

Making the Common Myna a Rare Species in the Bega Valley

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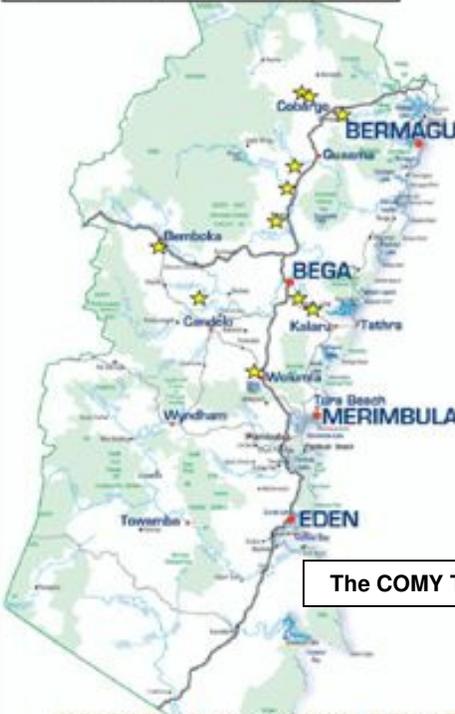
The Indian (Common) Myna is increasing its range into smaller centres and semi-rural areas, and the Bega Valley has not been exempt. However, the Bega Valley district still remains relatively free of this pest, due in part to the extensive areas of native forest around it.

Nonetheless, there are sufficient mynas around to concern conservationists and land managers. Since 1996, the Far South Coast Bird Watchers have conducted a program to remove mynas wherever they are reported. Using local knowledge, public input resulting from flyers and newsletters, and the human resources and funding of the community over 300 birds have been removed. Small pockets of mynas are known at a few sites. Recently, due to the increasing number of myna invasions, the COMY Task Force was set up to co-ordinate myna control activities.

BEGA VALLEY SHIRE

COMMON MYNA SIGHTINGS = ★





OLD SIGHTING LOCATIONS

COBARGO & WEST
McLEODS HILL
ALSOPS CREEK / BROGO
BEMBOKA TOWNSHIP & SURROUNDS
CANDELO / KAMERUKA
WOLLUMLA
TATHRA ROAD / KALARU



The COMY Task Force myna poster

COMMON (Indian) MYNA RECORD INFORMATION

DATE / TIME	OBSERVED BY WHO ? PHONE NUMBER	ROAD NAME (eg. Tathra Road)	WHICH SIDE OF ROAD ? North-South East-West	DISTANCE FROM NEAREST CROSS-ROAD (e.g. 600m East of Kerrihan's Lane)	PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME ?	NUMBER OF BIRDS SEEN	NOTES (Seen prior ? New Sighting ? Roosting ? Feeding ? Flying ? On Power Lines ? Etc.)

Please report any sightings to Far South Coast Birdwatchers on 6495 7390 or Tony Jarman on 6492 1607

Bega Valley dairies are a ready source of feed for mynas and this provides opportunities for targeted trapping: it is the same where there are horse paddocks. The COMY Taskforce has had a program of trapping with a number of dairy farmers. Our experience has been that working with a rare pest species provides different challenges and solutions to those where it is super-abundant.

We have found that where the local landholder is provided with clear information about trap maintenance and myna behaviour, given Judas birds and continual feed-back, captures and local eliminations happen. What did not work was providing basic equipment, expecting that an interested but busy dairy farmer would find the time to figure things out on their own. Time spent in discussion and regular feed-back is rewarded with more captures.

Flexibility and adaptability are essential where mynas are rare. It is frequently possible to eradicate invading pairs by shooting - a tactic that is impossible or ineffective in metropolitan areas with thousands of birds. Most dairy owners are licensed shooters: there is no or

little issue with human safety and low myna numbers mean that the task is not overly time consuming. The skills of the local Australian Deer Association members have also been a great asset.

Judas birds and persistence work well.

At one particularly successful case at a dairy between Cobargo and Bermagui, the farmer has trapped over 80 birds. He set up the trap between the dairy and the residence, where it could be inspected regularly and became part of the local “habitat”. His Judas birds were well looked after, and he persisted with baiting, even after some big captures and an extended quiet period.

Working with the operation of the farm (ie, finding areas that stock cannot access but which are still near the food source and regular human activity) is useful on a working dairy. Putting the trap where horses are regularly hand-fed gives both bait to lure the birds and an opportunity for the farmer to check the trap.

One of our more elderly trappers laid trails of bait from the birds preferred perch site to the trap, and eventually eliminated the entire local colony.

Conversely, an animal carer has successfully eliminated all the birds on his property by taking them into captivity, where they are a source of Judas birds, or, ultimately, food for his cats and the pet pig.

Such variable tactics succeed in eliminating invading local populations.

We have learned that communication and clarity are essential. Local animal welfare groups actively encourage our activities and we get great community input when they know our objectives. Lack of communication and clarity results in no success, confusion and in-action.



The COMY Task Force realises that further census work and monitoring is required. Monitoring information at control sites needs to be collected now with regard to the distribution and abundance of woodland birds in the district, to provide management information on the effectiveness of the COMY control program. That is something we have on our future program.

The control of mynas as they invade an area has provided unique management challenges – in the Bega Valley, the myna is rare and,

hopefully, through the continued success of our program, a threatened species.

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