

Developing an effective trapping program for low density Indian Mynas in rural areas

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In the past decade Indian Mynas have established across the Grassy Box-Gum Woodlands (an endangered ecological community) surrounding the ACT. The Murrumbateman rural community — which includes a number of commercial vineyards — is one such area where myna numbers have been increasing. In response, Murrumbateman Landcare began a survey and trapping program in 2007. The initial monitoring work indicated that mynas were at a low density.

Following a trap-building workshop, a trapping program involving six rural residential properties across the rural community was started. Trapping a pest species that has low numbers can be difficult as "catch per unit effort" tends to be low. As such, it became apparent that there were problems in getting sufficient on-going community participation when low myna densities were resulting in low trapping success, while still requiring daily care of decoy birds.



Trap building workshop

Preliminary work showed that continuous trapping over eight months on these properties resulted in an average of only 1.5 mynas every 10 trap days. This was regarded as a large effort for little result. However a three month trapping program at two vineyards during autumn in 2008 caught 3.2 mynas per 10 trap days — effectively doubling the rate of catch with encouragingly large initial capture rates.

We now consider that developing a "rapid trapping program" in vineyards over grape-ripening period in March-April (early autumn) to be the most cost / time effective method for control. Our program now targets individual vineyards for 1 week periods with intensive effort using decoy birds and up to 4 traps, and moving traps as soon as capture rates drop. Viticulturalists are more motivated compared to the general community due to potential impact on harvest and production. Recent success in trapping mynas without decoy birds using the Mascot Wire Trap is encouraging. Future trapping may use a combination of traps to obtain decoy birds and variety of trap types to reduce trap shyness.



Successful vineyard trapping

This program has been successful as our monthly surveys reveal. In 2006 there was on average 10.6 birds recorded during each

survey, then an average of 17 in 2007 but after our refined vineyard trapping program this reduced to an average of 12 in 2008. A total of 142 mynas have now been trapped.



Vineyard trapping at Murrumbateman

In our area, results so far indicate that long term trapping on rural residential / small farms — where myna numbers are low — is less effective than short-term trapping in local vineyards during grape ripening times. Our experience may point to an approach that could be adopted in other horticultural districts where mynas are in low numbers but, importantly, where they do tend to congregate for easy feed when fruit is ripening.

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