

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Dr Chris Tidemann

Myna Matters Bulletin # 17



Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on CIMAG activities.

CIMAG AGM: celebrating another year of success — and a new Committee member

The CIMAG AGM was held on 26 August 2009. A good turn out of some 60 CIMAG members and the public heard about our activities over the past year and about what is planned for the future. The formal business of electing a new Committee was completed with the return of the existing committee members unopposed plus the election of Margaret Peachey, The addition of Margaret Peachey to the Committee is heralded as a wonderful addition. Many of you will know of Margaret from her work as the Manager of the Wildlife Section at the RSPCA Centre at Weston. Margaret has a deep knowledge of conservation and the protection of native birds from a wide range of threats — not least from mynas. Welcome to the Committee, Margaret.

A couple of certificates and prizes were also awarded on the night. Mik Ormay received a well deserved award for his continual work on refining trap design and building techniques. We also gave an award to the Men of Maconochie — the inmates of the new ACT gaol — who are now making traps for us. They are doing an excellent job, and this was acknowledged with a certificate of appreciation and acknowledgement.

We then got down to the guest speakers. Tracey Poulter from the Wingecarribee Shire Council gave us an excellent presentation on the anti-myna activities around Moss Vale and Mittagong areas.



Tracey from Wingecarribee Shire

We also heard from the President of Birds Australia, Alison Russell-French (who is also a CIMAG Committee member) about how Birds Australia is approaching the issue of invasive species and the difficult matter of what to do when native birds become an environmental problem. Many would now put Currawongs into that category. Chris Tidemann and Kate Grarock brought us up to date on their



Alison Russell-French

latest research activities. Chris mentioned, much to our disappointment, the difficulties with the roosting tree trap that he was trialing. But Chris has never been put off by a challenge and is now approaching the issue of trapping at roost sites from another angle: mist nets.

All in all a very informative and good fun night.

CIMAG keeps growing – as does the message

Our membership has now reached 739 as the message continues to get out that we can each do something about these pest birds. There are still some 120 people (not yet members) waiting for a trap: so we are most grateful that the Men of Maconochie are continuing to quickly churn out high quality traps.



Picking up traps from the gaol

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Nesting boxes – an addition to the trapping and research effort

In lateral thinking mode, Kate Grarock and Chris Tidemann have concluded that the 5 “high harvest” suburbs that are part of Kate’s PhD research project will benefit from the addition of nesting boxes for rosellas. So Kate and Chris and a couple of sturdy volunteers have made up 250 nesting boxes for the 5 high harvest suburbs. The suburbs where Kate would like to instal the boxes are: Kaleen/Giralang; Aranda/Cook; Pearce/Torrens/Chifley; Kambah (south of Drakeford Drive); and Theodore.

So if you live in these suburbs and would like one of the nesting boxes in your back yard, just contact Kate on kate.grarock@anu.edu.au . All Kate asks is that you keep an eye on what is occupying the box and if mynas take it over, then contact her and she will come over and remove them. For more info see <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=124824384343> or google: "The Great Nest Box Project".

Kate is also keen to get reports of roost trees. A roost tree is a tree where 10 or more Indian Mynas gather together at once just before sunset, to spend the night. Some roost trees can have huge numbers of mynas and the noise is deafening. Hope you don't have one of those outside your window!!

Separate to this, CIMAG has also seen the advantage of supplying nesting boxes to people outside these 5 “high harvest” suburbs to help our Crimson and Eastern Rosellas find a nice cosy nesting hollow. We had a working bee a couple of weeks back and have churned out a good number of nesting boxes, and future working bees will be held. If you are interested in getting a box, contact Greg Flowers (gregf@velocitynet.com.au). We also have nesting box kits cut up for people who would like to assemble their own.



Scientific paper confirms that car exhaust is “the way to go” – for mynas, that is.

A scientific paper by Dr Tidemann and Daryl King, published in the CSIRO Wildlife Research Magazine, confirms that what we have been doing here to euthanase trapped mynas – using carbon monoxide from a cold petrol car – is the most humane way to dispose of them. Car exhaust provides a humane dispatch: quick, painless and stress-free. It holds the key to the launch of a large scale community program on myna control in NSW and other States. Currently only ACT authorities support the use of car exhaust to euthanase mynas. Local governments in NSW are, understandably, reluctant to endorse the use of car exhaust by community groups while state government agencies and the NSW RSPCA are opposed to it.

Hopefully that will be a thing of the past with these new research findings. With the report in hand, we intend to approach NSW Government agencies to seek a change to their current policy. If, as we hope, they accept the use of car exhaust, this will provide a practical, efficient and low-cost way for the many new Indian Myna action groups in NSW to dispose of trapped mynas and enable them to expand trapping efforts. That can't come soon enough.

You can read the research paper on our website. Just go into www.indianmynaaction.org.au and then click onto “Media Articles, Conference Papers and Scientific Papers” and then scroll down to “Scientific Papers”. A very good read.

Floriade — helping to getting the message out

Many brochures / info sheets on Indian Mynas were handed out at Floriade's weed display garden again this year. Rosemary Blemings thinks they would have distributed 250 or more

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copies. Many of these were to people from interstate: an excellent way of spreading the word. Rosemary says that in conversation about mynas there was an overwhelming hostility to them because of the damage and nuisance they cause.

The Collective Noun for Indian Mynas

You will recall that in the last Myna Matters Bulletin we posed the question put to us by Justine Ramsay of Lyneham High School: is there a collective noun for Indian Mynas. Well we only received a few suggestions, but all good. Perhaps the most apt were: a “malevolence of mynas”, a “malice of mynas”, a “mayhem” of mynas, a “mess of mynas”, a “destruction of mynas”, a “raucous of mynas”, a “malignancy of mynas”. A certain theme came through as you can see: nothing really positive about them was suggested.

What do you choose as the most apt? Let us know by sending your vote to president@indianmynaaction.org.au.

Around the Traps

The movement grows and CIMAG is a big part of the reason. Since the last Bulletin, we have been involved in presentations to community meetings in Moruya and Richmond organized by local government officers in the respective councils — Courtney Fink-Downes of the Eurobodalla Shire Council and Garry Baldry & Martin Gauci of the Hawkesbury City Council. It was gratifying to see so many enthusiastic and committed people at these meetings, and with Courtney, Garry, Martin and the new Community Coordinators on the job, the mynas days are numbered. A similar day at Lane Cove in Sydney is planned for the end of November.

Things are going well in the Moss Vale / Mittagong / Bowral area. Tracey Poulter says that the Bowral Men's Shed has now produced 50 traps and 1057 mynas have been caught in the Wingecarribee area.

Myna control is also going well up around Coffs Harbour. Ron Smith reports that numbers in the area still remain low after earlier trapping activity. They are now able to make more of an effort to round up mynas in isolated areas. Their Project Officer, Tien Pham, is doing a great job building up the program in the Bellingen and Nambucca local government areas. Their network of trappers increases all the time and they are looking forward to having a big impact this breeding season.

Courtney Fink-Downes of Eurobodalla Shire Council advises that the Bateman Bay's Men's Shed is making traps, and the 23 Community Coordinators for the 21 villages and towns across the Shire are being very active with community meetings, and local trapping with 35 traps is underway. Courtney is about to take the word to Mt Macedon in Victoria. She is going down there in November to speak to the environmental officer at the Macedon Ranges Shire Council to encourage them to support a community Indian Myna Control Program. Good luck, Courtney. Now with things happening in NSW, we need to encourage the Victorians to start activity.

The Blacktown City Council reports that things are on the move up there. Following the trapping trials, research continued with Dr Ricky Spencer of the University of Western Sydney. A report on the next round of research is scheduled to go to Council for consideration in the near future. The Council has a trap hire program under development. By all accounts the community is very enthusiastic about participating in a trapping program.

The Shoalhaven activity continues. Max Smith advises that they have 300 traps out and about, and they estimate that they caught 1200 mynas over the past year. The Bendigo

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Bank generously donated \$1000 to the Shoalhaven community groups and they have put that all into local advertising. One of their trappers, Rod Simpson, has now caught 205.

John McCrea of the Central West Indian Myna Control Group around Mudgee advises that they have resumed trapping at Dunedoo after a winter recess — Currawongs had begun to dominate the traps over winter so they held off trapping. The Currawongs have now mostly moved on (isn't that a pleasant thought) so they have their traps out again. They catch more starlings than mynas – but then again they have more starlings than mynas (10:1). Wineries in the Mudgee area have contacted John to learn how to rid their vineyards of both starlings and mynas. There are strong parallels between Mudgee and Murrumbateman.

Myna Trapping Numbers

Graham Gliddon has been hard at work bringing our capture data up to date.

The number of mynas trapped and disposed of as at the end of Sept 2009 was 26,400. The monthly totals reported in recent months have all been in the 300s: considerably lower than previous times (340 in July, 327 in August, 307 in Sept).

These are the birds we know have been trapped and disposed of. How many others have gone that way and we have never been told? It may not sound that important. But it is very important for a number of reasons. Firstly it demonstrates the success or otherwise of our strategy which is important to determine so that others can adopt or reject this model based on its performance; secondly, there are still some sceptics out there, so having reliable data is important in influencing them; thirdly, Kate Grarock's PhD research project requires her to know with reasonable certainty the level of trapping in her selected suburbs. The research results would be less useful if the trapping data was badly astray. Governments need good science and good data if they are to come on board. Reliable data on numbers of mynas trapped is a big help in giving our efforts credibility with governments and key stakeholder groups. So, **please**, just send Graham a quick email or phone me on 6231 7461.

CIMAG News Distribution System

To get onto the CIMAG news email distribution system for news and notices from the CIMAG Committee, just send a blank email to news-subscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au and you will be automatically included on the distribution list. This will be the main way that the Committee will circulate information and notices to CIMAG members and "friends".

From time to time, members request that we take them off the chatline. The easiest thing to do if you no longer want to get chatline emails (this is different from getting the Myna Matters Bulletin and news from the committee) is to send a blank email to chat-unsubscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au. That will take you off automatically.

Bill Handke
President
CIMAG
27 Oct 09