

CDMC Quarterly Report – Spring 2023

Hi All,

Apologies that the quarterly reports have not been quite so ... quarterly. This does not mean nothing has been happening. Far from it, CDMC has been very busy, and the “deer landscape” locally and nation-wide is changing markedly and rapidly. And not too soon either!

Vegetation – faecal scat survey:

With the help of 42 volunteer citizen scientists and the scientific input from Deakin University, we have finalised the vegetation survey we started two years ago. Covid and wet and cold weather combined to delay this, but did not dampen the spirits of the citizen scientist surveyors who took part. CDMC are so grateful for their help, and we now have a report which sets out the vegetation damage deer cause and gives us a base study against which we can assess the efficacy of our strategies to improve our environment through humane deer reduction. As this is a longitudinal study, repeats of the survey will be required to allow comparisons to be made. Initial results show quite clearly that deer are doing far more damage to the indigenous vegetation than the native macropods and wombats. It also shows which plant species are most heavily impacted and where. For more on this and to view the scientific report, click [here](#) or visit the CDMC website.

Periurban Deer Control grant

We were successful in our application for a \$34,000 grant from DEECA (formerly DELWP). In full! This is an amazing result and reflects the high regard CDMC have among DEECA decision makers. This grant has enabled the purchase of some highly technical thermal imaging equipment to enable and enhance the works of our controllers in reducing deer numbers, while importantly and simultaneously increasing the safety of shooting.

The grant will also improve our outreach capability with the employment of Geoff Lockwood as a part-time facilitator. Geoff has had extensive experience in community deer control and has a long history of working in and knowledge of our area and its environment. Among other things, the funding will be used to conduct further local neighbourhood meetings to encourage landowners to work together on deer control and also an open community meeting to be held around October/November.

Click [here](#) for further information.

New equipment for our controllers

As mentioned above, the Periurban Deer Control grant, along with a generous \$5000 donation from the Upper Beaconsfield Conservation Group have enabled the CDMC to purchase some new thermal imaging devices for the use of our controllers. Principal among these are two new \$4000 rifle mounted thermal imaging scopes. These are capable of “seeing” in the dark, enabling the controllers to both find more deer and to target them without scaring them off, a problem when using spotlights. It also improves the controllers’ overall vision, by revealing in greater detail animals further in the distance. According to our controllers, these scopes, especially when used alongside the handheld monocular scopes are a game changer, at least doubling their efficiency.

We are also now in possession of more thermal imaging cameras (AKA camera traps) to help improve our understanding of the location and movement of deer in the landscape. If any landowner wishes to have one or more of these installed on their property to assess whether or when deer incursions are occurring, please contact CDMC at info@cardiniadeer.org.au

Neighbourhood meetings

CDMC have conducted two neighbourhood meetings recently, in Harkaway and Narre Warren East. The purpose of these meetings is to hear local community input regarding the impact of deer on

local landowners, to answer their questions regarding possible solutions and to present the various options available. The idea is to encourage and enable local landowners to take action on deer and also to work together in developing a more synergistic approach to deer control. The Harkaway meeting, held in May, has been a tremendous success, with multiple landowners involved and in excess of 30 deer culled on participating properties since the meeting. It is too early to assess the results of the Narre Warren East meeting regarding culling, but the participants were very appreciative of the chance to express their personal experience and of the information they have received.

Due to the success of these meetings, and with the help of Geoff Lockwood, more local community meetings are planned on the next few months.

National Deer Strategy

Appointed to the new position of National Feral Deer Coordinator at the end of 2020, Dr Annelise Wiebkin and her small team have since been very busy in their efforts to raise awareness and stimulate action in the effort to halt the spread of deer across the continent. They have been active at all levels, from Federal and State government, down to local councils and even supporting local groups such as the CDMC. Annelise has made an impressive start. She has given herself a daunting agenda and is absolutely kicking goals. She has just released the National Feral Deer Action Plan in recognition of the significance of the threat posed by feral deer nationally and with the aim of developing a more consistent and structured approach to tackling the deer invasion. This is a terrific document offering tailored and practical steps which governments, both state and federal, and local councils can take to improve and ramp up deer control. Hopefully our own state government will heed some of the advice and finally join all the other mainland states in declaring deer a pest. For interesting reading (yes, really!), the plan can be found here at <https://feraldeerplan.org.au/the-plan/>

Cardinia Council – Land Management Officer

Late in 2022, Cardinia Council created the new position of Land Management Officer. This position has been created in part to enhance council's efforts to control pest species, both animal and plant. This position has now been filled by Daniel Jujic, and part of his role will concern addressing the issue of feral deer in Cardinia Shire. We have already developed a good working relationship with Daniel, including involvement with community education, helping the evolving council strategy regarding deer control and in running one of the neighbourhood meetings mentioned previously. We are very pleased Cardinia Shire has created this position and are confident Daniel will bring a lot of his skill and impetus in driving council and landowner action in deer control.

That is the positive side – on the negative side, we have lost the services of Marianne Sawyer who retired late last year. Marianne was the Cardinia Council biodiversity officer and has been with us since the inception of the CDMC, early as a founding committee member. We are so grateful to her for her advice, support and friendship and wish her well in her retirement.

CDMC presentations

In recognition of our work as early innovators, and the experience we have amassed as a community volunteer deer control group we have been invited to give presentations on several occasions around the state. These include meetings with Western Port Catchment Landcare Network, Peninsula Landcare, Meeniyah Deer Forum and Mansfield Community Deer Forum and a presentation at the Bunyip Agricultural Show. These meetings and forums are a great benefit to the CDMC, as we get to hear what other groups are doing and hear more experiences from landowners. This all helps us in strategy development, learning new approaches to deer control and equally important, learning where and why some approaches fail to achieve their goals.

CCCDPP & CCLSDMP

Need I say more? I'm sure you're all up to speed on these, but, if not ...

These daunting acronyms stand for Cardinia Creek Catchment Deer Partnership Project (Cardinia Council) and Cardinia Creek Large-Scale Deer Management Plan (Melbourne Water). These two projects reflect the importance of this waterway, the Cardinia Creek, and its subsidiaries, regarding the damage being caused by deer on local biodiversity and water quality. CDMC are partners in both these projects, the former relating roughly to the creek between Guys Hill and Brennan Reserve and the latter from Brennans Reserve up to the Cardinia Reservoir. Once again, the desire is to develop a more coordinated and synergistic approach to deer control, including multi- & cross-tenure control. Cardinia Council are in the early stages of landholder education and liaising with stakeholders, Melbourne Water have completed data collection and analysis and are developing strategy. A lot will depend on funding as well, and we are waiting anxiously to see what sort of resources will be allocated to the task, especially by Melbourne Water.

For more information on these projects see [here](#) and [here](#).

In general ...

From various discussions and reports from other groups, it is obvious that there is a significant ramping up of deer control in the state. This can be seen in actions by state government, government agencies, local councils and local groups such as the CDMC. We are pleased to see this and hope the talk is matched by appropriate funding. And, I will never stop saying this till it happens, we hope the Victorian state government will finally change the status of deer from "protected" to "feral", where it truly belongs.

Notices:

AGM

The CDMC Annual General Meeting is due to be held in November. More details on this will be announced shortly. While we are proud of what the CDMC has achieved in its short history, we can not continue at this level without new people on board. We are always looking for new ideas, strategies, strengths and broader representation. Our committee currently lacks a treasurer and secretary. This is partly why the quarterly reports are not quite quarterly. We need more input from our supporters, thinkers and innovators. Please think about this and how you might be able to help us. The job we do is, after all, pretty important, would you agree?

Membership

Membership fees for 2024 will be due in October, before the AGM. Reminders will be sent out soon. We sincerely appreciate the support of all our current and previous members. This support helps in so many ways: it pays for our insurance, helps pay for printing costs, website costs, meeting room hire etc. Importantly, it lends us credibility to be able to say to potential donors that "we have 40 members and strong community support". Please consider becoming a member of the CDMC. For those current members, again, thank you, and we would love to have you on board again.

Donations

Last year, Victorian Landcare, of which we are a member, established a Deductible Gift Status for the organisation. The CDMC have applied and can now tap in to this. This means your donation to the CDMC via the Landcare website is tax deductible.

Gifts and donations to the CDMC will enable us to support our dedicated and hard-working controllers (they put in a lot of long hours, and have significant ongoing costs) and landowners in their efforts to save our environment.

To make a donation, please visit www.landcarevictoria.org.au/donate and type in *Cardinia Deer Management Coalition* where it asks if you would like to support a particular group.

Thanks

CDMC