

Memo

To:	Josh Leckie, Lane Neave	Job No:	2352.200
From:	Graham Ussher, RMA Ecology	Date:	30 June 2026
cc:	Mia Turner, Lane Neave; Cheryl Crow, Santana Minerals		
Subject:	Bendigo-Ophir Mine Project: information request regarding biodiversity offsetting		

Dear Josh,

Matakanui Gold Limited (MGL) has applied for resource consents under the Fast Track Approval Act (FTAA) to establish, operate, and remediate the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project (BOGP) on Bendigo and Ardour Stations in the Dunstan Mountains of Central Otago.

Conferencing between lizard experts has resulted in a Joint Witness Statement on lizards. Paragraph 19 of the Joint Statement states that:

MD and TA acknowledge there is a degree of uncertainty around identification of McCann's skink and southern grass skink and considers that some further mapping around southern grass skink habitat would be useful. TA and MD also request habitat mapping for Kowarau gecko.

This memorandum provides mapping of southern grass skink habitat and habitat of Kowarau gecko across the Direct Disturbance Footprint (DDF) and the restoration enhancement areas (the sanctuary areas, the Ardour Restoration Area (ARA), and the Mine Regeneration Zone (MRZ), collectively, 'the site').

Southern grass skink habitat is closely associated with the wetter areas of the site. Wet habitat mapping was confined to wetlands and their margins, streams and stream margins, seepages, overland flow paths, valley bottoms, floodplain areas, and other areas that support damp soils for at least parts of the year, and provide lush or thick plant growth as cover for these skinks.

Wet area (southern grass skink habitat) boundaries were assessed from drone footage and some of the thousands of geo-located site photos from the site, and then delineated using Google Earth and ortho-rectified drone footage. Areas lacking photographic evidence or other indicators of suitable habitat were not assessed for grass skink habitat but included only very small areas of the MRZ and the ARA; all parts of the DDF were well covered by photos, drone imagery, and were therefore thoroughly mapped.

Kowarau gecko habitat mapping included the DDF, MRZ, and ARA. Well-worn roads were excluded from the habitat layer where practicable. Less obvious tracks and roads were generally retained, as they were difficult to map accurately from aerial imagery and attempting to do so would have been unreasonably time-consuming.

A summary of the habitat mapped is provided below.

Maps showing habitat mapping for southern grass skink are provided in Appendix A.

Maps are not shown for Kowarau gecko habitat, as the species was found throughout the DDF, MRZ, ARA, and sanctuary sites. Appendix A includes a map showing where Kowarau were found across the site – that is, they were found everywhere that was surveyed, and it is reasonable to assume that areas not surveyed also contained this species.

These results indicate that there is a greater area of habitat for each of the two species within the wider restoration management areas (MRZ, ARA, Ardgour Sanctuary and Bendigo Sanctuary) than there is within the DDF.

The rehabilitation work within the DDF, which aims to restore at least 6 ha of wet habitat, will return less area of wet habitat than is currently within the DDF (47 ha).

Many of the areas mapped as southern grass skink habitat are heavily grazed pasture grasses or small grazed and pugged wetlands and margins that support 'potential' habitat if stock were removed and grasses and rushes were allowed to grow. It is estimated that of the 102.14 ha of habitat, approximately 70 % is not currently viable for southern grass skink, as it does not currently support thick vegetation or refuges.

Therefore, actual viable southern grass skink habitat that exists on the DDF and surrounding areas of landscape that will be managed as part of the overall project is around 30 ha.

Location	Southern grass skink habitat (ha)	Kawarau gecko habitat (ha)
DDF	47.0	585
MRZ	39.0	889
Ardgour Restoration Area	16.0	1,263
Ardgour Sanctuary	0.14	38
Bendigo Sanctuary	nil	29
Total habitat	102.14 ha	2,804.0 ha

Yours sincerely,



Graham Ussher

Principal Ecologist, RMA Ecology Ltd

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Appendix A – Habitat maps

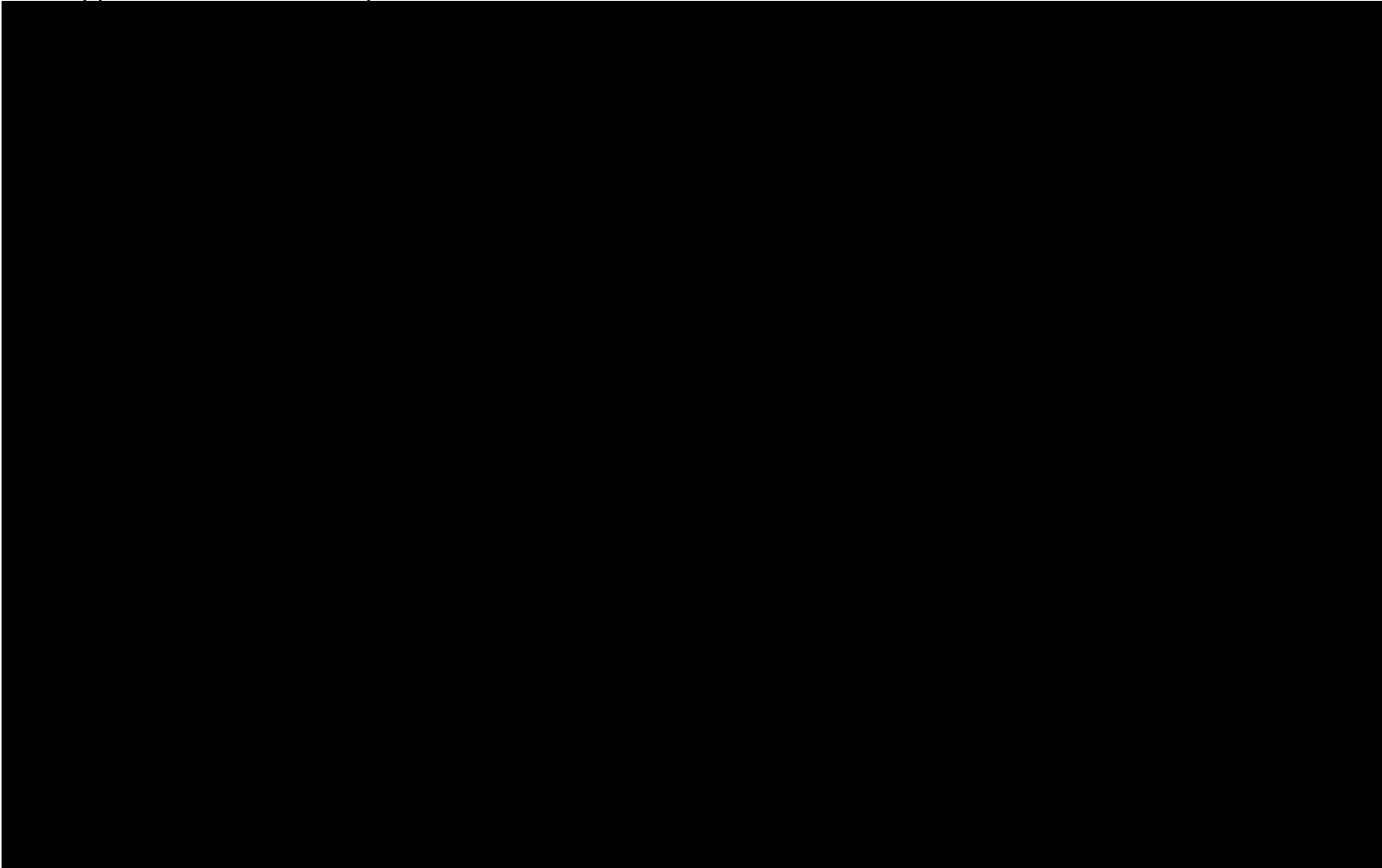


Figure A1. Southern grass skink habitat (pink polygons) within the DDF. The extent of the DDF is shown by the black linework with light white shading.

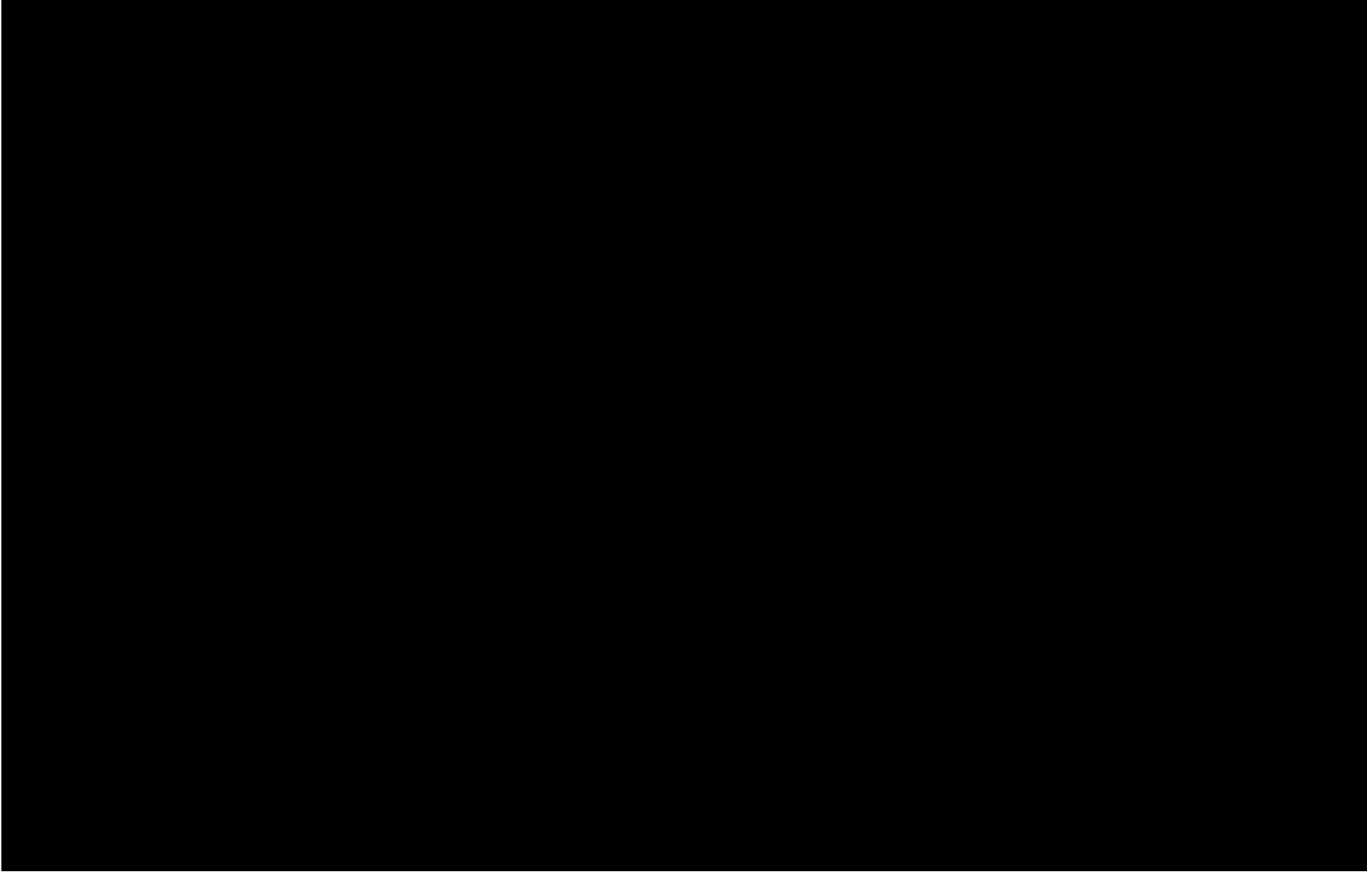


Figure A2. Southern grass skink habitat (dark blue polygons) within the MRZ. The extent of the MRZ is shown by the light blue shading.

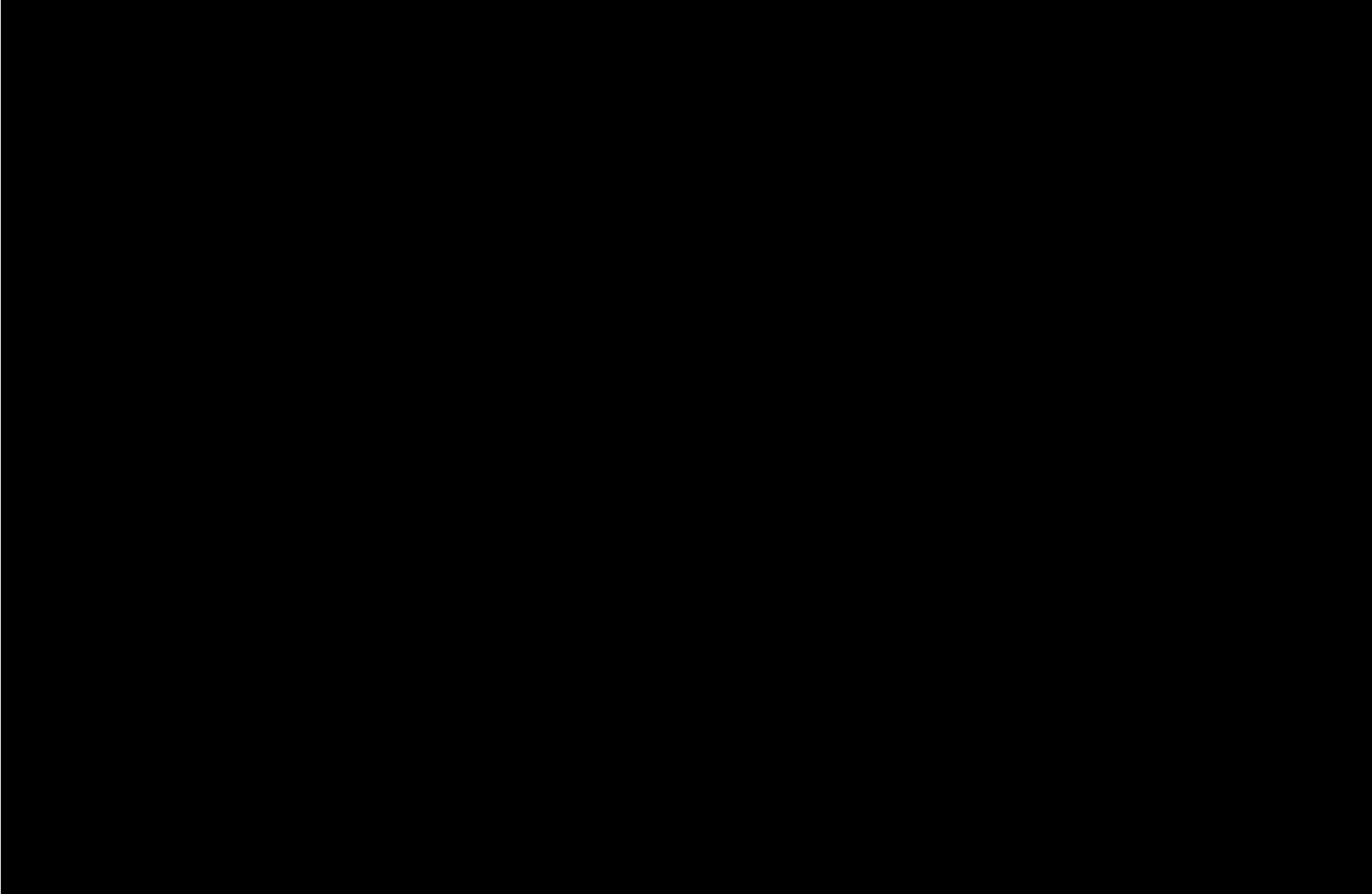


Figure A3. Southern grass skink habitat (yellow polygons) within Ardour Sanctuary.

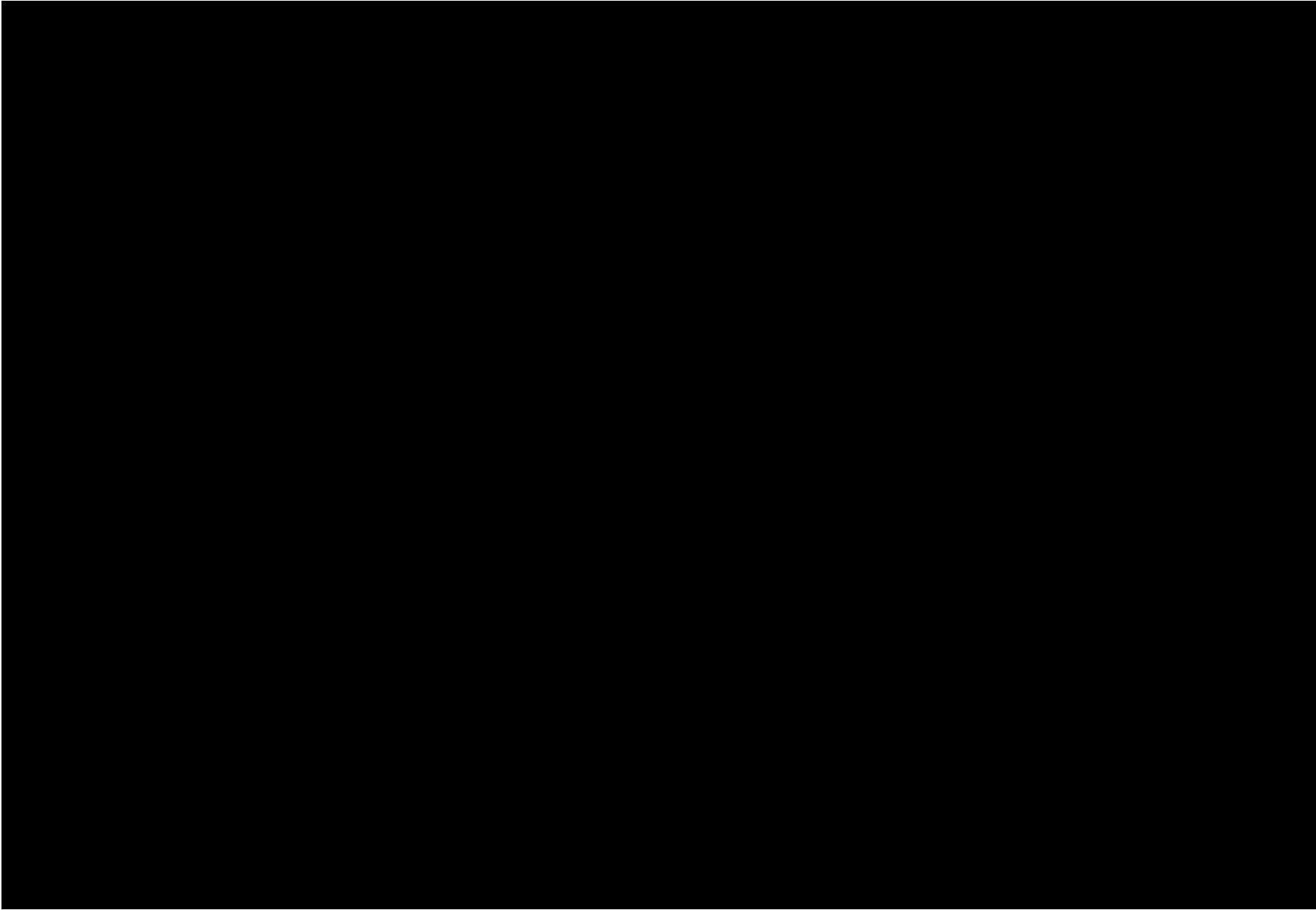


Figure A4. Southern grass skink habitat (pink polygons) within Ardgour Restoration Area. The extent of the Ardgour Restoration Area is shown by the blue shading.

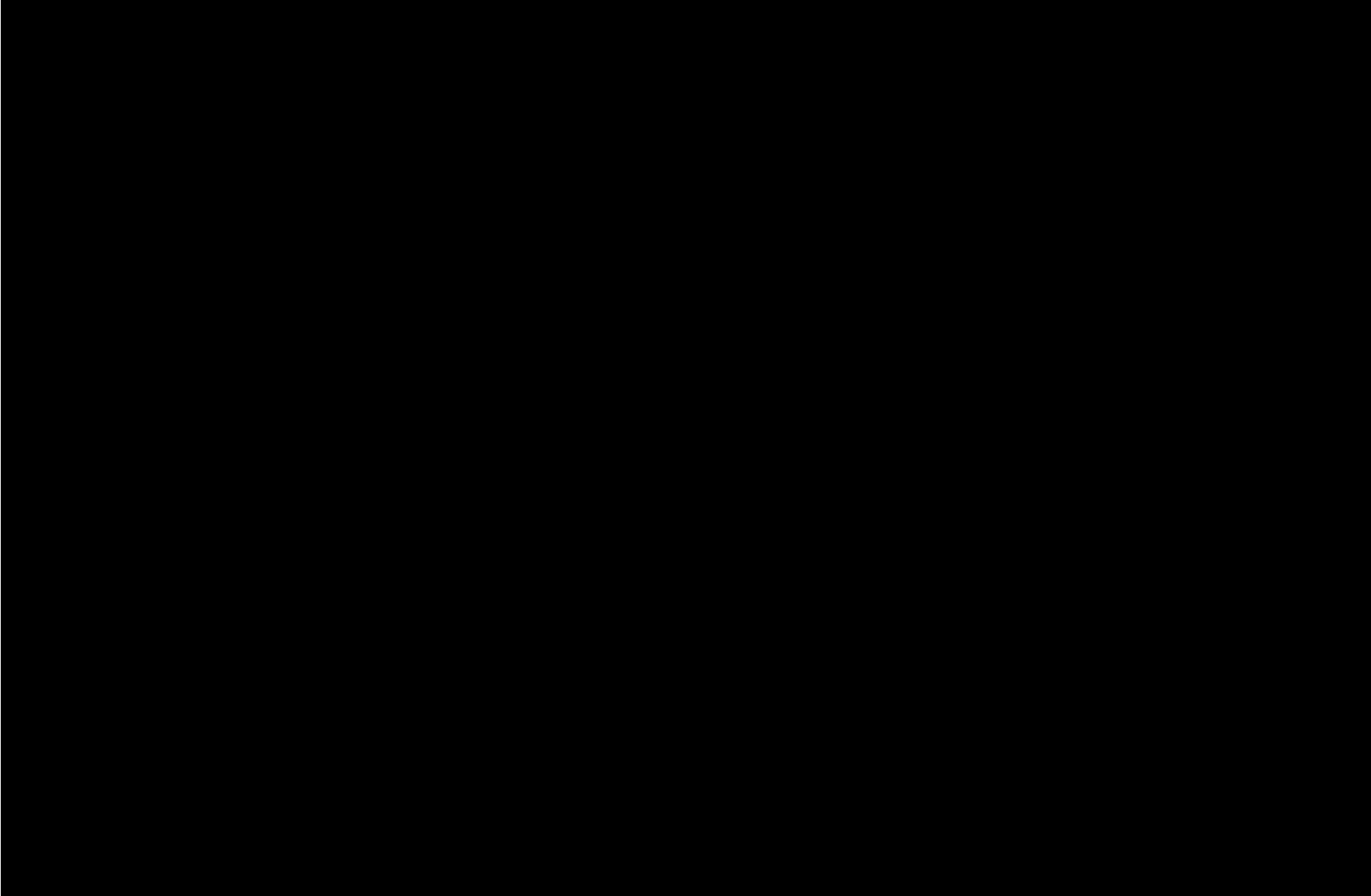


Figure A5. Northern part of the DDF/ surrounding Ecological Survey Area (ESA). Records of Kowarau gecko (yellow triangles) from across the DDF (blue shaded polygon) and surrounding ESA. Most triangles represent multiple sightings of geckos (up to 10-15 in some cases).

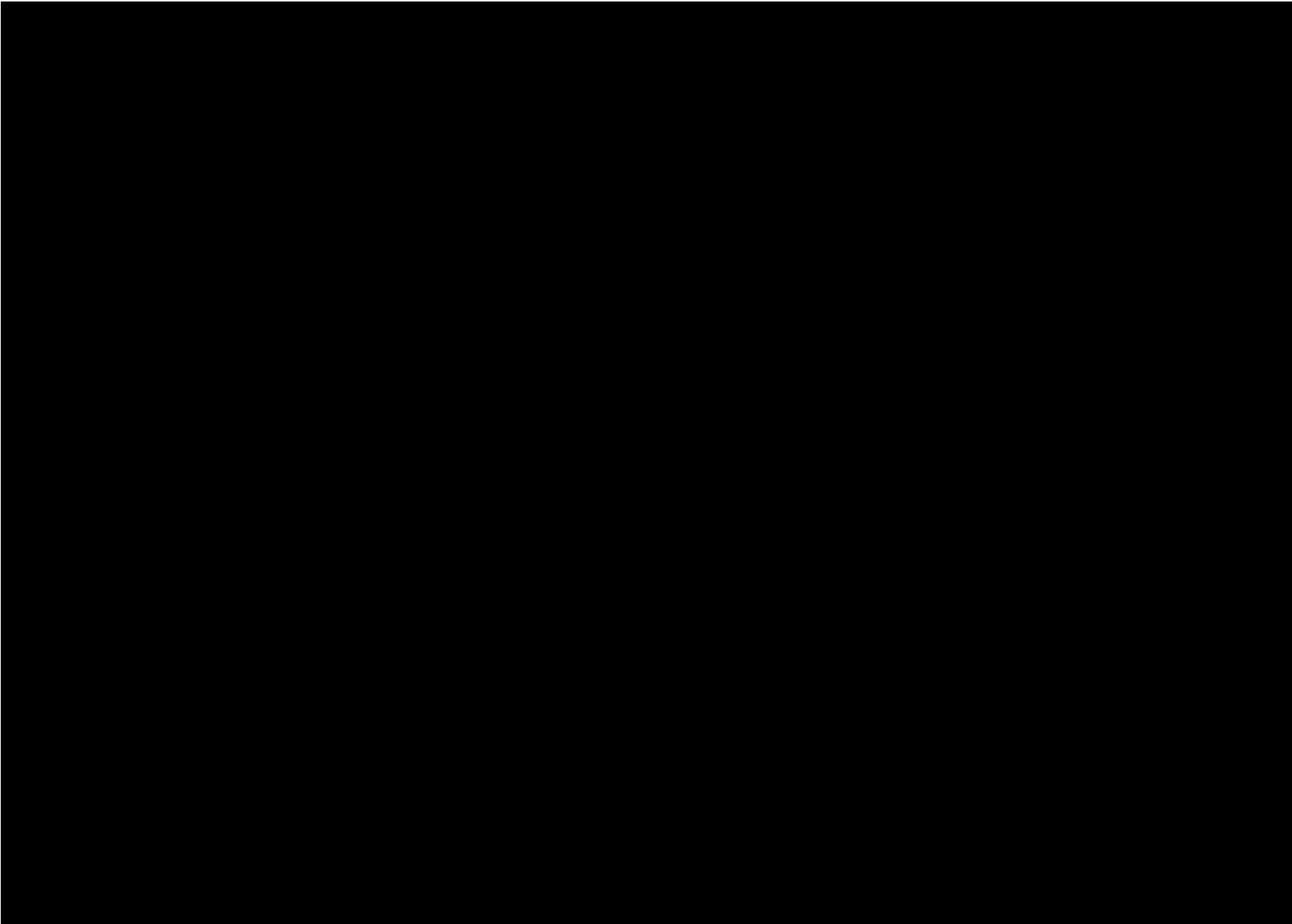


Figure A6. Southern part of the DDF/ surrounding site. Records of Kowarau gecko (yellow triangles) from across the DDF (blue shaded polygon) and surrounding ESA. Most triangles represent multiple sightings of geckos (up to 10-15 in some cases).