

GPS Tracking Sika in Kaweka Forest Park

One month in the life of a Hind

The information is gained from one of tracking collars used in the pilot study. It contains the track log from a mature hind that was tracked in the Manson area of the Kaweka Forest Park from 10th November 2010 to 13th December 2010.

The GPS logger attached to the deer collar was set to log a position every 30 minutes for 1 month, at which time the collar was set to automatically fall off (thanks to some very smart technology from Sirtrack). The collar was then recovered using VHF tracking gear and the data was able to be downloaded onto a mapping program to give us the track log of that hind for that period. The map shows each of the positions logged at 30 minute intervals and the track log of the hind's route. Further analysis can be done on the data to show the exact date and time of each position, it is from this analysis that the information become of great interest to the recreational hunter.

The study will involve comprehensive analysis of 30 GPS tracking collars which are applied to 20 Sika hinds and 10 Sika stags throughout the Kaweka Forest Park. Collars will remain on the deer for up to 18 months. However a few key observations can be reported on this particular hind's movements for this pilot study that occurred late last year. Note that this information is only taken from one of the hinds in this study and is not necessarily representative of all Sika hinds in the Kaweka Forest Park. It is also only information collected from 10th November 2010 to 13th December 2010 so doesn't show a complete annual cycle, for that information we will have to wait.

Capture

- Deer were captured using a net gun fired from a helicopter, collars were attached within 5 minutes and the deer were released at the same place they were captured.
- The hind travelled only 60 metres for the first 12 hours once being fitted with the collar, however once she moved out of the area that she was captured she never returned to that area.

Daily Cycle

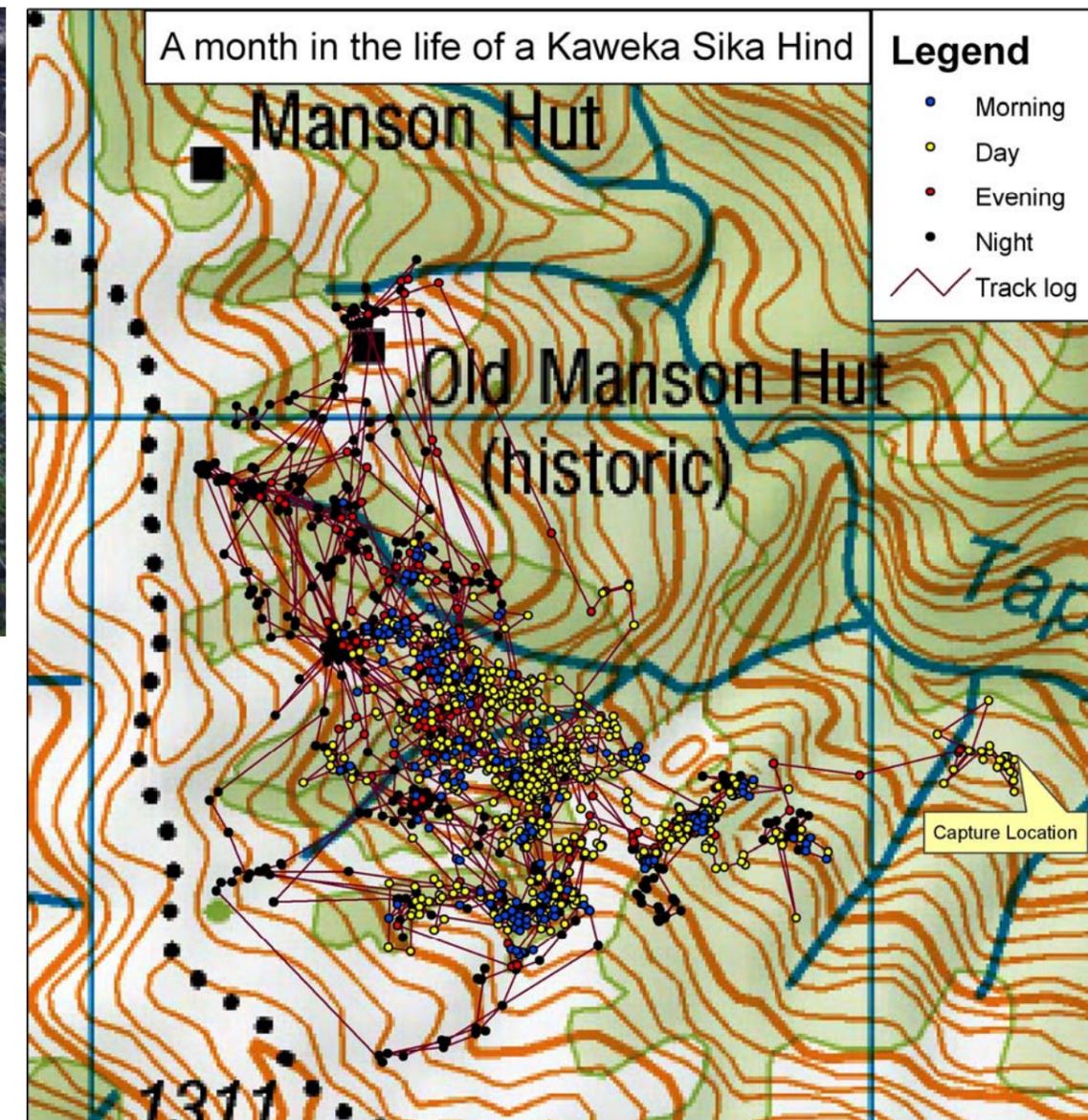
- The map shows the positions as different colours depending on the time of day, morning = blue, day = yellow, evening = red, night = black
- Generally activity started around 6pm when the hind made her way up out of the Kanuka and into the beech forest, then she started working her way into open areas around sunset, consistent feeding activity through the night but often spells of rest/sleep between 2am and 5am, feeding activity again between 5am and 7 am then back down into dense kanuka or mountain beech forest.
- The data indicated that generally there was very little or no activity during 7am and 6pm, this is presumably the hind's daytime sleep and these positions were nearly always in very dense vegetation.

Feeding patterns

- Areas of high activity were visited for several hours at a time but were very rarely revisited in consecutive nights. This hind tended to feed in a small area (approx 1 hectare) for several hours and then move on. She never returned to that area the same area the following day but did return to the exact same areas every 5-8 days. There may be a number of explanations for this:
 1. She is taking the best pickings of feed then waiting several days for regrowth
 2. This could be a behavioural adaptation designed to avoid leaving too much scent in one area, therefore attracting predators.

Either way, interesting to note, if you see a deer feeding in an area, chances are they won't be back in that exact place the next night but they will return in the next few days.

This hind lived within 60 hectares for the duration of this pilot study (one month).



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