

# FACT SHEET #1

## Indian Myna

*Acridotheres tristis* (starling family)

Common names: **Indian Myna**, **Common Myna**



Photo by Andrew Tatnell

<b>Native Habitat</b>	Tropical southern Asia from Iran to India and Sri Lanka.
<b>Feral Pest</b>	<p>The Indian Myna has extended its range into most of Southeast Asia, and has been introduced elsewhere, including South Africa, North America, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand and many Pacific islands.</p> <p>Indian Mynas were introduced into Melbourne's market gardens in the 1860s to keep down insects. They were then taken to Cairns and other places in far north Queensland to control insects in cane fields. They failed!</p> <p>Intelligent and aggressive, Mynas are now often the predominant bird in urban areas all along the east coast – from Cairns to Melbourne.</p>
<b>Indian Mynas in Canberra</b>	<p>Indian Mynas arrived in Canberra in 1968, when a misguided newcomer from Sydney released a dozen birds because he missed hearing their call. It is now estimated that there are some 250 Indian Mynas per square kilometre in the urban area of Canberra.</p> <p>This is a 150,000 feral population, out-competing our native birds and arboreal mammals for nesting sites, preying on eggs, chicks and mammal young.</p> <p>Indian Mynas are a major problem in Canberra's backyards and particularly around schools, outdoor cafes and shopping centres where there is easy food.</p>
<b>Public Opinion</b>	<p><b>One of World's 100 Most Invasive Species</b> – <i>World Conservation Union</i></p> <p><b>Extreme Threat category</b> – <i>National Vertebrate Pests Committee</i></p> <p><b>The Most Hated Pest in Australia</b> – <i>ABC Wild Watch Quest for Pests 2005</i> (beating cane toads, feral cats and foxes)</p>  <p>Photo by Toby Roscoe</p>
<b>Why they are a threat</b>	<p>Indian Mynas are noisy, territorial and not afraid of humans. They use superior numbers to aggressively take over and defend territory. During breeding season, they seek out nesting hollows which they take over from native birds and animals, after harassing and evicting them.</p> <p>Indian Mynas kill the chicks of other birds or destroy their eggs, or build their own nests on top and smother them. They have been seen to block the entries to hollows, causing the inhabitants to die of starvation, after which they then lay their eggs in the hollow.</p> <p>Mynas build and defend several nests during the breeding season, although they only lay in one nest – which excludes native birds and animals from those nesting sites. They can raise two broods of young every year, and over-night in noisy communal roosts.</p>

<p><b>Health risks</b></p>	<p>The Indian Myna poses a potential health risk to humans – from bird mites and faeces dust – due to its habits of closely associating with human activity, for example scavenging at outdoor cafes and eating areas, and domestic patios.</p> <p>Mynas also build large untidy nests, using sticks, straw, feathers and rubbish, like scraps of paper and plastic, in roof spaces and cavities, which are a fire risk and an entry point for bird mites into houses.</p> 
<p><b>Canberra threatened species</b></p>	<p>Indian Mynas are a particular threat to the nationally endangered Superb Parrot in the area north of Canberra. In addition, ACT birds such as the threatened Brown Treecreeper will potentially benefit from a reduction in Indian Myna numbers, as will the threatened insects which Mynas feed on: the Flightless Grasshopper <i>Perunga ochracea</i> and Golden Sun Moth.</p> <p>There is also some evidence that the Myna's aggressive nature, which excludes small insect-gleaning native birds from providing ecological services to native vegetation, is resulting in a loss of tree health and vigour. In doing so, it poses a risk to Yellow Box and Red Gum grassy woodlands – an endangered ecological community in the ACT – such as at Mulligan's Flat and Goorooyaroo nature reserves.</p>
<p><b>What can people do?</b></p>	<p>Here are some things people can do to help discourage Indian Mynas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear away food scraps after eating outdoors.</li> <li>• Feed pets indoors, or clear away when they've finished.</li> <li>• Plant native shrubs to reduce open areas in gardens.</li> <li>• Avoid planting trees with dense foliage, such as pencil pines, in which Mynas will roost at night.</li> <li>• Block holes in roofs or eaves to prevent Mynas from roosting or nesting – make sure you don't accidentally trap a possum, bat or other native species.</li> <li>• On farms, feed stock only as much as they need, cover the feed bins and clean up any spills.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What about trapping and euthanasia?</b></p>  <p><i>Trap designed by Peter Green</i></p>	<p><b>CIMAG</b> – the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc – is a non-profit community-action group that has the aim of protecting our native birds and mammals from the threat posed by the introduced Indian Myna in the Canberra region.</p> <p>Their trapping and euthanasia program – endorsed by the RSPCA and the ACT Government – has been highly successful, and has humanely removed over 12,000 Mynas from around Canberra in around 18 months. The program has led to a marked decline in Indian Myna numbers in backyards and nearby urban nature reserves, and has had a positive impact on local native biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>CIMAG trappers are reporting a significant increase in small birds returning to backyards after trapping has removed mynas, and the return of rosellas to nesting boxes and tree hollows in backyards and along streets that had previously been occupied by Indian Mynas.</p> <p>Please do not interfere with any traps that you might see in people's yards. They are doing something very important for our environment.</p> <p>You can also participate in this activity. If you want to know more, contact CIMAG:</p> <p> <b>02 6231 7461</b> or <a href="mailto:president@indianmynaaction.org.au">president@indianmynaaction.org.au</a></p> <p> <a href="http://www.indianmynaaction.org.au">www.indianmynaaction.org.au</a></p>