



Wallows

A Trail Camera Study

Trail cameras have given us a much better understanding of the pivotal role that wallows play in the sambar's mating system. This chapter reveals what was discovered during an 18 month study using just one trail cam focused on one wallow. This was a study conducted by myself and Dave Bailey Bsc. of Wodonga. Results from the first month of this study were published in the chapter 'The Mating System', Vol. 2, pp. 82 – 87.

The study location was in north eastern Victoria, between 450m elevation at the river and 1000m on the surrounding hilltops. The trailcam was attached to a tree at 565m. The study commenced when the Cuddeback was first activated on the 12/2/2008 and concluded on 12/8/2009 – a period of 18 months. The commencement date of 12/2/2008 was three years after the 2003 fires burned through this area. The trail cam used was a Cuddeback 3Mpl with daytime colour images and white flash night images. It gave excellent results and trouble free operation during 18 months of continuous operation.

Habitat Conditions

The study area was burned by the 2003 bushfire and in the six years following an annual average of 816mm of rain had fallen in the area and stimulated prolific regrowth. As a result, at the commencement of the study sambar had had the cumulative benefit of three years abundant and nutritious forage which was reflected in the condition of the deer.

Left: Dominant stag # 2, who is easily identified by his impressive antlers, pursues a young hind at a wallow. More than 200 images taken of deer visiting this wallow make it crystal clear that both hinds and stags perform sexual displays at wallows. These images also prove that when a hind is in oestrus she goes to a wallow looking for a stag – and not just any stag – but the dominant one in that area.