

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group

Strategy

10 June 2006

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1. Background

The Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) was formed in April 2006 in response to the noticeable large scale increase in Indian Myna numbers across Canberra and the known serious impact these introduced birds have on our native birds and arboreal mammals.

Indian Mynas are a serious environmental threat to native wildlife because they take over nesting hollows, evicting birds and small mammals, and prey on nestlings. Their threat to wildlife worldwide has been recognized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with its inclusion on the IUCN's list of 100 most invasive species in the world. Indian Mynas, by nesting in roof cavities and foraging around outdoor cafes and shopping centres, also pose some small risk to human health as they carry a number of diseases. The nesting material they bring into roof cavities and into other spaces in buildings can also be a fire hazard.

Group Objectives and Purpose

CIMAG has the aim of protecting our native birds and mammals from the threat posed by the Indian Myna (or Common Myna) (*Acridotheres Tristis*) in the Canberra region.

Operating Arrangements

The group will operate as an association of like-minded individuals who are interested in working, individually or collectively, in implementing an agreed strategy to tackle the Indian Myna problem in Canberra and the surrounding region. The group will meet periodically, and be kept informed of developments via an email network.

2. Strategy

The CIMAG's objective will be progressed through a strategy that recognizes that a multi-layered approach will be needed — three elements being essential:

1. increased public awareness that this bird is a serious environmental and health threat, not just a nuisance
2. public education aimed at limiting the spread of the species by reducing its feeding and breeding opportunities, and
3. a humane reduction program.

The strategy to achieve CIMAG's objective involves:

1. Building membership of the Group
2. Raising the public's awareness of the risk posed by the Indian Myna to our natural environment
3. Informing the public, businesses and government of ways to help minimize the impact of Indian Mynas and prevent their spread in our region
4. Promoting and managing a humane reduction program
5. Monitoring the results of the strategy, particularly on any decline of Indian Mynas in our region and any positive impacts on native birds
6. Developing alliances with similar like-minded groups, working with other stakeholders and being involved in a strong research program
7. Promoting and facilitating other communities to establish similar groups
8. Raising funds for CIMAG activities.

2.1 Building membership of the Group

The success of CIMAG will be greatly influenced by the numbers of people who participate directly in our activities. This will be particularly the case in a reduction program, where “network coverage” trapping will be needed across suburbs.

Promoting the Group in an effort to gain active members will need to be a high priority.

The actions to achieve this could include:

- Developing a publicity / communication strategy that involves:
 - radio coverage
 - articles in local newsprint media
 - promotion in environmental and similar groups.

2.2 Raising the public’s awareness of the risk posed by the Indian Myna

Without public support, the overall strategy would be rendered ineffective. A public awareness campaign will be developed to raise the public’s awareness that the Indian Myna is a serious environmental pest.

The actions to achieve this could include:

- A community education campaign with pamphlets, media articles, educational materials for distribution to schools, libraries, the media
- Speaking engagements
- Radio interviews
- A CIMAG website
- Occasional stands at Shopping Centres
- Regular meetings with key stakeholder groups.

2.3 Informing the community on ways to help minimize the impact of Indian Mynas and prevent the spread of Indian Mynas

The Indian Myna is highly skilled at exploiting feed sources and nesting opportunities: both of which give it the capacity for multiple breeding and population spread. Reducing these opportunities can help to stop the increase in bird numbers and the further spread of the bird in the region.

The actions to achieve this could include:

- As for the public awareness actions mentioned above — incorporating these messages in the public awareness campaign materials
- Investigating ways to reduce feeding, nesting and roosting opportunities in domestic, public and commercial buildings
- Developing and circulating brochures to the public and building owners with information on ways to reduce feeding, nesting and roosting opportunities.

2.4 Undertaking a humane reduction program

To have a meaningful impact on the Indian Myna population an extensive, concerted, sustained, coordinated and collaborative effort is needed by government, the community and business that involves an extensive trapping and euthanising program.

A high priority for CIMAG will be to establish a comprehensive reduction program that is acceptable to the RSPCA, the general public and to the ACT Government. Issues that need to be considered include:

- the best methods for luring and trapping the birds, and the various effective trap designs
- the trapping strategy – location, density, coverage area
- what is the most desirable (ie humane and efficient) means of dealing with the trapped birds
- the options for disposing of the bodies.

Actions to achieve this could include:

- Collate information from our members and from experiences elsewhere on the best techniques for trapping birds and the trap designs that are proving effective, and disseminate the information to our members and to other interested people
- Hold workshops
- Encourage CIMAG members and other members of the public and business to participate in a soundly-based humane trapping program
- Design a comprehensive trapping program, that considers
 - type, size (and cost) of traps for different situations
 - training workshop requirements
 - logistics for maintaining traps
 - method of euthanizing birds and carcass disposal
 - numbers of traps needed per suburb
- Develop a strategy for disposing of the carcasses
- Explore opportunities for collaborative work with government, businesses and commercial pest bird management companies on an integrated reduction program.

2.5 Monitoring the results

A monitoring program is needed to substantiate the strategy and to provide base information to government and the community. A robust and soundly-based monitoring program will be essential in meeting criteria of government grant programs and in seeking donations from the public and business.

Actions to achieve this could include:

- Utilising the Canberra Ornithologist Group's Garden Bird Survey as a monitoring tool
- Assessing what enhancements might be needed to provide more comprehensive coverage across Canberra — covering the nature reserves and peri-urban area
- Designing and running a highly focused monitoring program in a small area (say, half a suburb) in which there are high number of traps to assess the impact on Indian Myna numbers, external replacement / recruitment.

2.6 Developing alliances with similar like-minded groups, working with other stakeholders and being involved in a strong research program

The success of the strategy will require close alliances with a range of similar environmentally-minded groups and working with other stakeholders, such as government agencies, RSPCA, Animal Welfare bodies. In recognition that the strategy needs to be have a sound scientific basis, the strategy will also involve on-going research into a number of aspects relating to the threat posed by mynas and the activities that achieve greatest success.

Actions to achieve this include:

- Establishing contact and network with like-minded community groups on common activities
- Keep Environment ACT, DEH and the regional office of NSW Dept of Environment and Conservation informed of progress and results of CIMAG activity
- Collating information and developing a research program on various aspects of Indian Myna control and management
- Establish alliances with researchers and provide support resources for agreed research activity.

2.7 Promoting and facilitating other communities to establish similar groups

As Indian Mynas are also a serious environmental threat in other regions, the group will promote and facilitate the establishment of other community-based Indian Myna action groups.

Actions to achieve this include:

- Providing information and publicity materials
- Providing technical advice on trapping and euthanising techniques
- Providing support and advice on structures and strategy.

2.8 Raising funds for CIMAG activities.

A level of funding will be required for public awareness activity and possible other aspects of the CIMAG strategy.

Actions to achieve this include:

- Seeking donations from members in lieu of annual subscriptions
- Pursuing opportunities for grant funding from government (Commonwealth & ACT Governments) and regional local councils
- Public appeals and seeking business support
 - seeking donations / sponsorship from businesses at shopping centres for trapping activity in their areas.
- In time, seek Deductible Gift Recipient status from the Australian Taxation Office for the group.

3. Management Matters

The group will seek incorporation as an association under the ACT Associations Incorporation Act 1991.

The Constitution of the Group outlines its Committee Structure and operating process.

The Strategy will be subject to periodic review to assess its appropriateness and as a basis for making any necessary adjustments.

The operations of the Group will be reported to members in an Annual Report.