

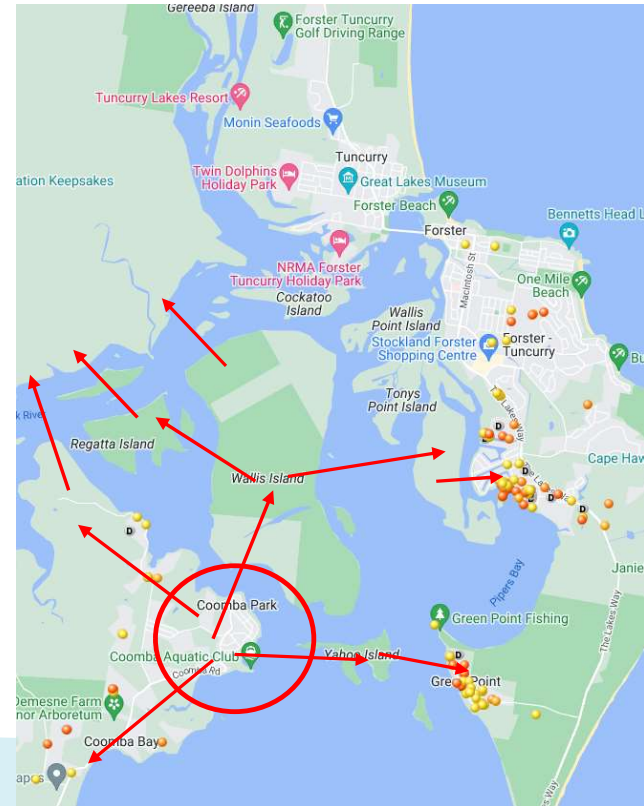
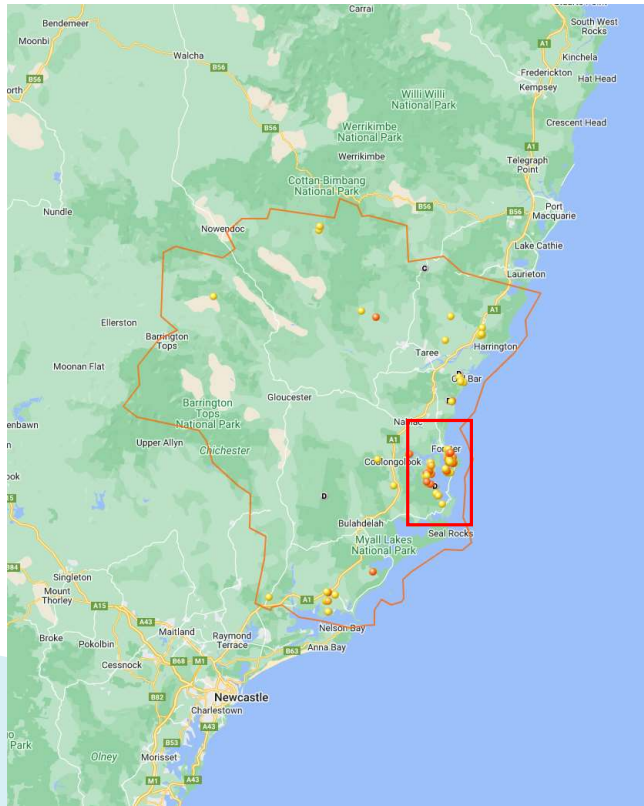


# **WALLIS LAKE FERAL DEER PROGRAM**

Tim Heffernan, Deer Officer



# THE CURRENT SITUATION



## THE CURRENT SITUATION

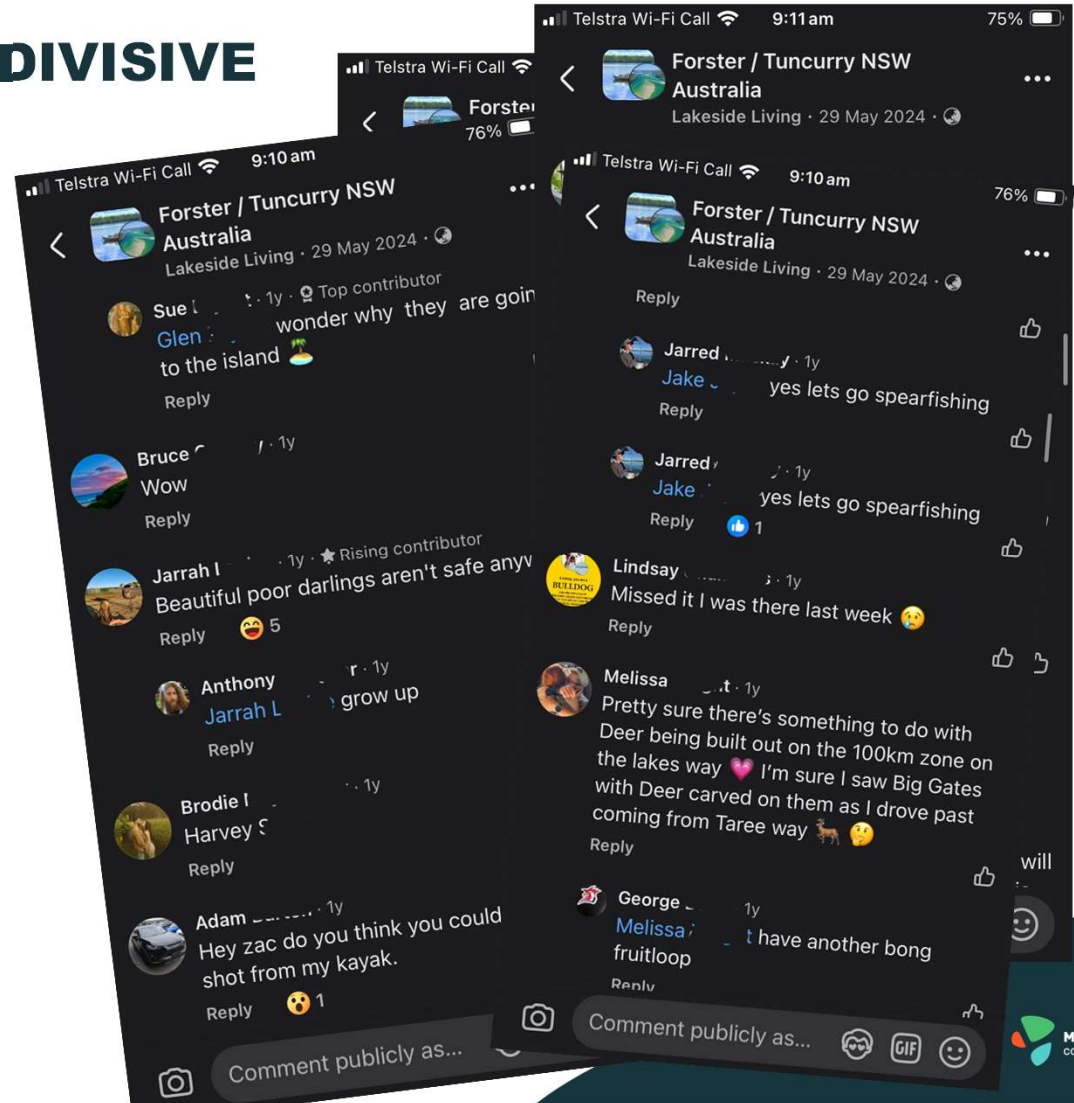


Yahoo Island – Devoid of vegetation under approx. 1.8m

Photo: Ryan Sims – Key Botany



# HIGHLY VISIBLE, HIGHLY DIVISIVE



● REC 0:29



M

4.5x



19:56



● REC 0:38



M

4.5x



13:32



● REC 0:17



M

4.5x



19:24



# CHALLENGES



- Urban environment
- Lakes & Islands
- Roads
- Lack of large landholdings requiring public-private partnerships
- Sporadic contractor availability and no in-house capabilities
- Multiple government agency landholdings requiring permits/licenses etc.
- Lack of reliable population data due to migration between landholdings

## RESOURCES

- NSW Local Land Service (LLS) funding
  - Dedicated Deer Project Officer
  - Education & engagement
  - Monitoring
  - Control operations
  - Feeding & trapping
  - Carcass removal equipment
- Interagency collaboration between MCC, NPWS, and LLS



## COMMUNITY EDUCATION



**Feral deer are an introduced species to Australia which cause significant damage to the environment, farming, biosecurity and community safety.**

Did you know that Yahoo Island on Wallis Lake has been browsed to 1.8m (the maximum height a feral deer can reach) and long-term feral deer presence is impeding natural regeneration processes?

Feral deer alter plant communities and the habitat of native wildlife by grazing and impacting the soil structure. Impacts are particularly significant in sensitive habitats such as coastal saltmarsh, littoral rainforest and riparian habitats.



**Find out more about feral deer and their impacts at**

**[feraldeerplan.org.au](http://feraldeerplan.org.au)**



put all Australians in the best possible position to adopt low- and zero-emissions technologies

Wednesday that fuel efficiency standards will be applied to new cars for the first time as part

most technologically advanced products to the Australian market," he said.

By Mike Foley - 21.04.2023 [www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au)

## MidCoast Council calls on residents to report feral deer

MidCoast residents are being urged to report feral deer sightings using the FeralScan app, as expanding populations cause community and environmental concerns.

Gerard Tuckerman, MidCoast Council's Manager – Natural Systems, said feral deer pose serious threats to the economy, our community and to the natural environment.

'From a population of escaped farmed deer at Coomba Park, feral deer have swum across Wallis Lake to many of the lakes' islands and have encroached into urban areas including Green Point and Forster', said Mr Tuckerman.

Feral deer have damaged formerly healthy littoral rainforest and wetland habitats on the Wallis Lake islands. 'Native vegetation on Yahoo Island has been grazed to 1.8 metres high', added Mr Tuckerman. 'That's the maximum height these deer can reach'.

Feral deer grazing alters the habitat available for native wildlife, promotes the invasion of weeds and causes impacts on water quality through soil damage and droppings.

When feral deer establish populations in urban areas there are additional risks posed

to the community. These include risks to road and personal safety and damage to personal property including gardens and fences.

Deer are not native to Australia and they have few predators. This means their population is growing largely unchecked. It is estimated that feral deer distribution in NSW has increased by 35% since 2016.

There are four species of feral deer on the MidCoast, namely Rusa, Sambar, Fallow and Red Deer. The largest of these species can grow up to 350 kilograms in weight and eat as much as four sheep. Feral deer compete with native and agricultural animals for feed and can carry harmful exotic diseases.

MidCoast Council is monitoring reports from residents via the FeralScan web-based and mobile phone app. FeralScan allows residents to report sightings of feral deer. They can provide details such as the type of deer and the damage they are causing. This information will help inform deer control efforts in the MidCoast region.

Mr Tuckerman said residents should never approach feral deer. They should also never

feed or encourage deer in their neighbourhood. 'These are wild, feral animals and are extremely unpredictable'.

MidCoast Council has partnered with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Hunter Local Land Services to manage feral deer. It will be conducting monitoring and coordinating targeted controls to reduce the negative impacts of feral deer.

If left unchecked, feral deer numbers in the Wallis Lake area will continue to increase. Expanding populations will increase the severity of community, agricultural and environmental damage that they cause. Control programs are therefore urgently required.





## CONTROL APPROACH

- Ground shooting
  - urban (public land)
  - peri-urban private land (FeralScan to ID properties)
  - night operations (8pm – 4am)
  - multi-person team (shooter + 2x spotters)
  - suppressed firearms
  - immediate carcass removal in public areas
- Boat-access to remote islands
- Corral trapping



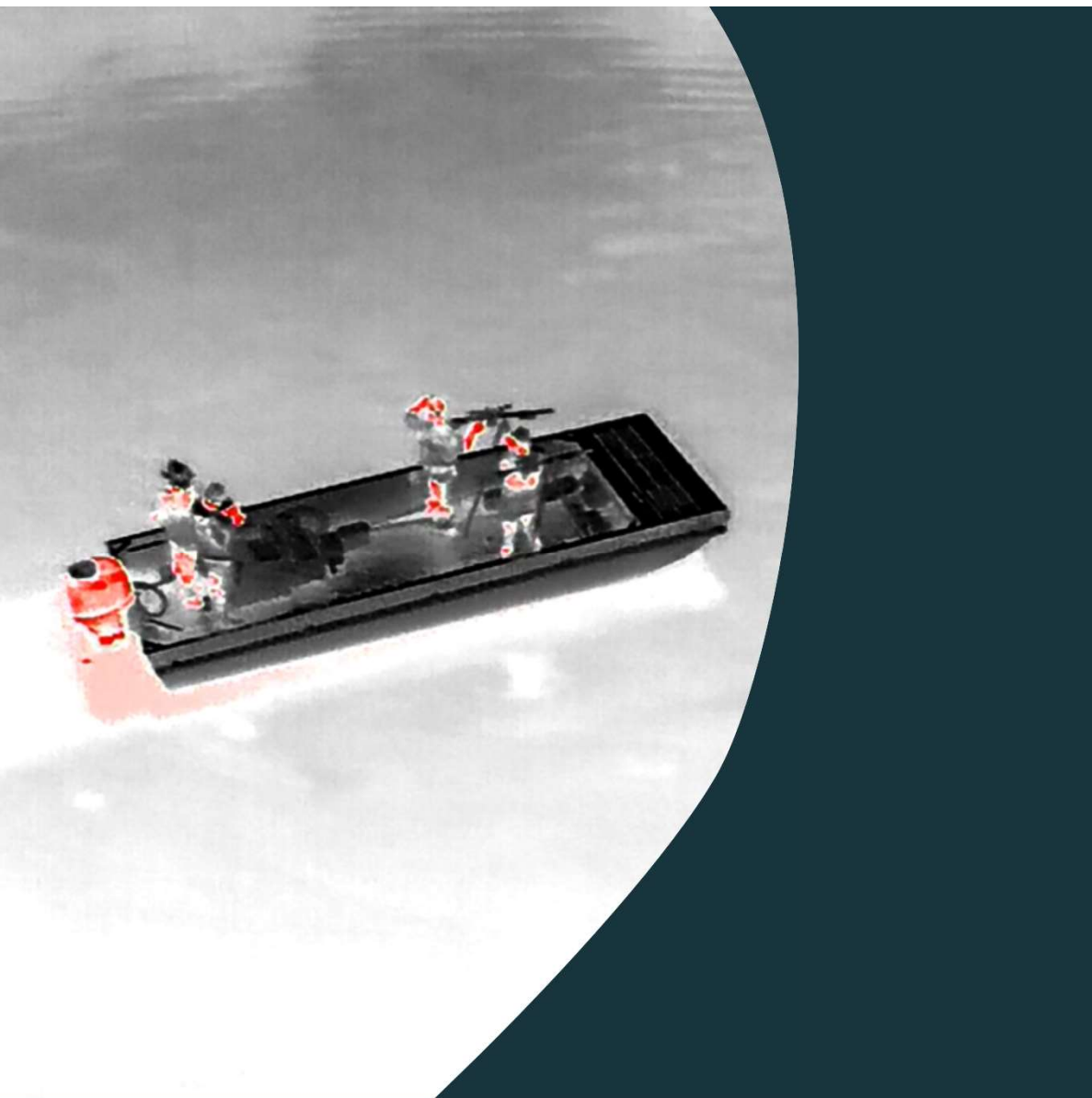
## CORRAL TRAP

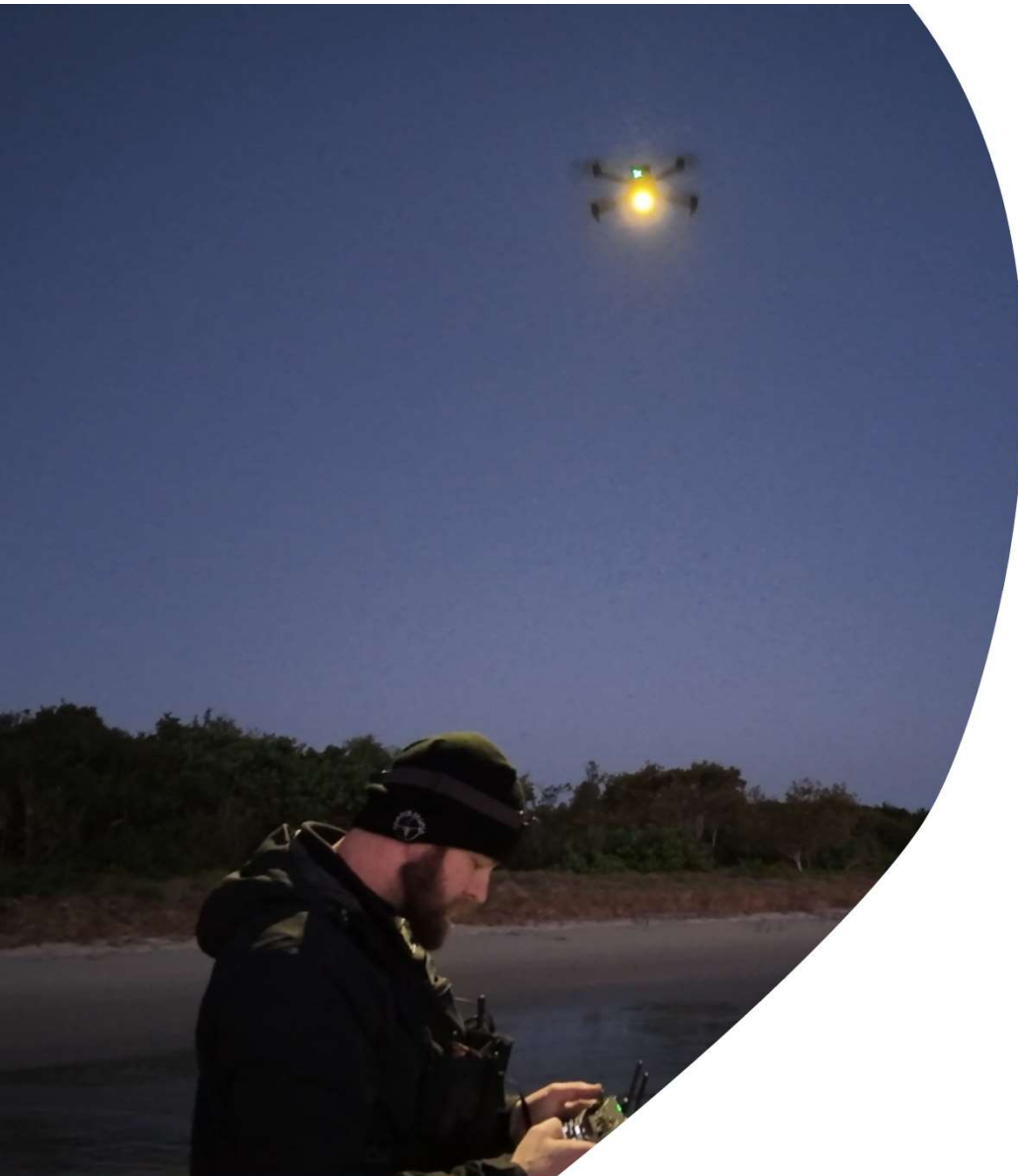
- 2-person assembly
- Staged construction
- FeralTech / MINE gate
- Find active deer areas
- Feed selection
- Trial and error



## BOAT OPERATIONS

- Council-owned punt
- Access remote islands
- Carcass removal
- Drone launch/retrieve
- Night operations





## **THERMAL DRONE**

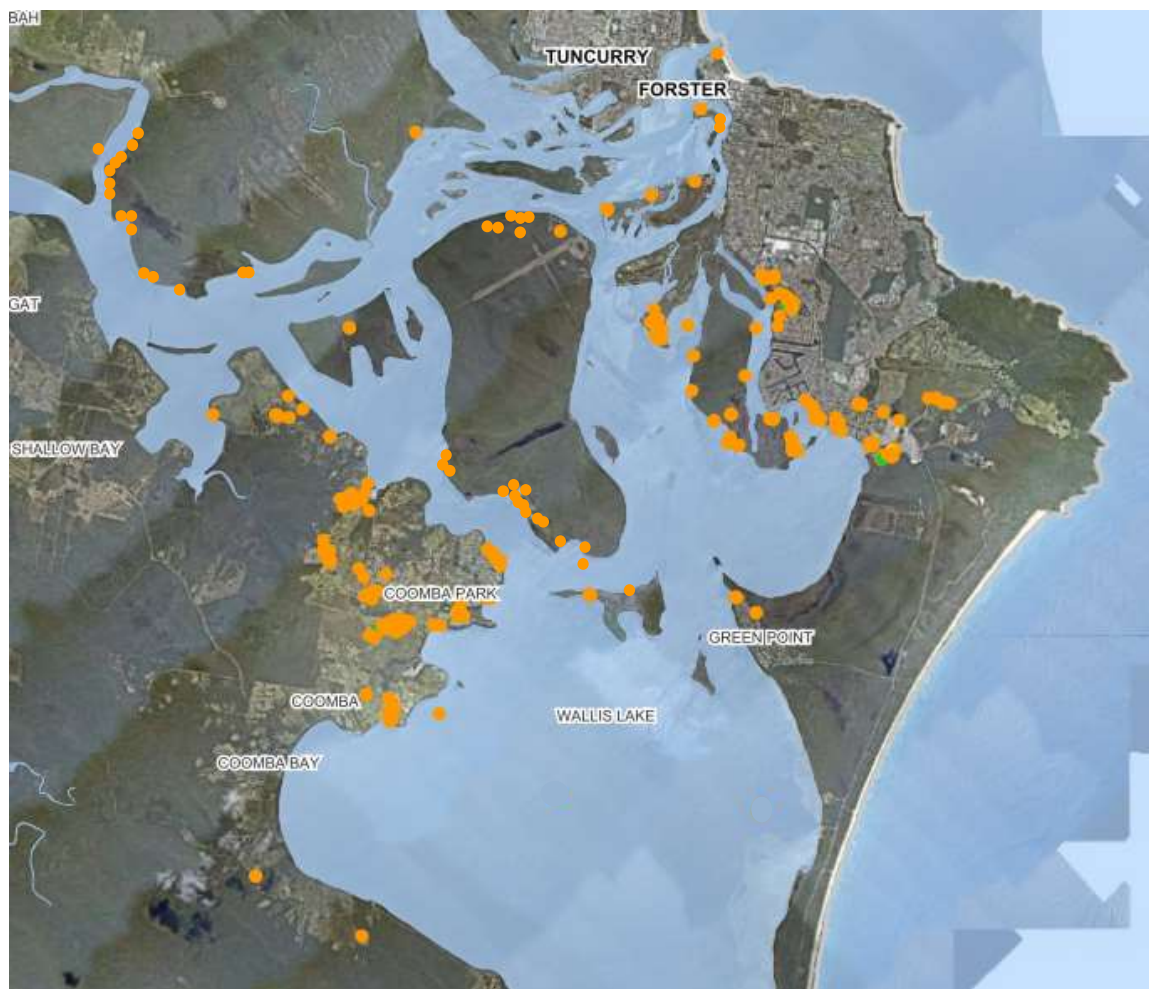
- Safety
- Locate targets
- Establish approach point
- Talk shooter onto an animal
- Locate carcasses
- Fast and efficient



[www.invasivafaunamanagement.com.au](http://www.invasivafaunamanagement.com.au)



[www.invasivefaunamanagement.com.au](http://www.invasivefaunamanagement.com.au)



## RESULTS

- 491 rusa removed
- 98 from urban public land
- ~50% from private land
- Zero incidents
- Minimal public complaints
- ~3000Ha treated
- 35 landholdings



## WHAT WORKED?

- Successful urban controls with limited resources
- Multiple sites per operation
- Social license
- Public/private partnership
- Use of technology
- Political will



## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- Funding opportunities
- Post-knockdown landholder education (with LLS)
- Advocacy for stronger biosecurity enforcement
- Sharing our wins and learnings