

Around the Traps – Dec 2014

Overseas

The Pacific – not so peaceful for mynas now

Things are ramping up in the Pacific: countries and islands and resorts within countries are taking on myna control activities: **Tahiti** to protect the Tahitian Monarch Flycatcher; the Outrigger Resort in **Fiji**; **Atiu Island** in **Cook Islands**; **Kiribati**; **American Samoa**. What a change in just a few years! The demonstration effect at work: people and governments just needed to see that something can be done to reduce these pests, that all is not beyond them, and that the community are strong allies in the effort. Canberra has played a part in that. We eagerly await the word that **Atiu Island** is totally myna-free after a tremendous effort over years by Gerald McCormack, George Mateariki aka Birdman George, Jason Tuara and Susana Saavedra. And many others. Gerald advises that there might be only 30 adult mynas left, but some have bred. Progress has been slow as mynas become scarce. Drop-door traps with a decoy bird are still working well for George and the shotgun is effective with Jason. Whereas Jason used to shoot just over 100 mynas-a-day in late 2010, now he works hard for one or two per day. They have had many predicted dates to complete the eradication: but now expect they will be "gone by May". If so, it will be the first island in the Pacific to have totally eradicated mynas, and a huge inspiration.



And the **Seychelles** are continuing the effort to protect their native birds from mynas. At one point the total world population of the Seychelles Magpie Robin (see photo top right) was down to 12 birds: then rat and cat eradication, later on habitat rehabilitation and most recently myna control measures have protected it. So now after translocation to several islands (including Denis Island where myna eradication is currently taking place by the local NGO Green Islands Foundation), it is up to 290 birds spread out over 5 Seychelles islands: 45 of the birds are on Denis Island. The population of Paradise Flycatchers (photo left) had dropped to 60 birds but after pest control measures the overall population has climbed to 270 birds (20 Paradise Flycatchers were translocated to Denis Island in 2008 - making



it one of only two places in the world where this bird occurs – and after initiating the myna eradication on Denis Island those 20 birds have increased to over 60 individuals). The Seychelles Warbler (photo bottom right) numbers had dropped to 26 but with myna control, now hover around 300 (60 Seychelles Warblers were translocated to Denis Island in 2004). With these birds now re-established on Denis Island there is a concerted effort to ensure they are protected from mynas. The estimated number of mynas at the start of the eradication program was between 1000 and 1200 – they are estimated to be less than 100 now. Arjan de Groene, General Manager, Green Islands Foundation advises that they are planning the final stages of the myna eradication effort on the Denis Island – a private hotel resort island. That would be good to see, and hopefully it happens very soon. Best book your flights to Denis Island now.



Singapore has both Indian Mynas and Java Mynas: they are very obvious when you spend any time in the city. Recently I had a meeting with Dr Wong Hon Mun, the Group Director of the Singaporean Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority, to discuss how the experience here in Canberra might be replicated over there. Some very different circumstances over there which pose a bigger challenge in getting a community-action program underway. For a start, as most citizens live in apartment blocks, the opportunities for backyard trapping activity is much less, so a different approach might be needed. Nonetheless, I left the meeting with a strong sense that Dr Wong and his colleague see myna control as needed. That, and controlling scrappy pigeons, would make one of the world's best modern cities unbeatable.



Interest in **South Africa** is growing with a number of people getting in touch –

from National Park Field Ecologists to Bird Watcher Groups to general citizens. Let's hope it takes hold there as well.

Around the Traps - Australia

Some good news on new local councils developing Indian Myna control programs in their areas.

Bayside City Council in Melbourne has now initiated a program, which will give the movement in Melbourne a big push along. The Beaumaris Men's Shed will be making the traps for them.

Campelltown City Council in Sydney has also started a program. They kicked this off at the end of August – and have already run 5 Indian Myna Bird Education Workshops, at various community venues – which have all been filled or oversubscribed. Just shows that the public are desperate to get involved in a well-run program. Mitch Johnson, the manager, previously worked at Wollongong City Council and is adopting their approach. The feedback from participants has been very positive and the connection with the three local Men's Sheds is proving to be a very valuable: they have already made 74 traps in no time flat. There is strong community interest in the program: 148 people have attended the workshops, and Mitch has had a further 340 enquiries by locals on how to participate in the program: all in a very short time. This is good news.

Meanwhile, **Sutherland Shire Council** is still going strong with continuing strong public interest. They have been very innovative in the past and are now assessing their long-standing program to see if there are successful approaches elsewhere that they should adopt, particularly in the areas of trap production and distribution.

The Wollongong Indian Myna Action Program overseen by the **Wollongong City Council** is still going very strongly. They will be holding their 70th education workshop this Friday – all people who wish to trap are required to attend a workshop before the Corrimal Men's Shed will provide them with a trap. A very sound policy as incorrect technique can lead to poor results. So far 921 locals have attended the workshops and some 655 traps have been handed out.

There has been interest in getting a program up and running in the **Kiama** area, but nothing has got off the ground so far. This follows the drop off in the Jamberoo program. A regional approach across the Illawarra with Wollongong and Shellharbour Councils might provide the impetus.

The **Camden Indian Myna Trapping Program** is still being operated by the Camden Council with Narellan Men's Shed supplying traps.

The **Cairns Remove Indian Mynas** campaign continues to impress: the Cairns Men's Shed has now made and sold just over 1500 traps. The CRIM group is again surveying trap owners to get a better handle of the numbers caught: just 30 trappers alone account for over 5,000 birds caught and dispatched since the program started in 2012. It is much harder for the group to know how many have been caught by the other trap owners. They are also participating in the Australian Museum's myna DNA research project. The ornithologist that surveys bird numbers at the Cairns international and domestic airports advises that myna numbers within the airport precinct were lower in 2013 and 2014 than in any of the preceding 8 years. Now that finding is very heartening and must be largely or wholly put down to their trapping efforts.

The disheartening news from John McCrea of the **Central West Indian Myna Control Group** are the first reports of mynas in **Dubbo** township and a report of mynas at **Parkes**. The movement westwards is on. Hopefully John's public awareness-raising work with the local ABC radio and Local Lands Service for the locals to report and trap mynas will help slow the spread.

Trapping is still going on in the **Clarence Valley: the CVCIA group** tally is now 6,500 from Feb 2011 to Dec 2014. Kevin and Laura Noble report that in many locations where there are trappers, there are either no longer any mynas or only a couple of very wary birds. There are still pockets of larger numbers but no trappers at those locations. They recently assisted Northern Landcare Support Services at **Kyogle** with an Indian Myna workshop and are participating with the Australian Museum with their DNA research on mynas. They have already sent down 11 frozen mynas.

