

Memo

To:	Cheryl Low, Santana Minerals Limited	Job No:	2352.500
From:	Dr Graham Ussher, RMA Ecology Limited	Date:	28 September 2026
cc:			
Subject:	Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project: FRI 14 reply regarding lizard data		

Matakanui Gold Limited has applied for approvals under the Fast Track Approval Act 2024 to establish, operate, and remediate the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project on Bendigo and Ardour Stations in the Dunstan Mountains of Central Otago.

The Panel that is considering the Application has requested via Request for Further Information # 14 that the Applicant provides information regarding the raw data on lizards caught during the lizard survey.

The relevant paragraph of RFI 14 is include below:

At the direction of the Panel, the EPA is seeking the following information:

1. Please provide the raw data generated during all lizard surveys that have been undertaken to date within the DDF, within the ESA and beyond the ESA. Specifically, what is required is for all records of lizards found during the surveys to be provided with details of the number of each species found at each survey point and the vegetation type at each survey point. Please also supply records of survey locations where no lizards were detected. This data should include all survey methods utilised. Please provide a map to show the location of each survey data point or transect.
2. The information provided should include all raw data used to produce technical report B.15 - RMA Ecology - Lizard Values Assessment (RMA Ecology 2025d) plus any subsequent survey work undertaken after the production of that report.

As RMA Ecology Ltd was the author of the B.15 – Lizard Values Assessment, we hold the raw data from the lizard surveys.

The lizard surveys and information that we hold relates to:

1. The surveys that we undertook across the site and surrounding areas as part of preparing the Lizard Values Assessment report; and
2. Further lizard survey following the publication of the Lizard Values Assessment report of the Rise and Shine Wetland to assess southern grass skinks. This information was included as Appendices A, B and C of the evidence in chief of Dr Graham Ussher dated 17 April 2026. We have included the maps from these appendices as they add to the data obtained for the Lizard Values Assessment Report and provide a concise illustration of the distribution of two of the lizard species found at the site.

In the time available, we have not been able to re-work any of the raw data to provide aggregate illustrative material for the Panel; however, we suspect that even if we attempted this, the resulting illustrations would be cluttered and unable to be easily interpreted.

Instead, we direct the Panel to the summary illustrations in Appendices A, B and C attached to this response letter, which together provide a clear overview of the number and spatial location of the various lizard survey methods, and the locations at which Kawarau gecko and southern grass skink were caught. The notes below add to this material.

1. The raw data is attached (see Appendices to this response). Every lizard record includes the habitat type in which it was caught, however please be aware that if the Panel is wanting (for example) catches of grass skinks relative to streams, wetlands or watercourses, those habitat types are not recorded on our datasheets (only vegetation types were). That information is best seen on the illustrative maps also attached as Appendices to this response.
2. The Panel has also asked where lizards were caught and where they were not. That information can be sourced from the raw data by overlaying lizard captures with where devices and searches were undertaken, on a per-species basis. It may be that the Panel just wants a graphical illustration, in which case i recommend they look at the attached maps in the Appendices accompanying this letter that show Kawarau gecko location and compare that to the adjoining maps that shows a summary of all of the survey devices, locations and search plots.
3. In terms of general patterns of lizard distribution across the site at a coarse level, lizard detection across all devices and survey methods was for:
 - Southern grass skink = around 5 % of locations, and almost all within valley bottoms, in proximity to streams, wetlands, watercourses;
 - McCann's skink – they are absolutely everywhere, apart from road centrelines and recently ploughed agricultural fields; and
 - Kawarau gecko – they almost everywhere, except roads and agricultural fields and their margins.

If the Panel has a specific question or query arising from the attached raw data, we would be pleased to further assist the Panel.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Graham Ussher
Principal Ecologist
RMA Ecology Ltd

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dec2025\working\lizards rfi 14 data\2352.500.bogp.fri14.reply.lizarddata.28sept2026.issued.docx

Appendices A, B and C of the evidence in chief of Dr Graham Ussher dated 17 April 2026.

Attached are electronic files that provide the raw data requested by the Panel, namely:

1. Excel file labelled 'lizard – raw data'; and
2. Excel file labelled 'Lizard – method analysis'.

APPENDIX A

Maps showing the areas searched by timed hand searching, set area basking searches, and where artificial cover objects (ACOs), Gees minnows and pitfall traps were deployed, relative to mapped wetland areas (indicative of wet areas, wet margins, valley bases and streams), and the DDF.

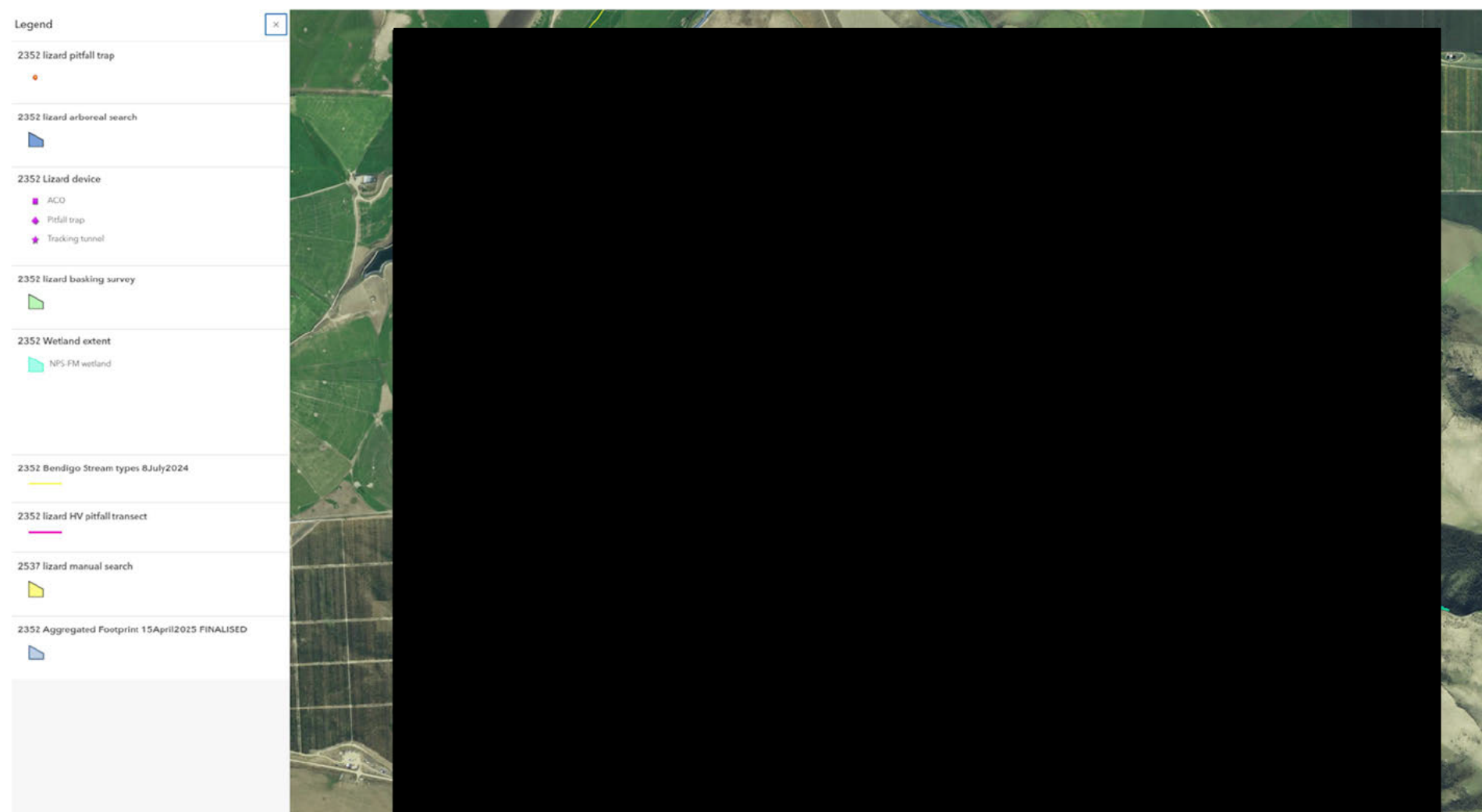


Figure A1. Northern part of the DDF (light blue shading) with the location and extent of lizard survey techniques shown – manual search cover object lifting, pitfall traps, ACOs, basking lizard searches. Wetlands and approximate pathway of watercourses are also shown.

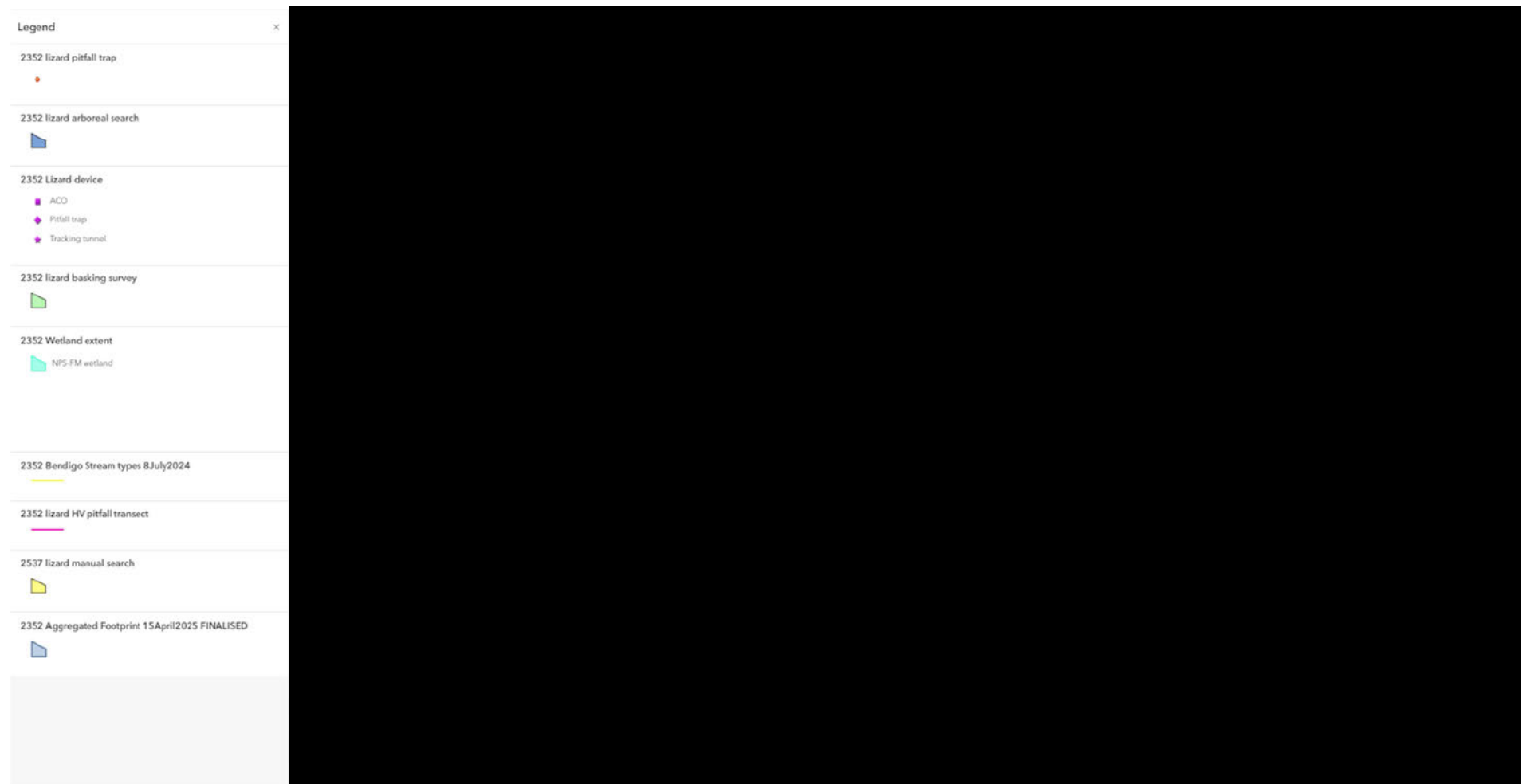


Figure A2. Central part of the DDF (light blue shading) with the location and extent of lizard survey techniques shown – manual search cover object lifting, pitfall traps, ACOs, basking lizard searches. Wetlands and approximate pathway of watercourses are also shown.

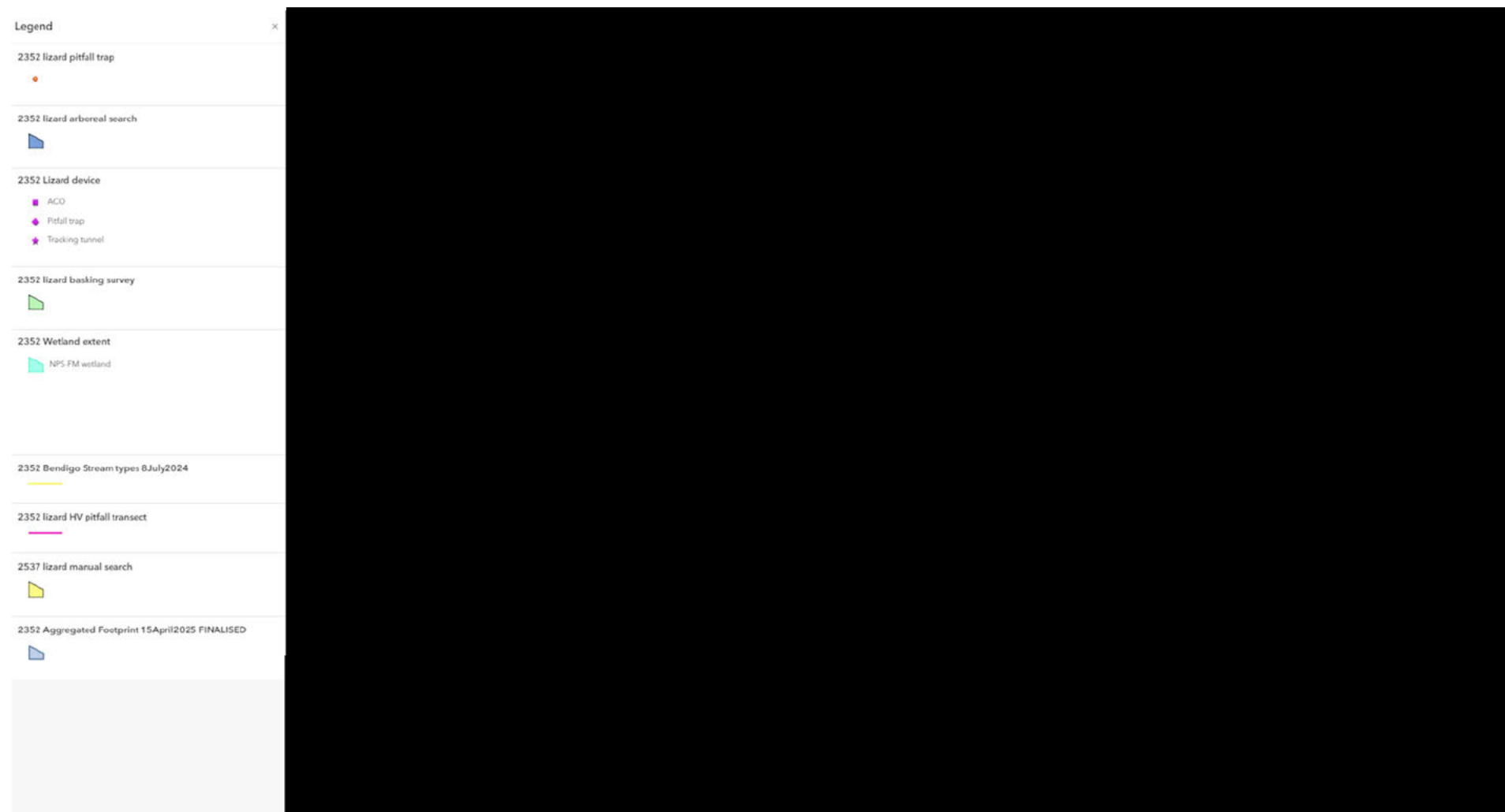


Figure A2. Southern part of the DDF (light blue shading) with the location and extent of lizard survey techniques shown – manual search cover object lifting, pitfall traps, ACOs, basking lizard searches. Wetlands and approximate pathway of watercourses are also shown.

APPENDIX B

Map showing additional lizard survey over the Rise and Shine wetland complex using baited funnel traps, manual search (through boulderfields), and visual basking survey.

The dates of this survey were from 20 – 22 March 2026 and involved setting out of 19 x baited gees minnows traps for 3 nights. Traps were modified for lizard survey including making the entrance larger, adding silicone gel to sharp protruding wires, and adding shade coverings to traps. Bait used was a mix of fruit pieces in jelly and mashed banana.

Total search time for basking and manual search was approx. 12 person hours – all of which was expended on the margins of the Rise and Shine wetland.

Weather conditions were fine clear skies with little or no wind, and with 8 degrees Celsius in the morning warming to 20 degrees mid-afternoon. These conditions were ideal for lizard activity and early morning basking.



Plates B1- 3. Sluicing boulder piles along the Rise and Shine wetland set back from the wetland edge by ca. 5-10m distance, and along side tributaries to the wetland. Manual search and basking lizard visual searches recorded only McCann's skink.



Plates B4-7. Representative photos of the Rise and Shine wetland including interior vegetation and edge communities. 19 gees minnow traps were set in groups (see Figures B1-B2) and operated for 3 days in March 2026. Only southern grass skink were recorded within the dense rush/ grass areas of the wetland.

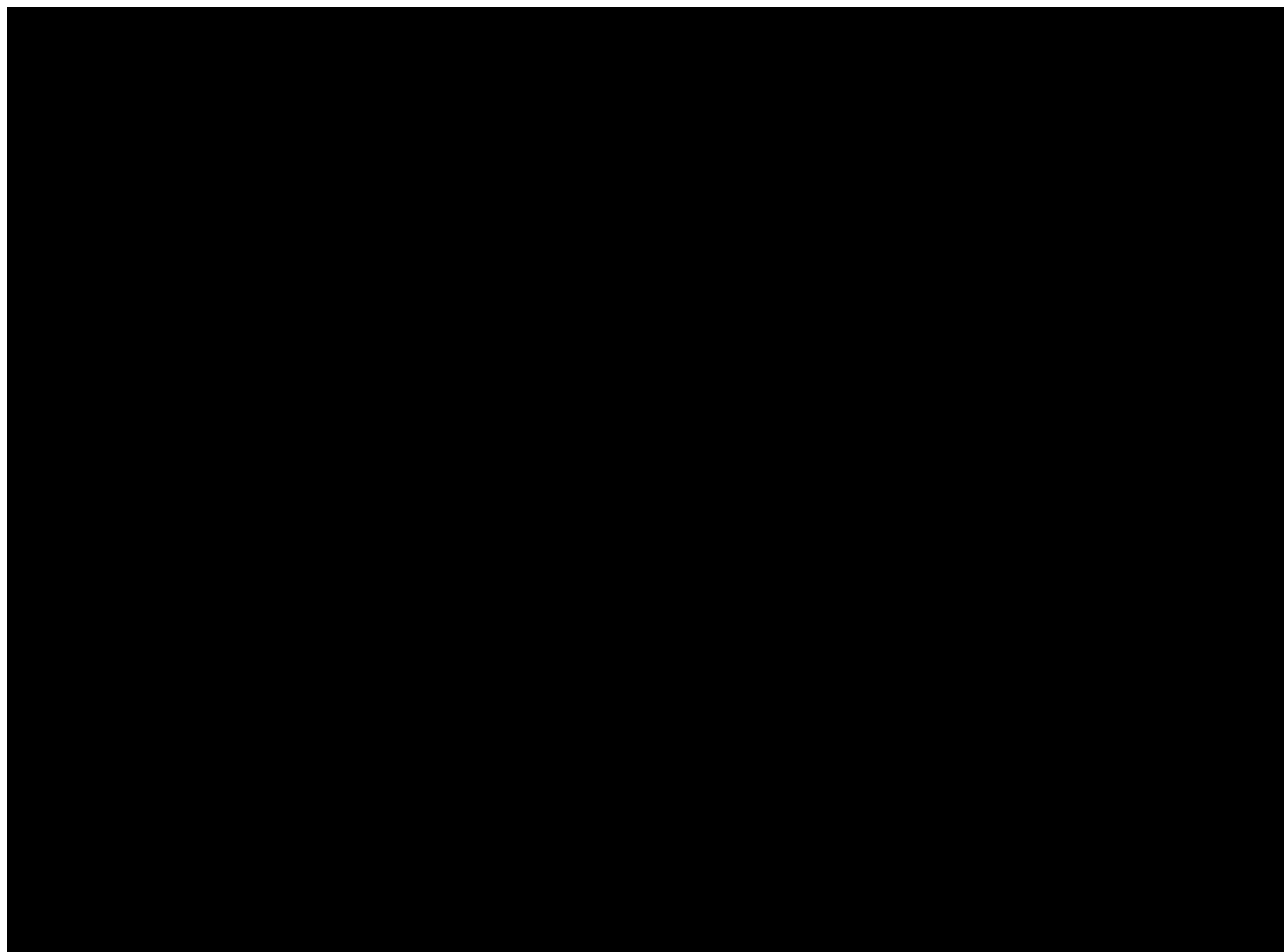


Figure B1. The northern part of the Rise and Shine wetland (green polygon) with the DDF extents also shown (light shaded blue). Location of Gees minnow trap clusters are shown as purple dots. Manual and basking search areas through boulder fields are shown as yellow boxes. Locations of McCann's skinks (as assessed by diagnostic characters in the hand, or by observing basking behaviour and colouration) are shown as yellow dots. Southern grass skink (as judged by capture and diagnostic features) are shown as green dots).

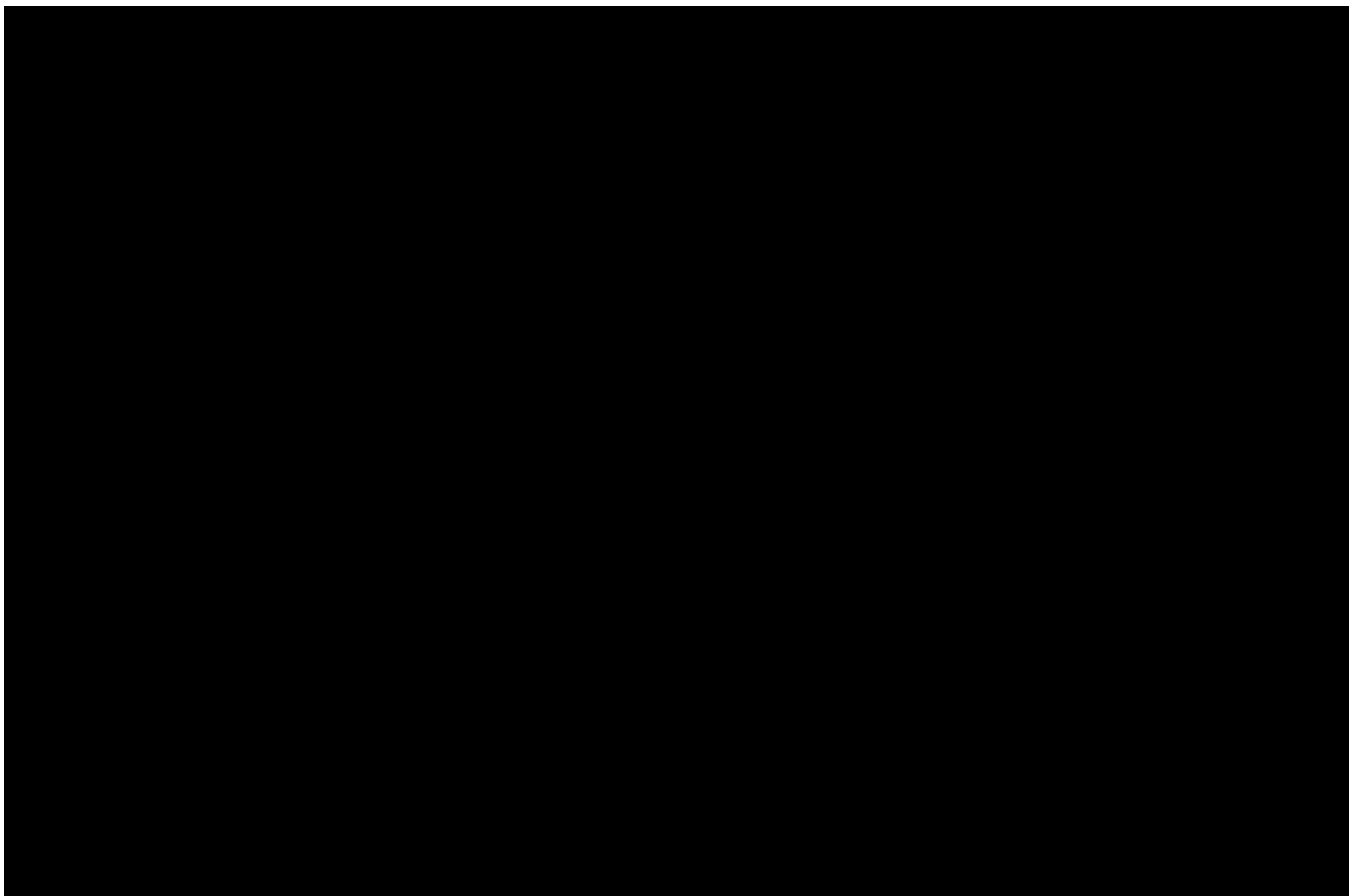


Figure B2. The southern part of the Rise and Shine wetland (green polygon) with the DDF extents also shown (light shaded blue). Location of Gees minnow trap clusters are shown as purple dots. Manual and basking search areas through boulder fields are shown as yellow boxes. Locations of McCann's skinks (as assessed by diagnostic characters in the hand, or by observing basking behaviour and colouration) are shown as yellow dots. Southern grass skink (as judged by capture and diagnostic features) are shown as green dots).

APPENDIX C

Map showing locations of lizards recorded.

The below maps show the locations of southern grass skink and of Kowarau gecko that were recorded from the site from the formal survey methods and from casual searching between sites.

McCann's skink records are not shown, as they were detected absolutely everywhere on the site, apart from in the middle of formed roads, and in within managed agricultural fields.

For all lizard sightings, sightings are clustered in places where observers looked for them. No part of the DDF or surrounding ESA was comprehensively surveyed at a large scale, hence there are gaps between sightings because search effort was not expended in those areas. At most these maps show the general association of lizards with topographical features including gullies, streams, wetlands, and rock outcropping areas.

The maps show:

- Southern grass skinks were recorded from only a small portion of the 550 or so formally sampled sites through manual search, ACOs, pitfall traps, gees minnows traps, and basking lizard surveys. Some were additionally caught during casual walkover and opportunistic searches along gully areas. Most were caught at or near the bottom of valleys or gullies, and most were in close association with wet pasture, wet margins, or gully bases that support dense ground vegetation.
- Kowarau geckos were most frequently caught in association with tors; however, they were also found in any place where was small pieces (slabs down to 0.25 m x 0.25 m) rock strewn on the ground, especially where rock was layered on rock. Geckos were found on ridges, spurs, slopes and gully bases. They were also found alongside roads under sidecast rock from recent road construction, and under rocks used to weigh down rabbit netting, as well as inside collapsed rabbit burrows.

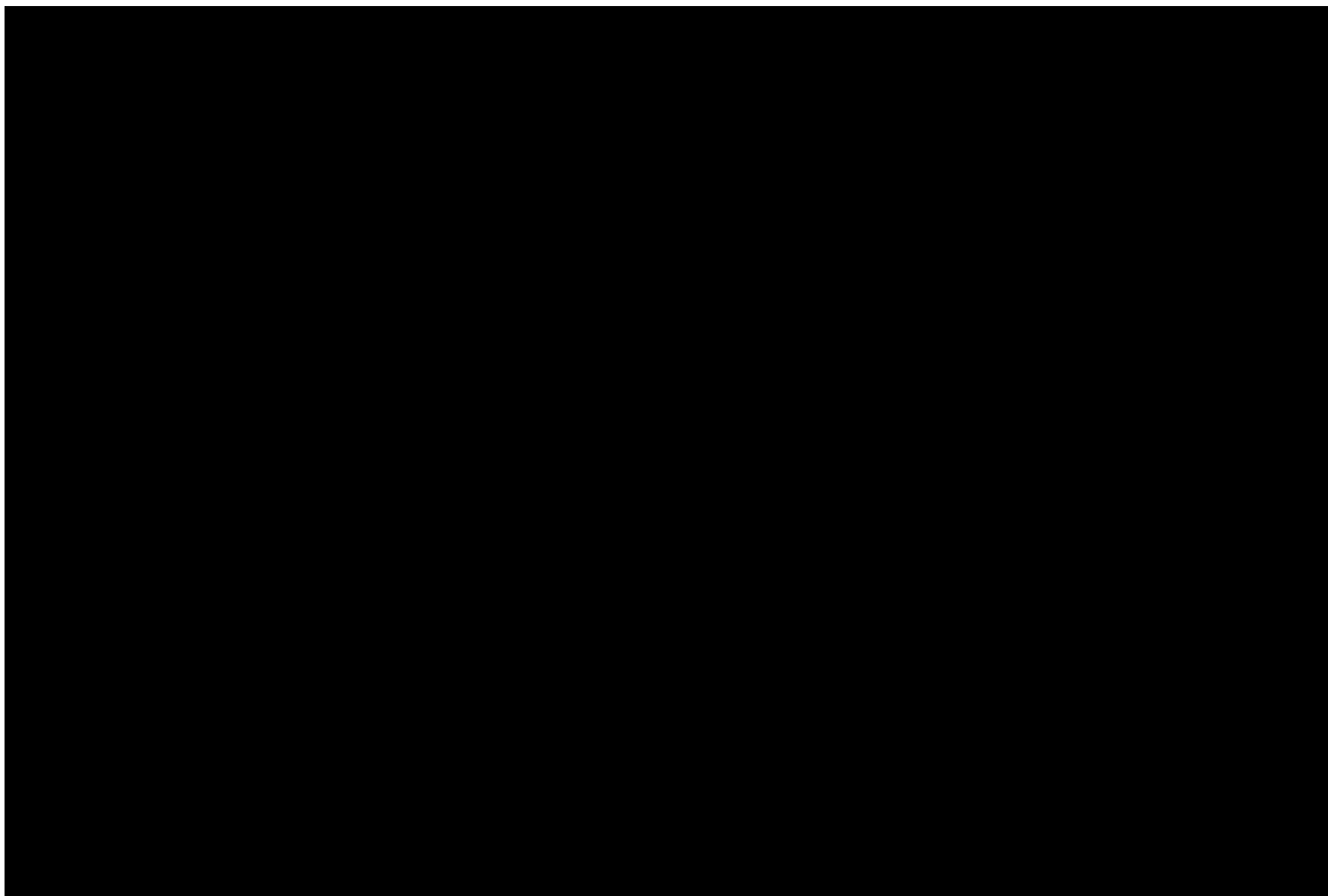


Figure C1. Records of southern grass skinks (green dots) from across the DDF (blue shaded polygon) and surrounding ESA. Turquoise polygons are mapped wetlands. Some locations represent multiple records.

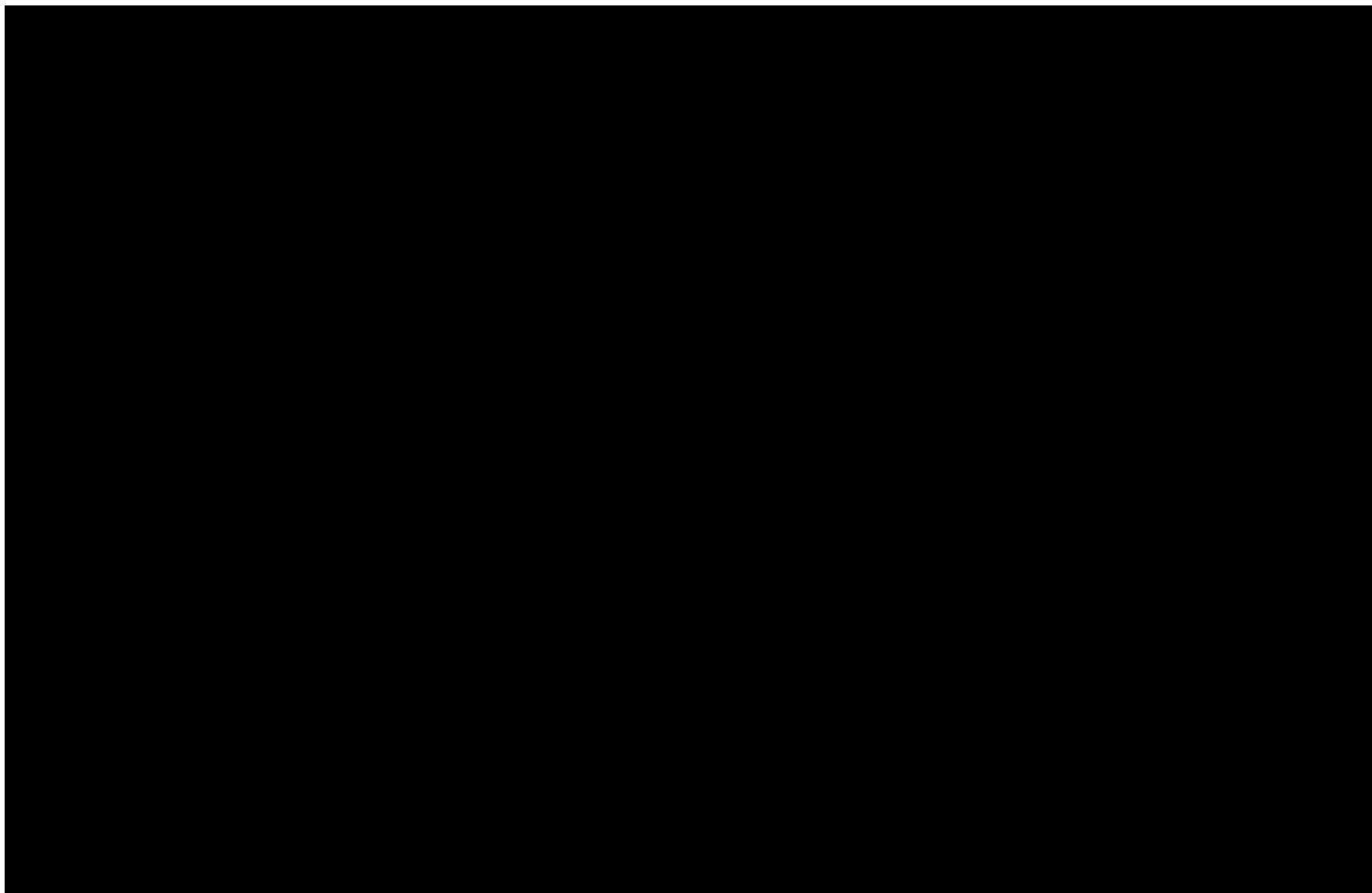


Figure C2. Northern part of the DDF/ surrounding site. Records of Kowarau gecko (yellow triangles) from across the DDF (blue shaded polygon) and surrounding ESA. Most triangles represent multiple sightings of geckos (up to 10-15 in some cases).

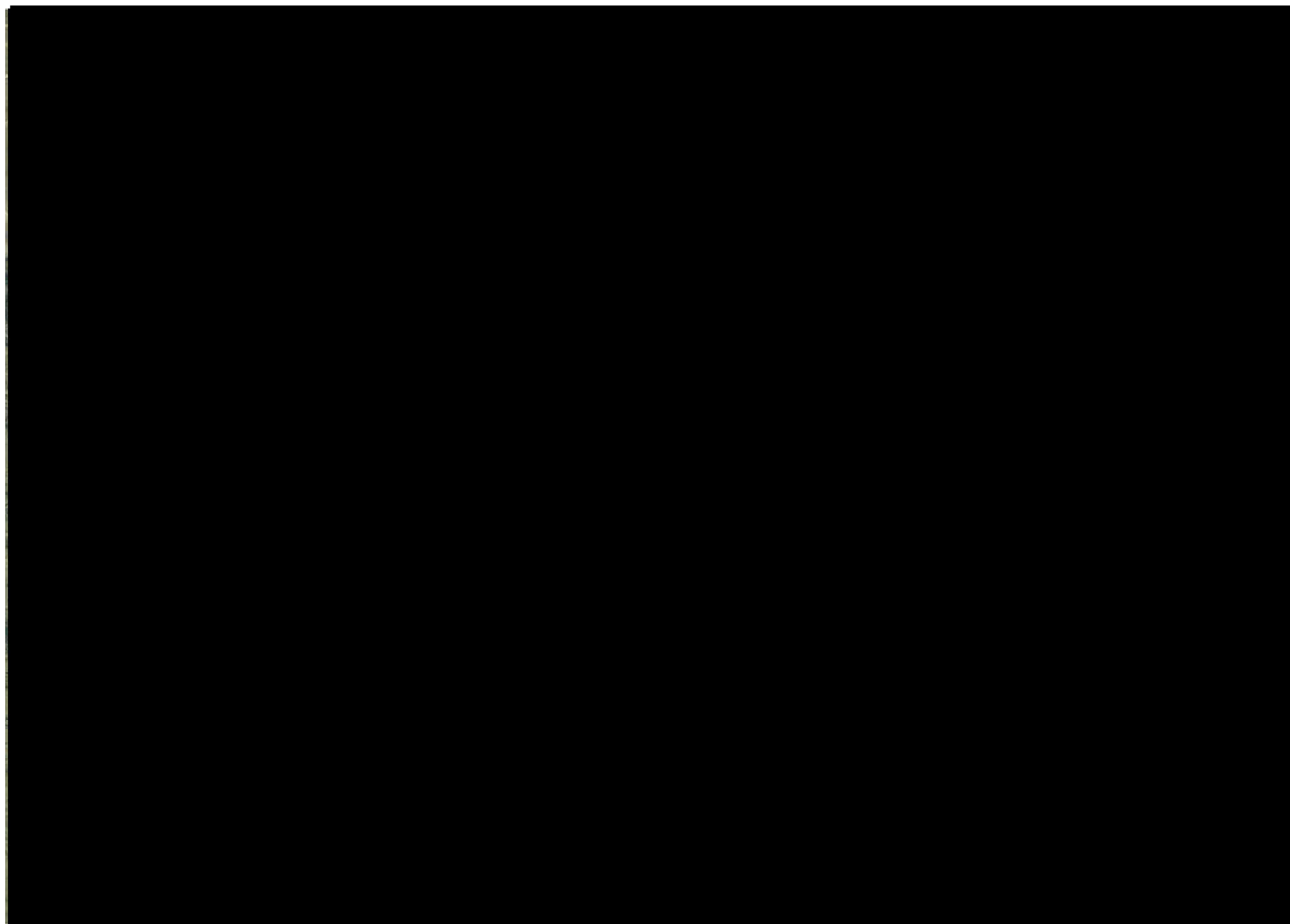


Figure C2. Southern part of the DDF/ surrounding site. Records of Kowarau gecko (yellow triangles) from across the DDF (blue shaded polygon) and surrounding ESA. Most triangles represent multiple sightings of geckos (up to 10-15 in some cases).

APPENDIX D

Results of species identification between southern grass skink and McCann's skink.

Photographs of species judged to be McCann's skinks and southern grass skinks are shown below. The diagnostic characters used to distinguish between the species are listed below.

- Dorsal head colour
- Ear opening diameter size compared to nostril diameter
- Ear opening with or without protruding scales on the anterior margin
- Belly yellow/ brown vs white/pale (sometimes with flecks or striations)
- Supraocular scales 3 on each side vs supraocular scales 4 on each side (can vary 3-4)

McCann's skinks – dry slopes/ boulderfields





Southern grass skink – wetland edges/ within wetland



