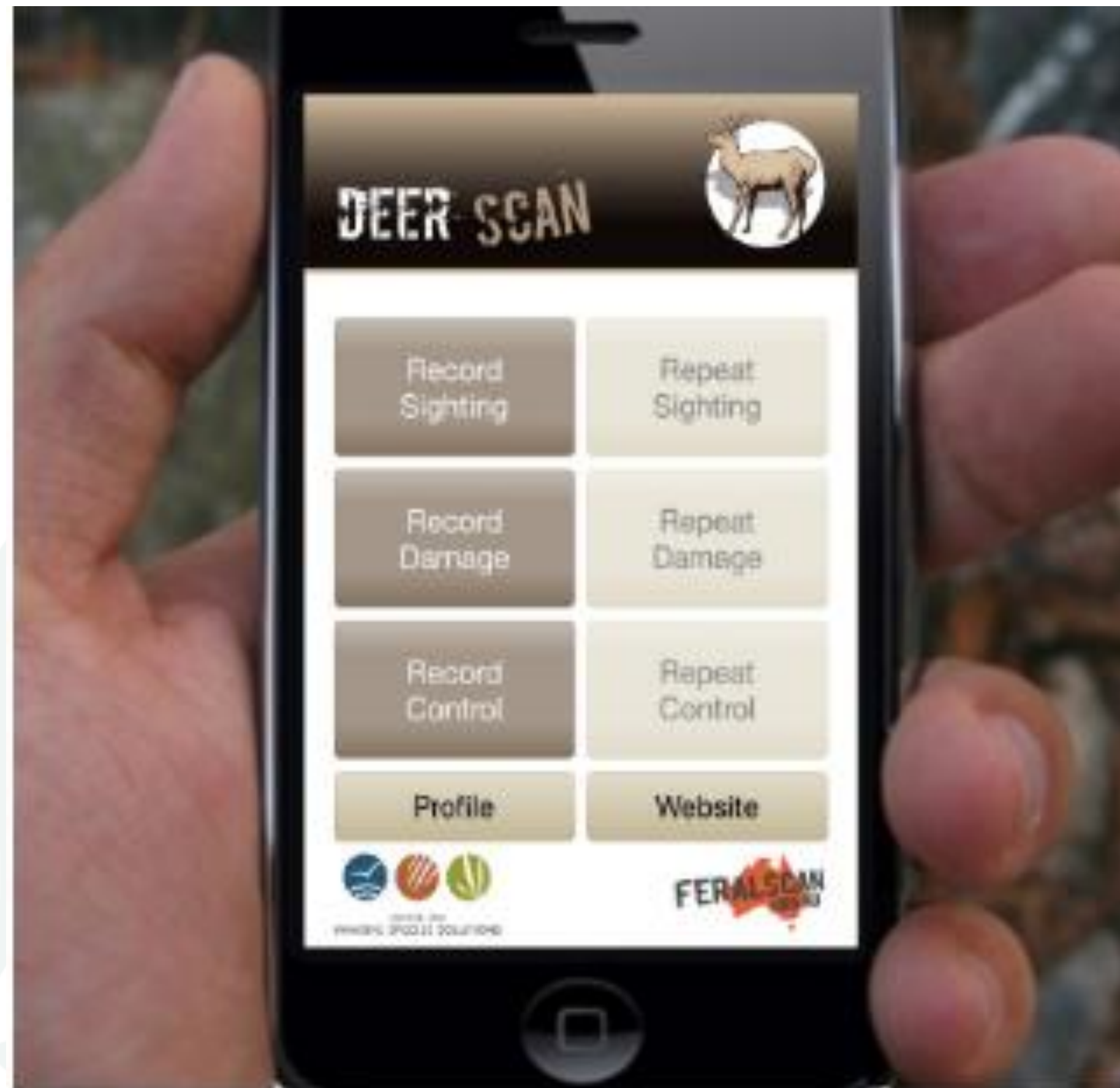
BINGO !

5. Acknowledging the correct way to control deer

WhatsApp +
Thermal scopes



Acknowledging deer presence using DeerScan



DeerScan:

- Is a free web or phone-based app, part of the Feral Scan suite.
- Makes it easy to report deer sightings, incl species, location, numbers & images
- Can report evidence of damage and control efforts
- Can be used to collate and report on data at regional/ local level



DeerScan Data

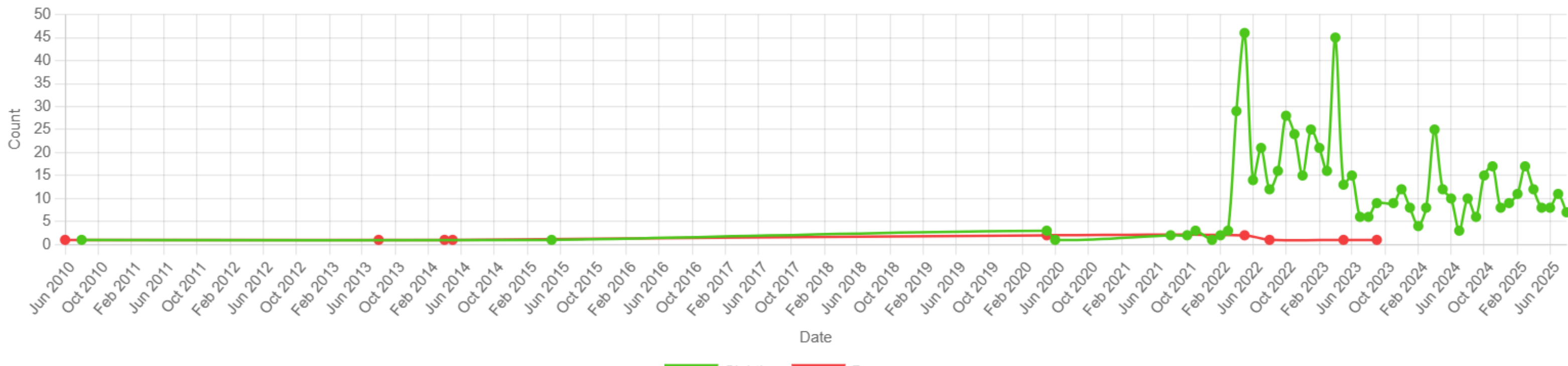
01/01/2021 to 22/4/2025

Zone	# deer sighted	# sight records	# damage records	# of deer controlled	# deer control records
1	66	40	3	0	0
2	1901	572	11	409	316
3	459	99	1	66	34
TOTAL	2426	711	15	475	350

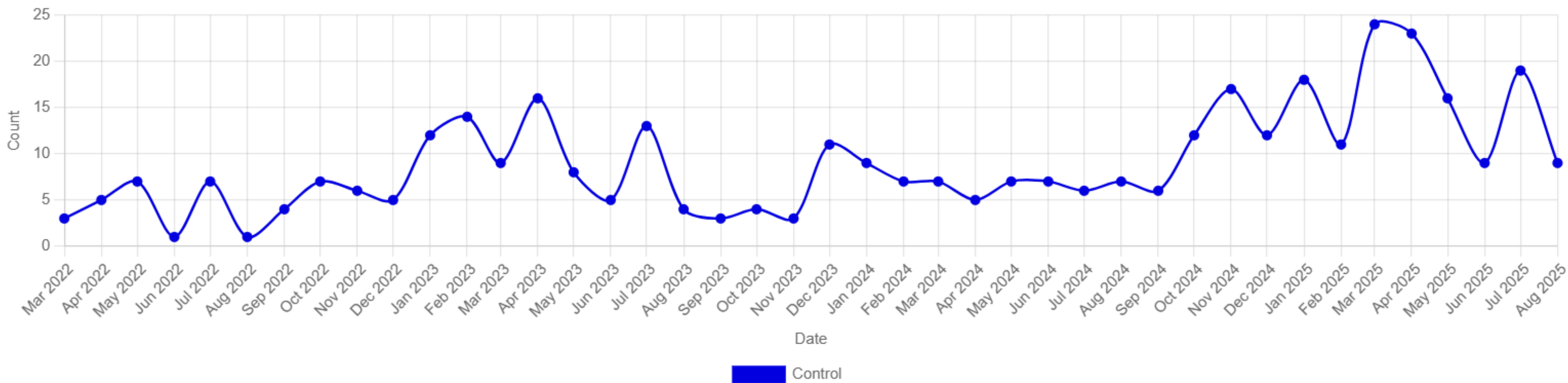


DeerScan Data (con't)

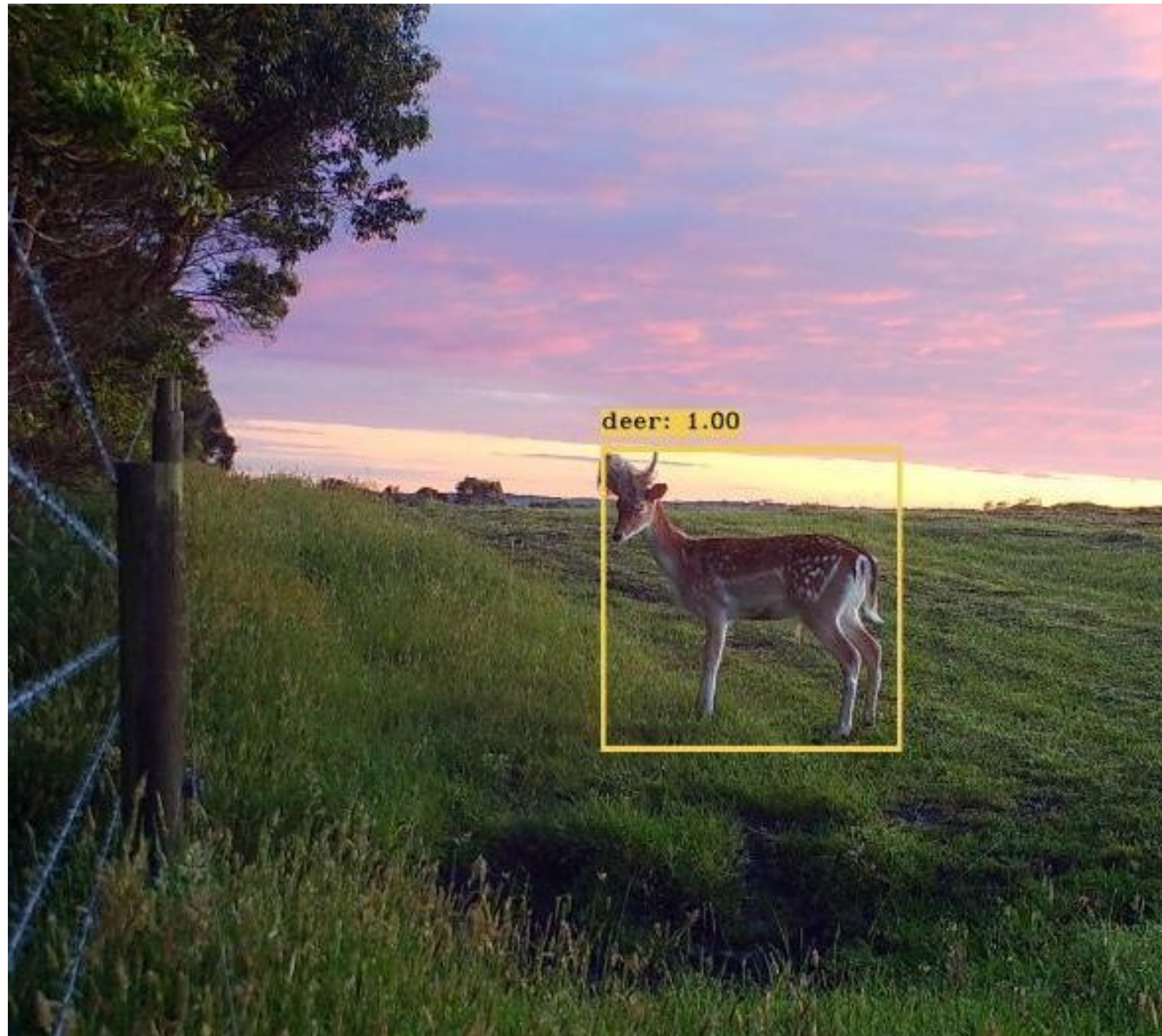
Sighting and Damage



Control



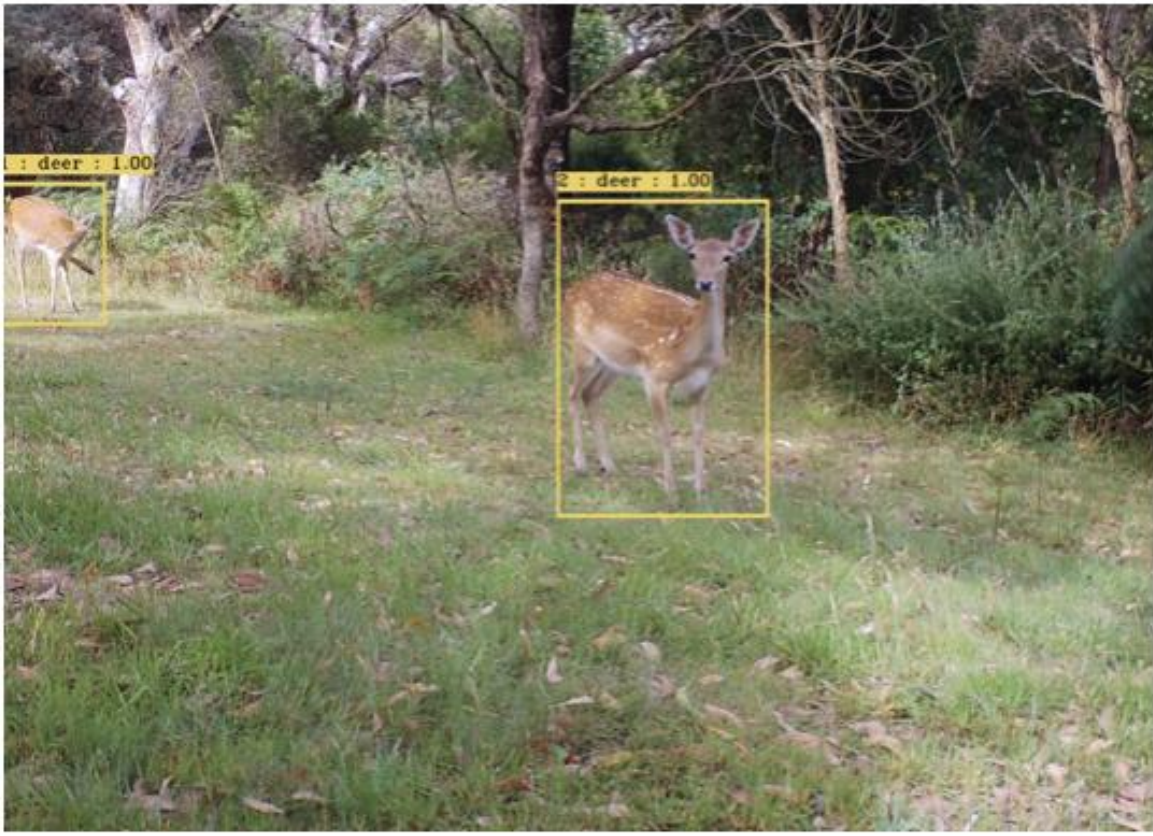
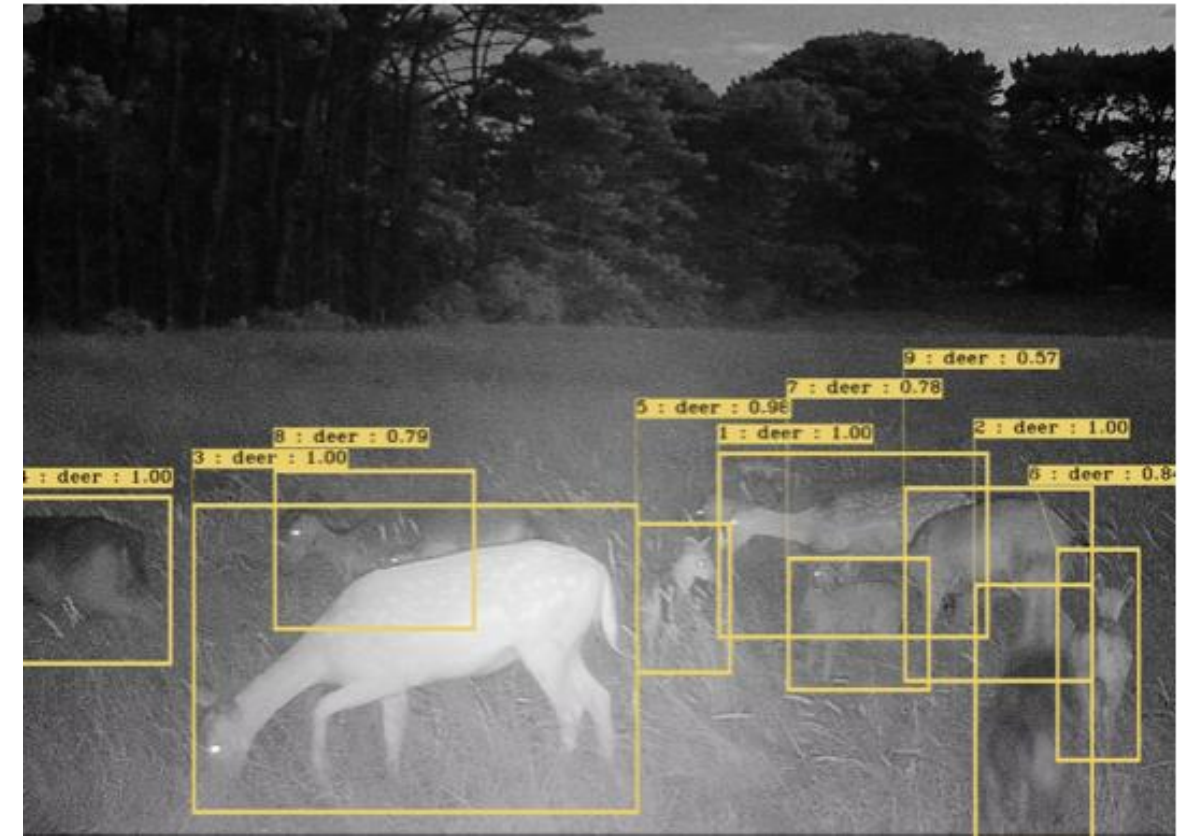
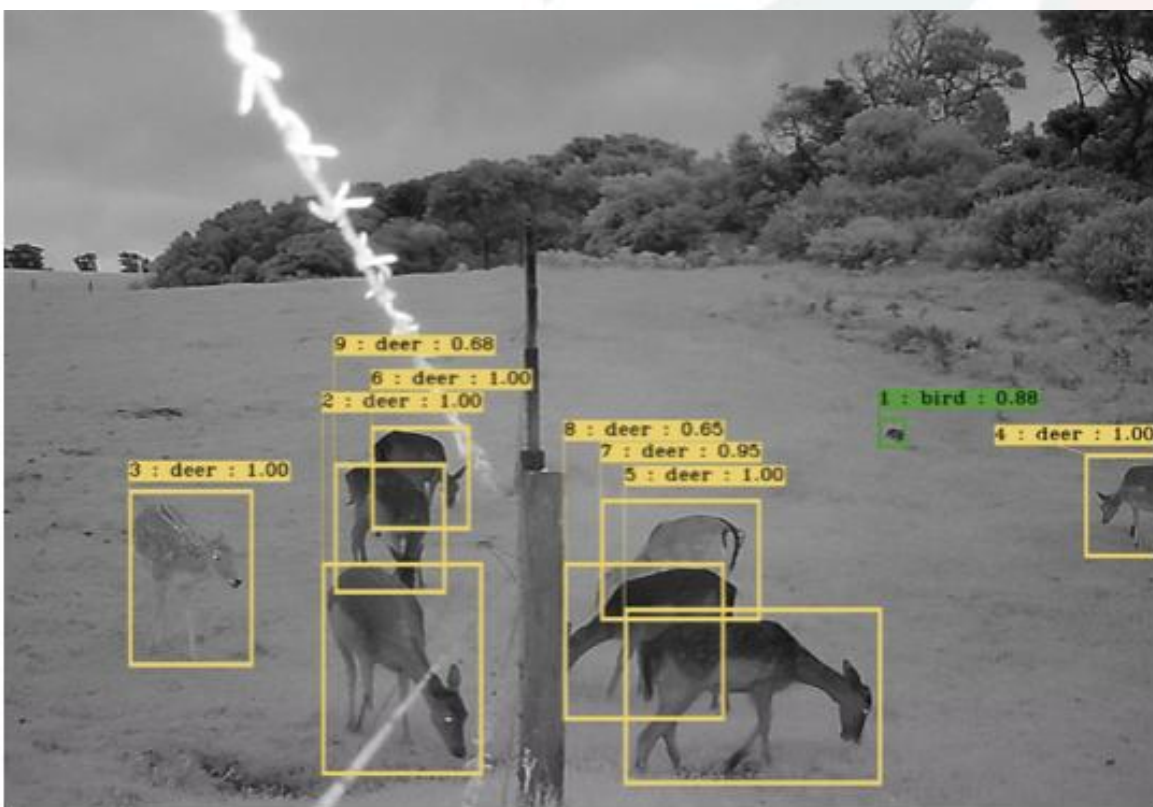
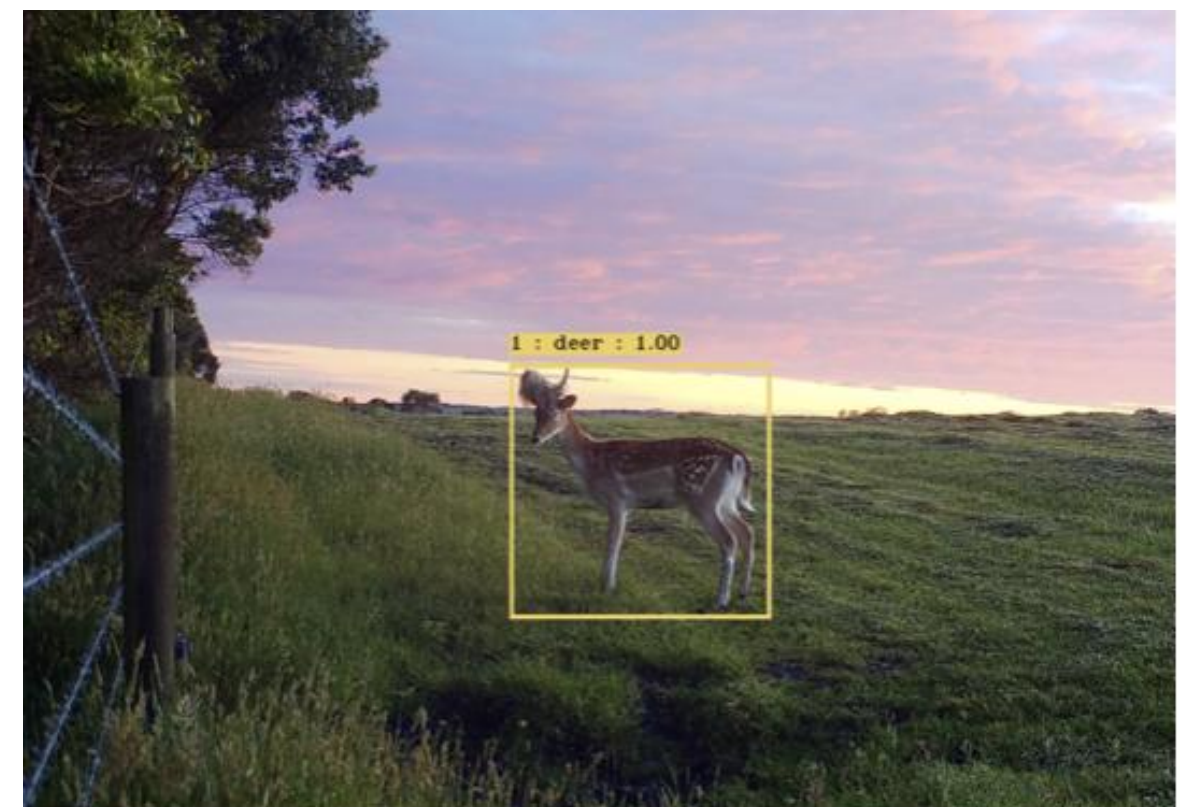
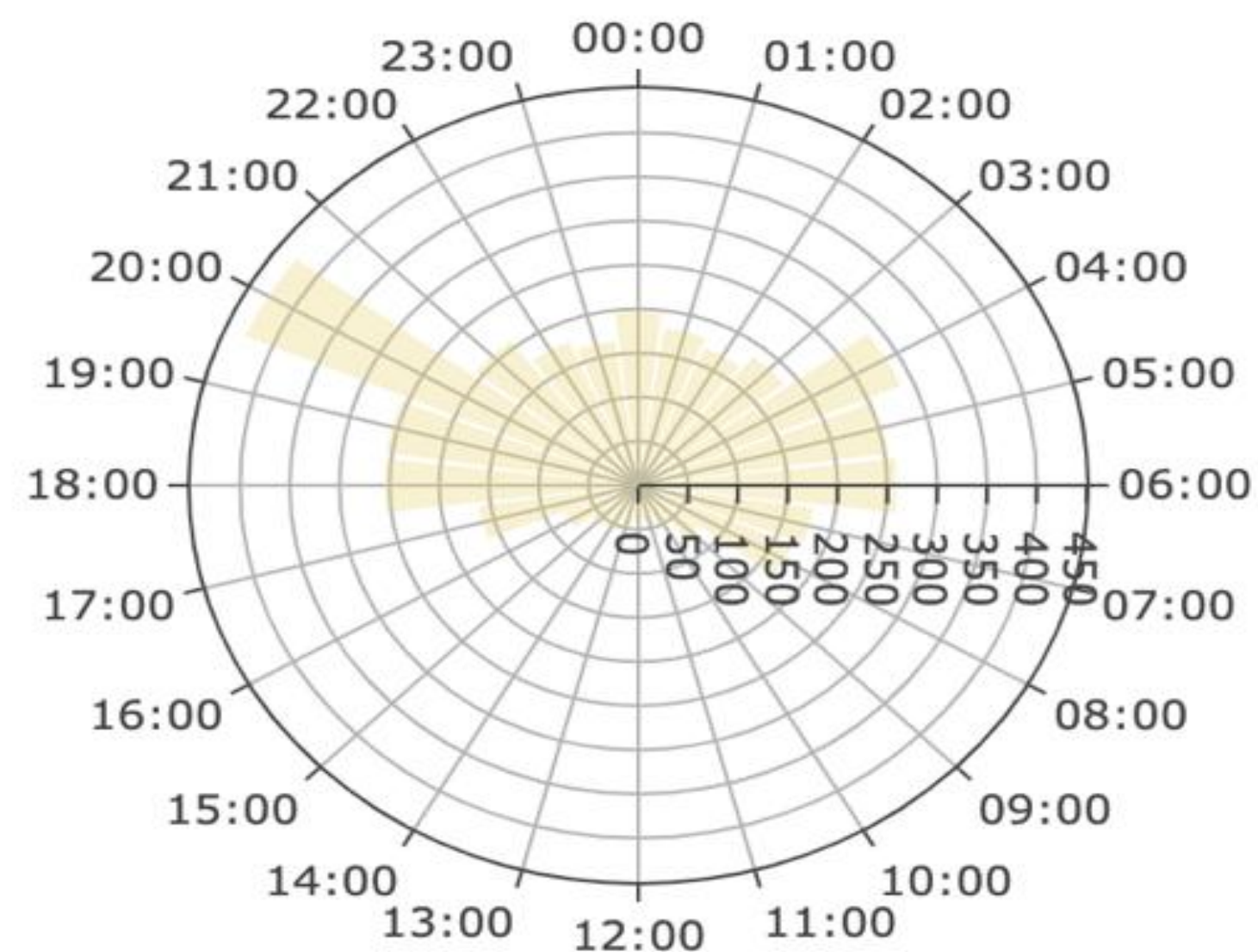
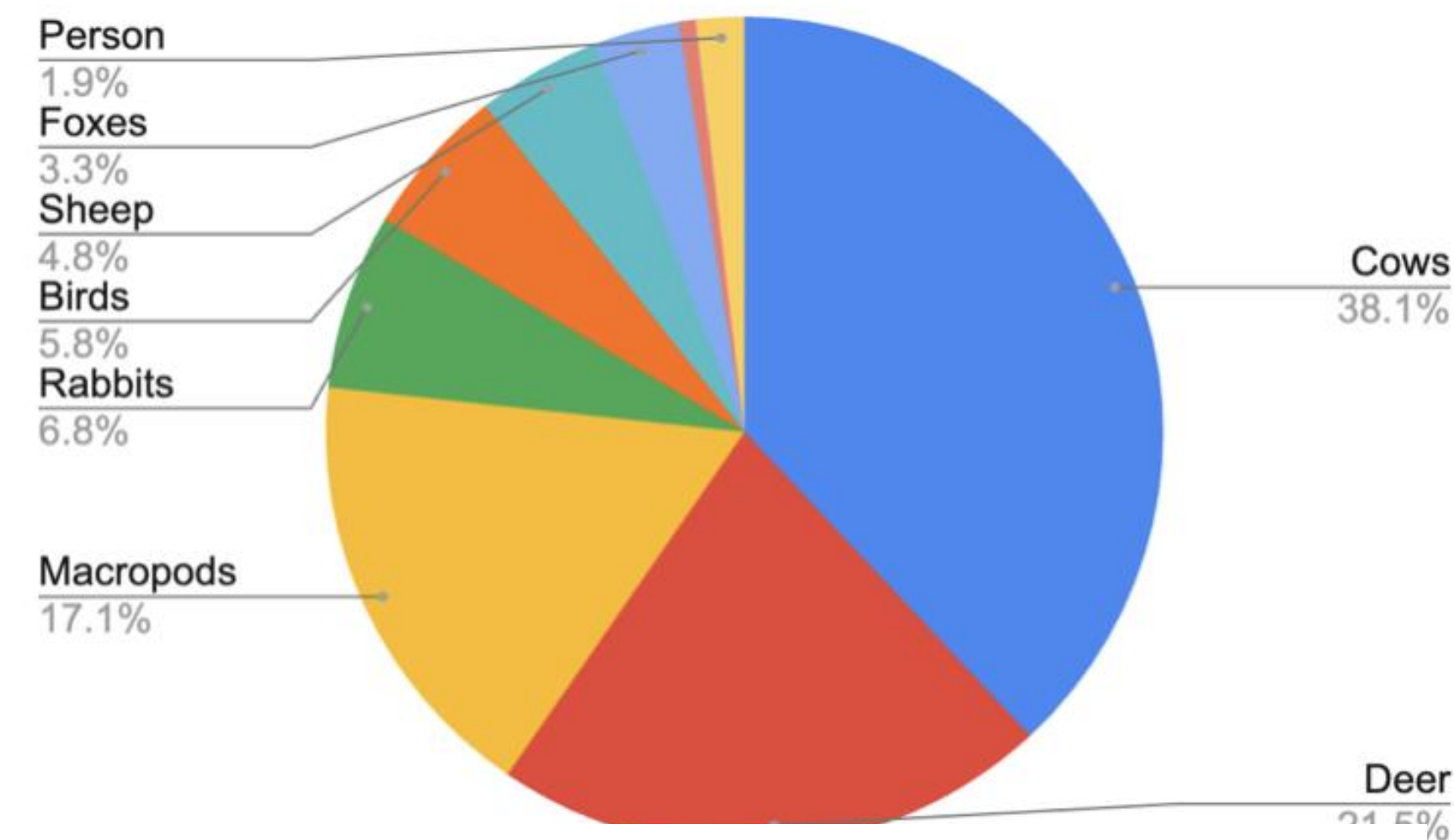
Acknowledging deer presence & impact using 4G cameras



- VLG funded project to set up 19 cameras across 17 farms to better understand the numbers, species and behaviour of deer
- **Partnership** between Tarwin Landcare and National Feral Deer Action Plan
- Cameras transmit images (using 4G) to a dashboard (evorta.com) which processes them & uses AI to identify species captured
- 30,000 images of animals captured of which 21.5% were deer (6450 images)



Analytics generated by the software.



What did you learn?

Survey quotes

“Deer have routines & times of peak activity”

“Patterns of movement on and off and around the farm”

“Relationship with cattle”

“impacts of shooting and moving to avoid”

“Densities of different species”

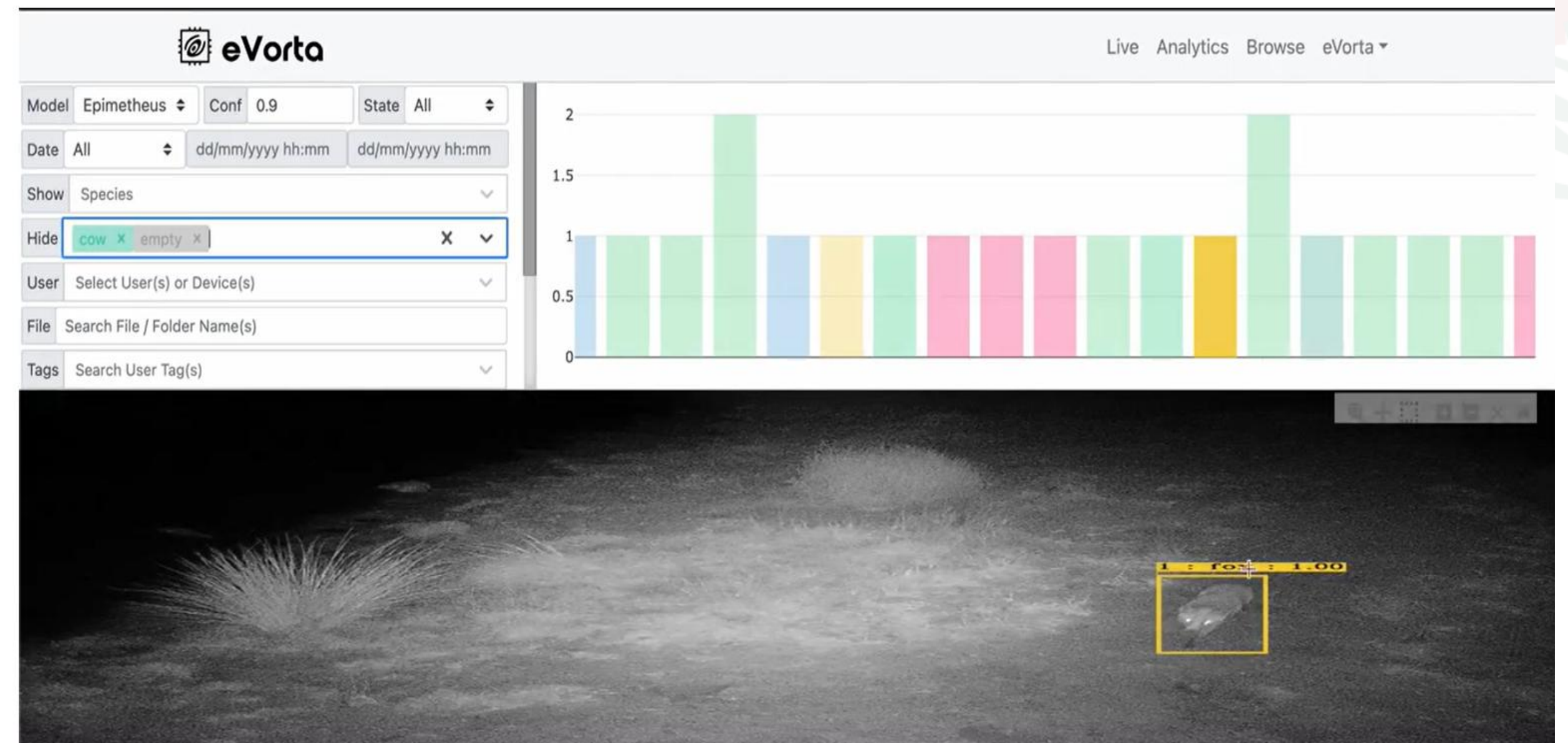
“Many more deer near the house than assumed”

“That deer exist in this area”



Benefits of the project

- Confirmed the presence of large numbers of fallow deer.
- Impacts could be seen – grazing on paddocks, access via fences. (Exclusion plots also established)
- Delivered insights to deer behaviour, helped with control efforts by landholders and their shooters
- Reviewed and discussed the data as a group (not in isolation)
- Strong project leadership



Acknowledging deer are a problem, and will only get worse!

- telling the story via  YouTube^{AU}



Feral deer impact to regeneration



Impact of feral deer to the environment - Cape Liptrap



Deer control challenges



Acknowledging that something must be done !



Source: Victorian Deer Control Community Network – Ground Shooting to control feral deer video.
<https://vdccn.org.au/need-help/lethal-control/>

- The **BINGO** moment
- **Culmination of evidence**
- Technology provides this evidence and stimulates people into action!
- Now set people on the right path for control



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5. Acknowledging the correct way to control deer

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Acknowledging the correct way to control deer

Lethal
(shooting)

In Victoria : Property owners, property managers, permanent employees or other agents of the landowner are permitted to shoot all deer, except Hog Deer, that are causing damage to buildings, crops, other vegetation or animals on their property.

Effective lethal control involves:

- Collaboration and coordination of shooting across properties
- Detecting deer at night
 - thermal imaging



Non-lethal
(exclusion)



Thermal imaging in deer control



Thermal monocular
< \$1000 to over \$4000



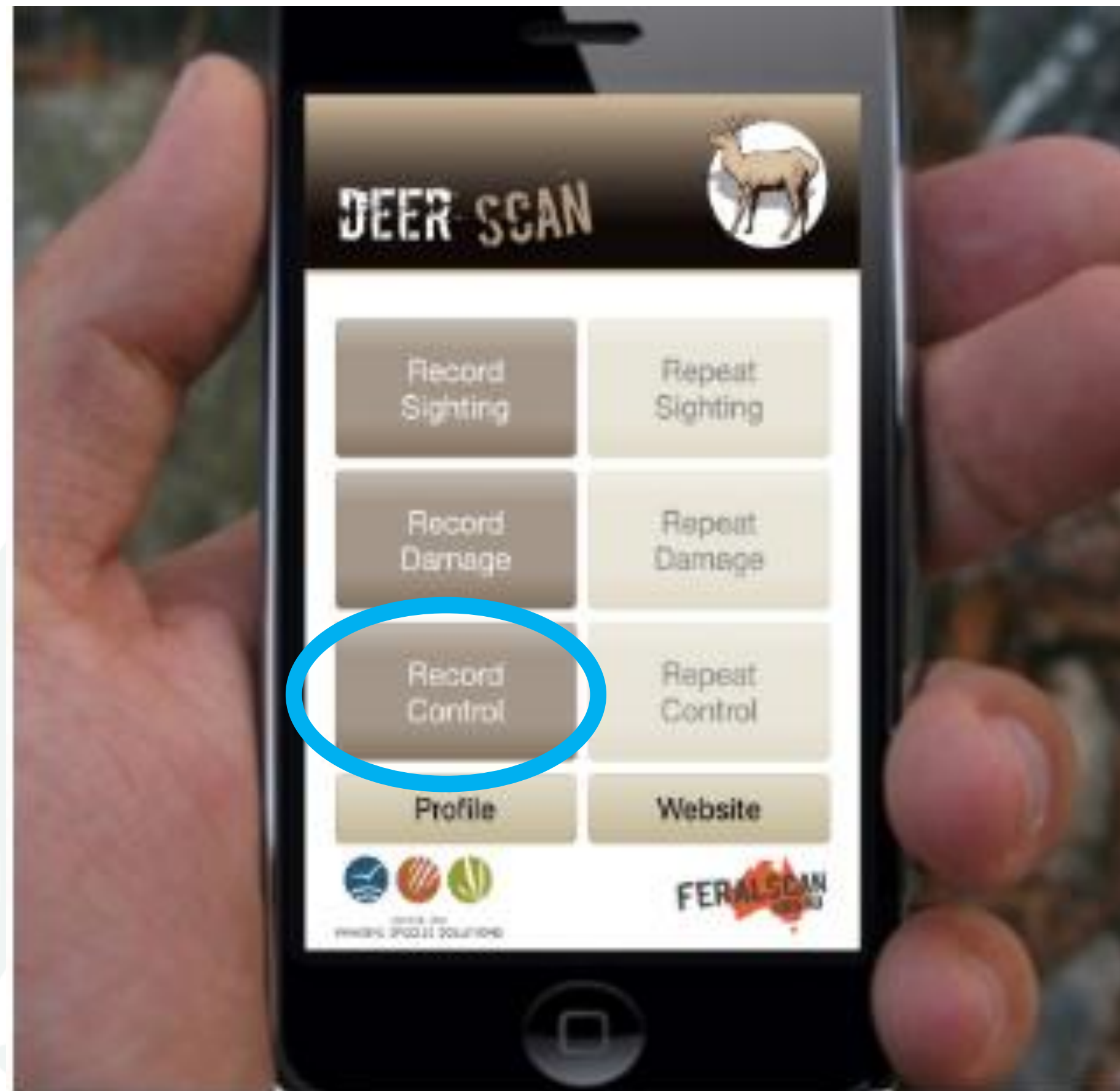
Thermal scope
\$1500 - \$5000



Thermal drone
\$8000 - \$14000



Monitoring results of lethal control



4:32 95%

Deer Control Submit

Please note, control data you add here cannot be viewed by the general public.

1. Date observed 20/08/2025

2. Your location

Latitude -38.47385667

Longitude 145.94383667

3. Site Number

4. What deer species was controlled at this site?

☐ Fallow Deer

☐ Rusa Deer

☐ Sambar Deer

☐ Red Deer (including Wapiti/hybrids)

☐ Chital Deer

☐ Hog Deer

☐ Unknown

5. Control techniques used?

☐ Ground shooting

☐ Aerial shooting

4:33 95%

Deer Control Submit

☐ Livestock guardian animals

☐ Repellents

☐ Noise disturbance

☐ Other, please specify:

6. Notes

7. Email address

8. Upload a photograph

No photo chosen

Submit



Take Away



- Need to tell a story to move through the logic sequence & trigger action
- Deer scan and camera trapping has been a tremendous help in providing data, and using the data as a basis for conversation. Download & Use it NOW!
- Communication tools such as YouTube and Whatsapp fast track learning and understanding, and help coordinate efforts
- Thermal imaging makes control efforts more efficient.
- Still need strong community leaders to get results





Thank you

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