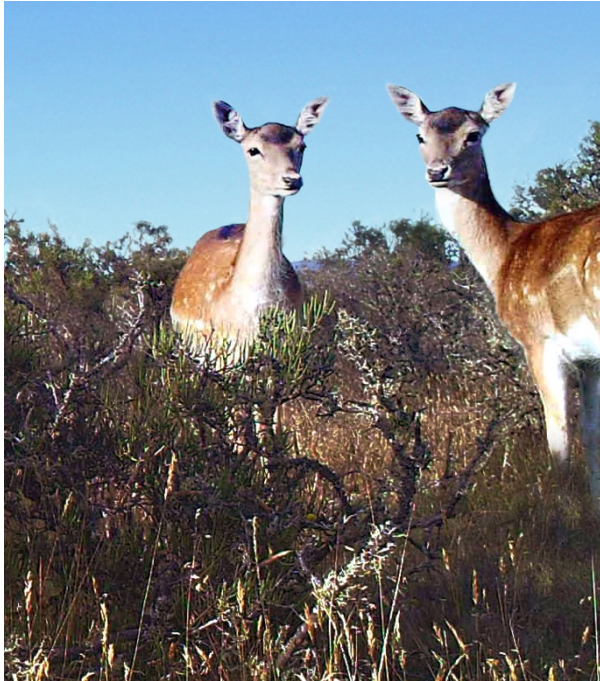




TWWHA Deer Control Project



Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area - Deer Control Project Update 2025

The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) has undertaken three eradication and control efforts for wild fallow deer in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park (WoJNP) and adjacent bordering areas of the Central Plateau Conservation Area (CPCA). This summary report provides a third update for the project.

Background

PWS applied for and was successful in acquiring a \$400,000 Australian Heritage Grant from the Australian Government to survey for and eradicate wild fallow deer from the WoJNP and surrounding reserves using thermal technology. The project is known as the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) Deer Control Project.

The project goal was to trial thermal technology and aerial control in the eradication of wild fallow deer within the WoJNP and reduce numbers of wild fallow deer within the CPCA to alleviate migration pressures into the WoJNP. The project has been undertaken over the last three years with all preparation and planning completed in April 2023. Operational deployments occurred in May 2023, May 2024 and May 2025. May has been selected as the best month for undertaking the operation due to the following factors:

- May is the end of the rut with deer still in groups and/or trying to fatten prior to winter.
- the recreational fishing season closes last Sunday in April (most waters).
- recreational use is reduced after Easter.
- autumn weather is generally more stable for aerial operations.
- the weather is cool, particularly at altitude which assists in thermal detection of deer.
- there is a need to undertake the deployment prior to the onset of wetter winter weather; and
- the Wedgetail Eagle breeding starts in June.

Thermal Assisted Aerial Culling

This project was predominantly an aerial shooting program from a helicopter using thermal assisted technology (cameras). This method is currently being used in several mainland jurisdictions with great success. Thermal Assisted Aerial Culling (TAAC) differs from conventional aerial shooting methods in that operations are guided by a high-quality thermal imager and a manual operator. Once a deer has been detected the location of the deer is pinpointed with a daylight visible laser for both the pilot and the shooter to confirm. Shooting only occurs in times of low solar warming (such as first light / last light), usually 4 to 5 hours per day

although it can operate all day on heavily clouded days. The benefits of TAAC are:

- animals are identified and targeted more easily including from a distance.
- animals can be tracked through cover reducing the risk of injured animals escaping.
- scattered herds can easily be reacquired.
- non target species can easily be identified; and
- all relevant data is captured allowing for review of animal welfare outcomes.



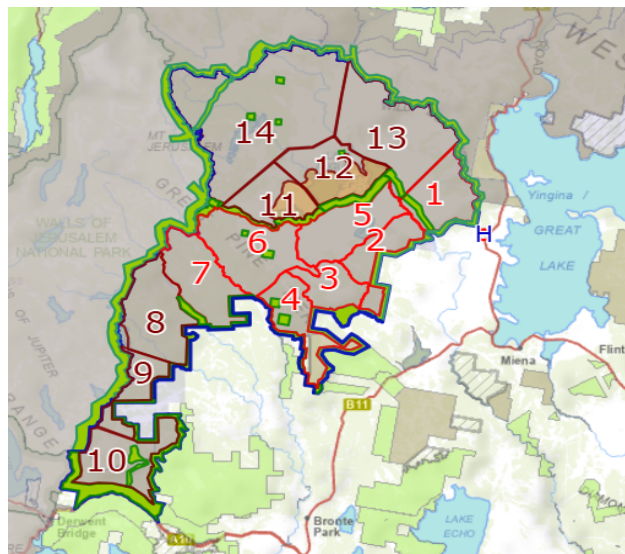
DAYLIGHT LASER VISIBILITY (ABOVE)
AND THERMAL (BELOW)



Project Area

This year the project concentrated on reducing deer numbers in the Central Plateau Conservation Area to further reduce the resident population and slow migration into the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. The project area was divided into daily task units to ensure that the project area could be thoroughly and systematically examined for deer. The helicopter flew each unit in a search grid pattern scanning for deer. Each daily task unit

provided a discreet area that considered reserve and private boundaries, infrastructure, buffer zones, special features and no shoot areas. No shooting zones were established 1000 metres from shack communities, 500 metres from agricultural and forestry boundaries and 250 metres from reserve huts, shacks, roads, tracks and other infrastructure within park boundaries. Live mapping in the aircraft ensured that buffer areas and no shoot zones were visible and were adhered to at all times.



SHOOTING AREA AND NO SHOOTING ZONES
(GREEN AREAS)

Personnel and Aircraft

Seven NRE Tas officers were rostered over the deployment period to ensure a shared workload in a challenging (doors off) operating environment.

Operations were conducted out of a Eurocopter AS350 (Squirrel) B3 helicopter.



PROJECT AIRCRAFT

Shooting was limited to short periods after first light and before last light and on days with heavy cloud cover. Shooters and the thermal camera operators sat on the edge of the aircraft in temperatures as low as minus eight scanning below for signs of deer body heat as they scanned the project area.

Animal Welfare

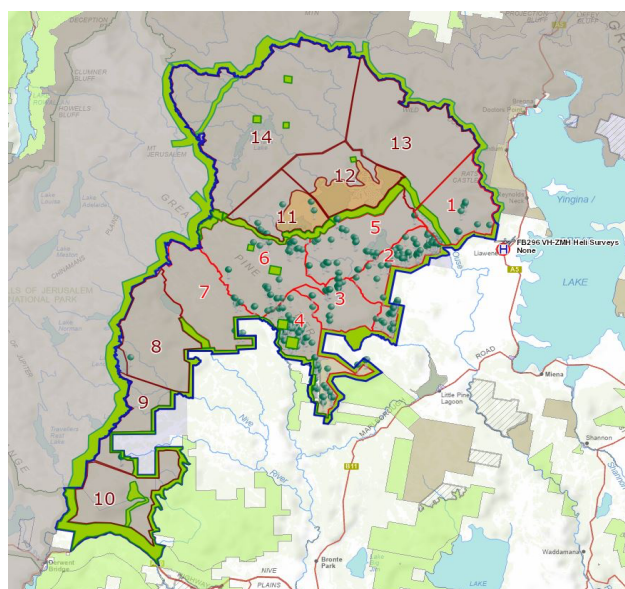
A primary objective is to uphold the highest of animal welfare standards when undertaking any culling operations. NRE Tas Deer Culling Operational Procedures have been designed to ensure all culling activities are consistent with National Guidelines and place animal welfare as the highest priority. During the operational phase of the aerial shooting, the project was overseen by an independent veterinarian.

Over the three operational years of the project, the independent veterinary officer has undertaken 51 necropsies. These necropsies were used to investigate whether animal welfare obligations had been met as well as general information on wild deer health and reproduction. The independent veterinary officer found that there was “.... ample evidence that rapidly fatal gunshot wounds had been delivered in all carcasses examined.”

2025 Operational Deployment Facts

- From the period April 28 to May 23, 323 deer were humanely destroyed within the project area.
- The 323 deer consisted of 114 stags, 198 antlerless deer and 11 immature deer.
- The aerial control program was supported by a volunteer ground shooting program. 16 volunteer shooters operated between April 28 and May 8 and removed 10 deer.
- The volunteer program involved members from Australian Deer Association and Sporting Shooters Association of Australia. The volunteers operated in units 2 to 5 over the first two weeks with the aerial program commencing at the conclusion of the ground program. In this way the ground program supported the aerial program to achieve its goals in a safe and methodical way.
- A total of 27 flights were conducted.

- The aircraft operated for 65 hours.
- The aircraft traversed 136,800 hectares, travelling 4,217km in a search grid pattern.
- Only a half day of aircraft time was lost to bad weather, however several ground shooting trips were shortened due to snowy conditions.
- A total of 1,691 rounds were fired during the operational phase.
- Each deer was compulsorily shot at least 3 times in rapid succession as required by standard operating procedures.
- There were zero wounded animal escapes.
- The entire project period was monitored to assess animal welfare outcomes by an independently contracted veterinary officer.
- The veterinary officer was satisfied that all animal welfare outcomes were achieved.
- Over the three years of the program, 1,340 deer have been removed over a total of 54 days.
- Most of the deer shot were located within the high-density zone of the CPCA, thus reducing migration pressures in the WoJNP.
- Pre and post aerial cull monitoring has been completed suggesting deer have been eradicated from the Walls of Jerusalem National Park and deer numbers have been greatly reduced from the adjoining Central Plateau Conservation Area.



DEER LOCATIONS

The Project – Where to from here?

Sentinel cameras have now been placed within deer movement corridors inside the project area. These cameras are designed detect the movement of deer before they reach the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. This monitoring will inform planning and operations for deer control programs for future years.



INSTALLING SENTINEL CAMERAS IN THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM NP

PWS continued to use lead-free ammunition this year. An assessment undertaken by the independent veterinary officer indicated the lead-free ammunition continued to be accurate and had the appropriate animal welfare outcomes. Lead free ammunition will be used where it is possible to do so to reduce impacts on the environment and non-target species such as eagles, quolls and devils.

Further assessments by the independent veterinary officer also indicated that 35% of the necropsied deer had been feeding on the Miena Cider Gum. Most of the necropsied deer had liver

fluke parasite and 1 deer had pinkeye (weeping, cloudy eyes). These parasites and diseases are transferable to domestic stock and are of concern to nearby agricultural enterprises.

The PWS has been successful in obtaining further Commonwealth funding through an Australian Heritage Grant to undertake monitoring of the broader distribution, and adaptive management of deer in the TWWHA. The grant will also support activity to determine what impacts deer are having on the Miena Cider Gum population within the project area. Information from this programme will help inform future control operations in the TWWHA.

PWS would like to thank the neighbouring landholders and community for their support of the project over the last three years and to acknowledge the contribution of the Australian Deer Association and Sporting Shooters Association of Australia volunteers.

For further information on the TWWHA Deer Control project please go to [TWWHA - Deer Control Project | Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania.](#)

