

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

Myna Matters Bulletin # 20

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on CIMAG activities:



Merry Christmas and a Happy Myna-Free 2011

To all CIMAG members (1,100 of you) and to all members of the 26 other community-action groups and local councils across eastern Australia that are part of this task, we hope that you have a wonderful Christmas and festive season, and a great 2011.



In Canberra / Queanbeyan and down the east coast we have together had another good year. Lets hope our collective efforts next year result in a further big decline in the numbers of this pest bird.

The 2009-10 Survey result is almost in and the draft finding is “huh?”

When CIMAG started in early 2006, the Indian Myna was the 3rd most common bird in the Canberra area, according to the Garden Bird Survey filled out each week by members of the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG). The “A” value for the bird, in statistical speak meaning the measure of abundance, was 4.9587 in the 2005-06 survey period.

Well, Martin Butterfield from COG is still finalizing the analysis of the 2009-2010 survey, but he has given us a sneak peak at the preliminary results. The good news is.....the value of “A” has dropped further. In the yet-to-be-completed analysis, the value of “A” has dropped from 1.8293 last year to 1.7588 this year. Great news as that means there are even fewer mynas around.

But there is a puzzle. Whereas mynas were the 14th most common bird in the 2008-09 period, they have now actually gone back up to being the 13th most common bird. An explanation might be that the numbers of another species has dropped by even more! Lets hope it is the Starling or the Sparrow – the other introduced pest birds high up on the list – but I fear it is a native bird. All will be revealed in time.

ABC TV Stateline sparks demand for traps

The ABC TV Stateline program shown in Canberra on 29 October has sparked a big surge in the demand for traps. Our thanks to Chris Kimball, the presenter, for pulling together a good program on the activities of CIMAG. For those who missed it, you can view it by going to <http://www.abc.net.au/news/video/2010/10/29/3052470.htm>.

But the program has given the Men of Maconochie a big job. After the program, the waiting list for traps jumped up to around 90 people. Thanks to all those CIMAG trappers who responded to the call for a lend of their unused traps. The generous response has meant that we have been able to get quite a few traps out to new members. But the guys out at the Canberra gaol still have a task in front of them to get the waiting list down. Lucky for us, the team out there is now onto it.

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The “Men of Maconochie” to add another dimension

The guys at the Alexander Maconochie Centre will shortly be adding another aspect to their activities in support of CIMAG: a flat pack PeeGees trap that can be send interstate. By refining a few aspects of the trap, it will be able to be concertina-ed, suitable for flat pack posting interstate.

Currently we are fielding many calls from frustrated people in Victoria who are unable to lay their hands on a trap. There are few community-action myna control groups in Victoria and no Men’s Sheds making them (that we know of). So to assist we will help the downhearted myna-plagued Victorians by having a flat pack PeeGees trap that could be posted to them.

Susanna shows the way in the Canary Islands

While we are proud of our success back here in Canberra, Susana Saavedra from the idyllic



Canary Islands, off the north west coast of Africa, has a feather in her cap (so to speak) that we will have difficulty in matching. The dynamic and hardworking Susana has dedicated 10 years to the task of cleaning mynas out of the Canary Islands; Ascension and St Helena Islands (the British Protectorates much



further south off the west coast of southern Africa – St Helena was where Napoleon was exiled to); and Mallorca in the Mediterranean. We have been following her successful myna control programs with growing admiration and increasing envy.

Susana advises that she has now **totally eradicated** mynas from 3 of the Canary Islands (Tenerife in 1999, Gran Canaria in 2006, and Fuerteventura in 2008) – making them even more idyllic. Moreover, she eradicated a small breeding population from Mallorca in 2006 and in recent years has focused on a control program for St Helena and Ascension Islands. Last year on Ascension Island, 623 mynas were trapped in 53 days: over half of the island’s pest population. A wonderful effort.



Oh that we could say the same about mynas in our region. We can take lessons from her experience. But even more than that, she is such an inspiration. Her report on the Ascension Island project will shortly be available on our website

(www.indianmynaaction.org.au).

Susana says that “Australia and its people have always been the best source of inspiration for me when dealing with these clever birds. It is very hard to work alone, but it has been very heart-warming to hear of Australian volunteers doing their best to control the mynas elsewhere. Merry Xmas from the myna-free islands”.

But as I see it, if there is an international award for hard work and success in controlling an invasive pest species, I’m voting for Susana.



Susana celebrating a trap full of mynas

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Plan to return mynas to the place from whence they came – or at least to where their ancestors called home

Asis Das from Sydney is concerned that Indian Mynas are reported to be dropping in numbers back in India – it seems that the modern concrete-jungle cities of the new India are not as conducive to them as the more traditional urban areas. So Asis is developing the concept of trapping mynas to return them back to their natural range. He has set himself a huge challenge as there will be many practical problems that stand in the way to his success. Problems of capture, collection, containment, transport, and Indian quarantine issues to name a few. We wish Asis all the best: better that they are there than here.

Wollongong about to join the fight

Paul Formosa of the Wollongong City Council has been developing up WIMAP (the Wollongong Indian Myna Action Program) for some time and the final touches of the strategy are falling into place.

The comprehensive strategy has the following 5 key components:

1) Community Engagement; 2) Administration; 3) Men's Shed; 4) Monitoring; and 5) Research & Dev. Each of the above strategies have their own specific actions. It is a technique and approach that they have developed for the other two priority invasive species in their area, namely deer and rabbits.

With such a well thought-out approach, the care-free days of the myna in Wollongong must surely be numbered. Paul mentions that currently they have around 150 people ready to go. Which means, hopefully, that the Wollongong mynas are about to go.

The New Nowra Gaol

Max Smith of the Shoalhaven Indian Myna Action Group advises that he has been in discussions with the administrators of the new Nowra Gaol about the inmates there making traps for their members and other groups along the south coast. While the discussions are in their early days, this would be a wonderful development and a benefit all round: the inmates would have a fulfilling and productive task to occupy their time, the community-action groups down that way would have a ready supply of traps, and mynas would have some worries.

More to do in Victoria

As can be seen from an earlier item, there is much more for us to do in Victoria. A major task – currently a nut too hard to crack - is to get local government in Victoria involved in facilitating community-action groups, as per NSW. Local government in Victoria is reluctant to get involved, fearing the cost of a myna control program will fall on them to fund. But as can be seen by the experience from Tweed Heads down to Bega Valley, community-action groups can carry the major cost and effort by building and operating traps, managing the network of trappers and collating data. All that is asked of councils is a little help at the start to kick off a community-action group and to give it publicity and moral support. It is the low cost, but high impact approach that relieves the council of most of the cost and effort: we call it the “Shoalhaven Model”.

If there are councils in Victoria and NSW that want to know more about how this can happen, please contact us through president@indianmynaaction.org.au .

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Trapping Tips

Juvenile mynas are starting to appear and it is time to dust down, wash off, and set up the trap again. Remember to use small dry dog or dry cat food as bait and keep it fresh by adding a little every four days. If the bait gets wet from rain, then discard and start again.

You will need to keep cats and dogs at bay. It seems that even the smell of cat around the trap is enough to keep the mynas away from the trap. If you smell cat around the spot, hose down the trap and the area and start again.

Also, a tip from Susana Saavedra as to why mynas across in the Canary Islands and Ascension Island never became trap wary: she would ensure that mynas never associated her with the trap or with the disappearance of their friends from inside the trap: so she would only set up the trap and remove trapped mynas when no free-flying mynas were around. Also for us here, perhaps the best is to euthanase trapped mynas where and when others can't see it happening.

A force to be reckoned with

The Indian Myna control effort is spreading rapidly: as far as we know there are now 27 community groups and / or local councils engaged in this effort, together with a few government institutions, such as the National Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne in Victoria and the Chisholm Institute. There may be more that we are not aware of, but here is the list as far as we know:

Tweed Heads / Byron Bay; Clarence Valley; Coffs Harbour / Belligen / Nambucca; Port Macquarie; Stuart's Point; Haliday's Point; Mudgee; Port Stephens; Newcastle; Orange; Hawkesbury; Hornsby; North Sydney; Lane Cove; Blacktown; Sutherland; Wollongong; Wingecarribee; Shoalhaven; Murrumbateman; Canberra / Queanbeyan; Eurobodalla; Bega; Yarra; Nillumbik.

If I have left anyone off this list, please let me know and, importantly, what you are up to.

CIMAG Website and News Distribution System

There is a lot of interesting information about mynas and about who is doing what to control them, on our website. Also it has some good scientific papers, plans for the trap, brochures and leaflets, and back issues of the Bulletin.

You are very welcome to use whatever information on the website that you want.

To get onto the CIMAG email distribution system for this Bulletin, news and notices from the CIMAG Committee, just send a blank email to news-subscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au

If you are interested in having someone from CIMAG talk to your organisation or work group about the threats posed by mynas and what CIMAG and others are doing, just get in touch.

Bill Handke
President
CIMAG
18 Dec 2010



**I'm having a very Merry Christmas
– I fear it may be my last !!**