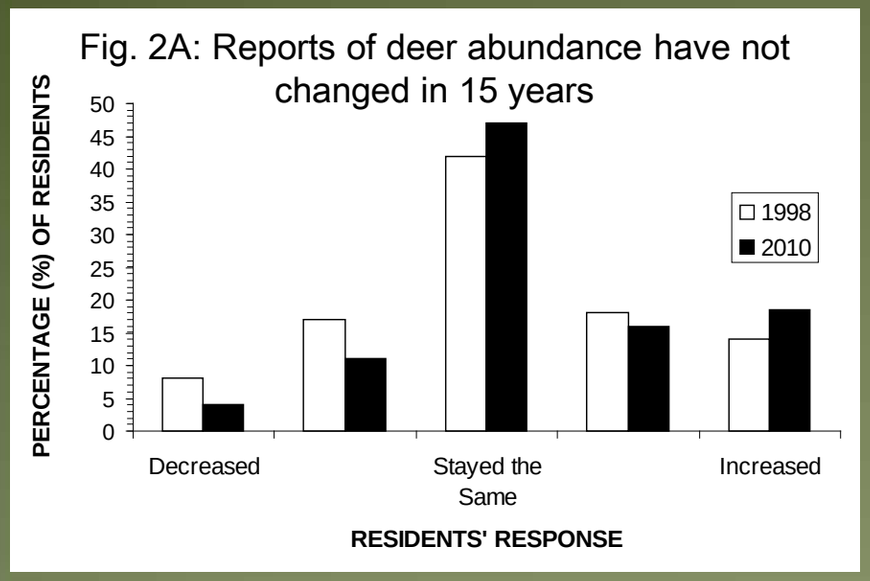
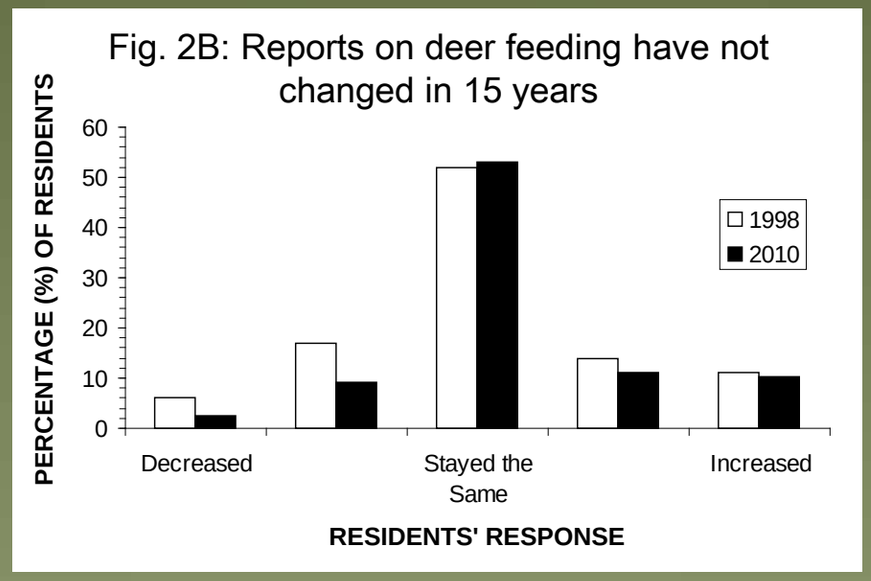
# Wildlife-human conflict in cities

## - how sensitive are peoples beliefs to changes in deer density?

**Jeffrey Benson** bensonjeff@myvuw.ac.nz **& Wayne Linklater** wayne.linklater@vuw.ac.nz,
***School of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science,***
***Victoria University of Wellington.***

**1 Introduction -** Deer can occur at extreme densities in cities and cause vehicle accidents, damage to property and vector human diseases. Human-deer conflict is a major challenge for local government because it requires the management of wildlife and residents' beliefs. The challenge is made more difficult if residents' beliefs are not sensitive to changes in the magnitude of the problem. We took advantage of an historical survey of public beliefs conducted during the mid-1990s and the decline in black tailed deer populations in California since that time to test whether residents' perceptions of the deer abundance and damage have changed with deer numbers.




**2 Methods –** In July 2000, we repeated a 1998 postal survey (Jennings 2001) to 1000 residents in El Cerrito and Kensington Cities, East Bay, San Francisco, California. (Fig. 1). We asked residents to quantify changes in deer abundance and damage to their gardens on a 6-point Likert scale and compared the results with the 1998 survey.

**3 Results –** Resident's beliefs about deer abundance and damage to gardens by feeding (Fig. 2 A & B, respectively) have not changed between 1998 (white bar) and 2010 (black bar), although black tailed deer populations have declined across California.

**4 Conclusion –** Two interpretations of the results are possible. Either resident's beliefs are not responsive to a reduction in deer abundance and damage or deer in urban areas have not declined in the same way as they have in other habitats (e.g., rural and wild landscapes). Future work will attempt to index deer abundance 1998-2010 in our study site using public records of vehicle-deer collisions.

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**Reference:** Jennings, K.W. (2001) Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management , UC-Berkeley.