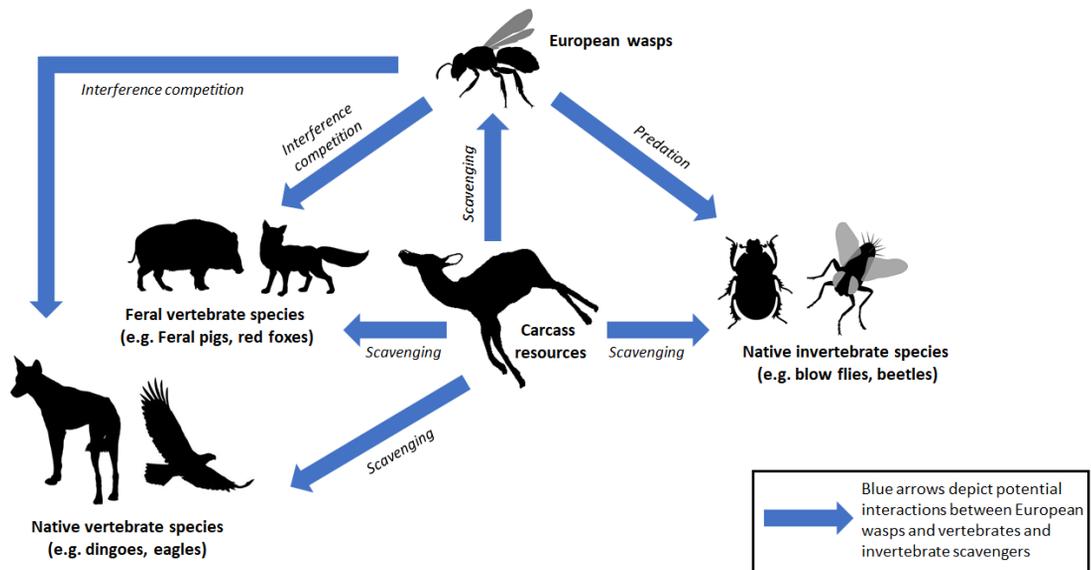


This project will assess how invasive European wasps interact with other species around animal carcasses in order to understand their broader ecological effects in Alpine ecosystems. European wasps have already invaded parts of Australia, including the Alpine regions of NSW, ACT and Victoria. They breed up rapidly in colonies that can number in the thousands, and they congregate around focal food sources like animal carcasses. A critical knowledge gap is how the wasps are potentially changing important ecological processes such as carcass decomposition, and the health and integrity of alpine ecosystems.

In this project we will monitor European wasps and other vertebrate and invertebrate scavengers on deer carcasses under a range of environmental and experimental scenarios. This will include (1) monthly monitoring of deer carcasses from December 2019 to May 2020 to assess when European wasps are most prevalent on carcasses, (2) a project where we experimentally suppress European wasps from some deer carcasses to assess whether this changes the abundance, activity or behaviour of other vertebrate and invertebrate scavengers around carcasses, and (3) the monitoring of deer carcasses along a transect from lower elevations of the Alps to higher areas to assess the current altitudinal distribution of European wasps, as well as the distribution of other invasive pests that scavenge on carcasses. The results will be used to assess if interactions among scavenger species change in the presence of European wasps.



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The field work will be in and around Kosciuszko National Park, and students will be working with local land managers and NSW Government Departments, including NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, and South East Local Land Services. External academic support is being provided by Dr. Philip Barton at Australian National University, Prof. Richard Duncan at University of Canberra, and Dr. Alex Carthey at Macquarie University.

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