

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

Myna Matters Bulletin # 22 (Spring 2011)



Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on CIMAG activities:

Our 2010-11 AGM and Public Info Night on again – keep 18th Oct free

That's right, our AGM and associated Public Information Night is scheduled for 18th Oct at the Southern Cross Club, Macquarie – next door to the Jamison Centre. We will start at 7:30 pm. It will be a great night again, with entertaining and informative speakers, prizes awarded and members talking about what works / what doesn't. This year's entertaining speakers include Peter West. Yes, he of MynaScan fame. You might recall that Peter developed MynaScan as an interactive web-based mapping and recording "thing". It is really neat. Don't miss out on hearing all about it and how you and CIMAG can use it. We encourage all our members to log onto the MynaScan website: go to <http://www.feralscan.org.au/mynascan/> and start playing. The Committee reckons it will provide enormous benefits to our myna-reduction campaign, but we need CIMAG members to log on and enter their data. Peter will tell how to do that. Kate Garrock has now completed all the data collection for her PhD research project on mynas and will speak to us about what she has discovered. Can't wait to hear that. And of course our Patron, Prof Tony Peacock will talk to us – but this time via the ether as he will be in Melbourne.

Come along and join other members and anti-myna friends in a fun night.

CIMAG praised in the federal Parliament



Ms Brodtmann speaking about mynas in Parliament

The cause of Indian Myna control got a real boost the other day when CIMAG and our efforts were raised in federal Parliament. Gai Brodtmann MP, the Member for Canberra, spoke about the results that we have had through our community-action program in reducing myna numbers in this region. You can read Ms Brodtmann's wise words in the Community section of www.gaibrodtmann.com.au/speeches/. As a consequence I have already had people from Parliament get in touch to find out how they can do things in their electorates. Thanks for the mention, Ms Brodtmann. Your contribution is most valuable and will take this important conservation effort out to many other electorates across eastern Australia.

Trap building by Yurung Dhaura team

We have been fortunate that a members of the Yurung Dhaura (meaning Strong Earth) team of indigenous natural resource management trainees have been building traps for us – when the weather doesn't allow them to do outside work. Krystal Hurst, Adam Shipp, Jake Lester and Greg Chatfield have churned out some really high quality traps. Thanks very much Krystal, Adam, Jake and Greg, and thank you to Joe Stephens, their supervisor, and Anna van Dugteren of the ACT Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, for their support in getting this going. This is a good project for the team and for CIMAG: the team gets to participate in another side of natural resource management and CIMAG gets some really good traps. We can only hope that Canberra gets lots of rain in the near future!!



Krystal Hurst, Jake Lester & Adam Shipp getting stuck into making traps for CIMAG

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The CIMAG Committee – a few changes

We have lost Peter Franklin to warmer, albeit wetter climes: Newcastle – Peter reports the myna control task up there is enormous. We thank Peter for his work as Secretary of CIMAG for the last number of years and for all his work on trap building, nest box making, and especially for sweeping out my garage after trap-building sessions. Megan van der Velde has taken over Peter's role as our Secretary. Apart from the Committee, we would like to get some people to help out on particular tasks: we would especially like 3 volunteers to be "whipper-snuffers" in north, south and west Canberra once we have nesting box traps erected. More of that at the AGM night.

Mynas versus Miners — a silly argument and most unhelpful to sensible conservation

In recent times there has been a line of argument, even in some Australian scientific papers, that the native Noisy Miner is worse than the introduced Indian Mynas in terms of impacts on other native birds and their habitats. The comparison is silly, arising in part to the similarity of names. There has even been some criticism of CIMAG and other community-action groups that we are focusing on the wrong villain!

Bruce Lindenmayer, our Vice President and prominent local ornithologist, puts the position in a more sensible light. Bruce does note that Noisy Miners – native honeyeaters – have moved into urban areas along the east coast, and shown that their aggression around food sources does push out other smaller birds from Canberra nor particular problem in our backyard native bird bullies are Currawongs and Wattlebirds.



**Mynas vs Miners:
a silly argument**



the east coast, and not become common reported as a Canberra gardens:

Bruce states that Noisy Miners, unlike the introduced Indian Mynas, do not exclude native birds from nesting hollows nor are they a serious pest nesting and roosting in suburbs and ceilings, and fouling backyard patios. Accordingly, they do not stop native birds from using tree hollows to breed in: this is one of the very serious concerns with Indian Mynas. This seems to be the critical aspect that is overlooked by those that regard mynas as benign.

The myna / miner issues are different, and it is pointless to link them! Rather, the focus should be on addressing all ecologically threatening processes no matter if they arise from non-native or native species, or from human activity. CIMAG and other community/local government action programs are doing their part on one of the big ones: the ecological threat posed by mynas.

Animal Welfare Issues

Since we started in 2006, CIMAG has stressed the need for humane treatment, painless euthanasia and appropriate disposal of trapped mynas.

We use a trap which minimises stress – it has a roost, food, water and a shade cloth cover over the holding chamber. Additionally, CIMAG has developed an animal welfare protocol (which all members sign on joining), and have an on-going relationship with the RSPCA, the ACT Government, the ANU and other conservation groups. And we follow Chris Tidemann's research which shows that carbon monoxide is preferable for euthanasia.

Over recent decades, public attitudes to animal welfare have changed markedly. Cruel or careless practices, once accepted or overlooked, are now no longer seen as appropriate by the community. CIMAG wishes to stay free from any dodgy practices. It would take only one or two reports of careless behaviour to damage our good reputation and set back our programs.

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

With this in mind we would ask that you continue to ensure that trapped birds are properly fed and watered, are humanely euthanized or taken to the RSPCA within a few days of trapping, and that traps are placed to avoid hot sun and are regularly cleaned after use.

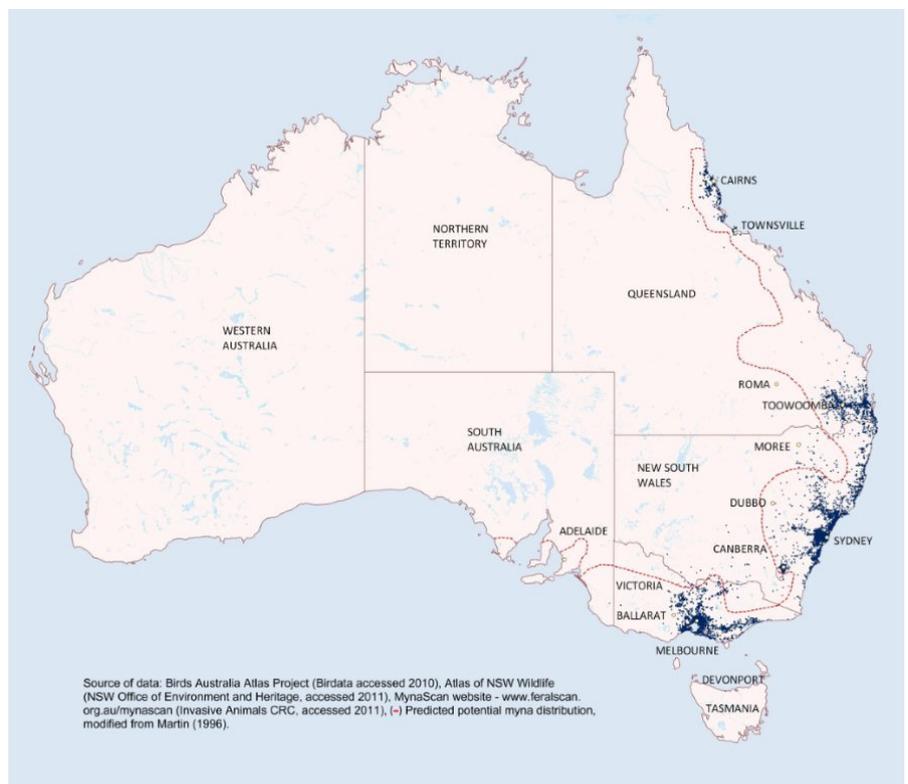
Thanks everyone for doing the right things over the last five years. We need to keep it up.

Chapman, Campbell, Red Hill, O'Connor, Bonython – you can start trapping again.

As part of Kate Grarock's PhD research project at ANU on the impact of mynas on native wildlife and the effectiveness of our trapping program, the suburbs of Chapman, Campbell, Red Hill, O'Connor and Bonython were "non-trapping" suburbs = part of the control for the research project. Now that Kate has finished the collection of data, people in those suburbs can resume trapping. In fact we are giving priority to those suburbs in our trap hand-outs.

Map on Myna locations with room to expand

This map shows the areas where mynas are currently located. The further disturbing thing is that the area on the coast side of the dotted red line has habitat and climate suitable for them. That is a lot of native wildlife that would be lost if we fail to stop the spread of the Indian Myna. At this stage, no government has listed the Indian Myna as a threat to Australia's ecology: hard to believe this is the state-of-play when one visits Melbourne, Sydney, Townsville or Cairns, or Pacific Island countries. Time for some hard thinking by State and



federal authorities: local government and local communities get it, so does the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the UN Environment Program: time for them too.

Cairns – perhaps the movement is about to happen!

At a recent trip to Cairns I was again totally dismayed at the number of mynas around the city: of every lot of 50 birds counted, 43-45 were mynas. Once central Cairns had lots of little native birds: that is a rare sight now. Equally shocking was that mynas were spread from Atherton to Mareeba to Mossman and at Palm Cove. But I was very heartened when Hugh Bowers of the Cairns Rotary Club invited me to speak to the group about mynas. Warren Entsch MP, the local federal member, is a Cairns Rotarian and is very keen to get something happening up there. He is very aware of the success we have had down in Canberra, having seen when he comes down for Parliament the change over the years in myna numbers. So let's hope this is the start of a concerted campaign to restore some balance to the birdlife up in far north Queensland. It is desperately needed.

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

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Around the Traps

Some really great developments are happening on the myna-control front elsewhere in Australia. Read on about the efforts of other groups. The "Happenings Elsewhere" section of the CIMAG website (www.indianmynaaction.org.au) has more on this.

The **Clarence Valley Conservation in Action** group in northern NSW is working up a good myna control program involving the local Juvenile Justice Centre, Envite and a volunteer from Volunteering Clarence Valley in trap building. They have recently started stalls at local markets as a way of getting their message out to the community. They passed their 1,000 trapped myna back in July and have a small dedicated group on the case up there under the co-ordination of Laura Noble. See their website (www.cvcia.org.au) for more info.

Tweed and Byron Shire Council's myna control program is now well established with well structured, well managed and very effective activities: over 4,500 mynas have been removed since the program started. The myna control program looks to expand its approach to conservation management up there with funding for a broader program of activities that will tackle mynas, cane toads, rabbits, foxes etc. Pam Gray, the Project Leader, says the aim is to support the restoration and rehabilitation of urban and peri urban bushland in the district. Hopefully the new funding comes through for that.

Paul Formosa of the **Wollongong Indian Myna Action Program** indicates that the program continues to attract new participants. They now have a total of 330 registrations since they began earlier this year. This is absolutely marvelous and shows how the community has gotten right behind the program. Last weekend they ran their 16th workshop at which they provided information about the programs objectives. The Corrimal Community Men's Shed continue to supply traps: they have developed a round version which has proven to be sturdy and quicker to make. See a photo of the round "Corrimal Trap" and other info on our website.

Byron Kearns, the Land Protection Officer on the **Townsville City Council** mentions that their program of eradicating mynas from Magnetic Island is now complete: the last two crafty ones were done away with by Byron's even craftier plan. It is wonderful news to know that the island is now myna-free. The council is now undertaking a program to educate the folk on the island in identifying and eradicating mynas if they return. Now Byron has turned his attention to the really big task: to rid Townsville itself of the pests.

The **Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne** Victoria continues with its program of myna control with some very positive and encouraging results. David Hunt reports that they have solved their problems with native mammals raiding the PeeGees trap by putting the trap within a floppy top enclosure. The catch since they introduced the PeeGees trap in May last year is 200 but more importantly they have done some analysis on native bird numbers around the depot where they are trapping. While still at an early stage, and the cause cannot be totally certain, myna numbers observed during their weekly transect count have dropped (from 31 per week to 20 per week) and indigenous species richness has correspondingly increased: 25 per week to 35 per week – some 40 native species were observed in the 12 months before trapping and 49 native species have been observed in the 12 months since. They are all great signs that there is something very good happening down there. If you haven't been to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne, put it on your "must-do" list for next time you are in Victoria. A truly wonderful spot.

Hawkesbury Indian Myna Action Group (HIMAG) powers on. It looks like they have beaten us to getting the flat pack made up by their correctional services inmates. Our prototype still languishes in the Alexander Maconochie Centre awaiting mass production. In addition, the local Hawkesbury Men's Shed has now made over 140 PeeGee traps, and it is gratifying to hear the feedback on its effectiveness. One of the HIMAG coordinators for Pitt Town, Peter Ryan, mentions that they have worked out an approach to entice the smarter mynas into the trap – by putting a little peanut butter on the dog food. Don't need much, apparently. They also find that it is important to keep the trap washed down between trappings.

Tracey Poulter from Wingecarribee Shire Council says that their capture results are now up to 2195 Indian Mynas and 108 European Starlings. So, good work up there. She has been contacted by people outside their shire for information, so let's hope that something comes from that. There was also plenty of

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

interest from Wingecarribee residents in regards to Indian Mynas and what people can do to control them when Council held their Threatened Species Display in one of the local shopping centres. The poster that they used gave some prominence to mynas.

Andre Pieterse from **Johannesburg, South Africa** advises that a tree trapping exercise over there has had some good success. The local authorities erected a tarpaulin over a roosting tree. After a few days the birds were all back. Some toxic gas was then placed under the tarpaulin and managed to remove over 100 birds in one night. I am seeking more information from Andre on how this worked. This seems to be a similar to Chris Tidemann's roosting tree trap concept which had to be abandoned because of structural instability in any sort of breeze.

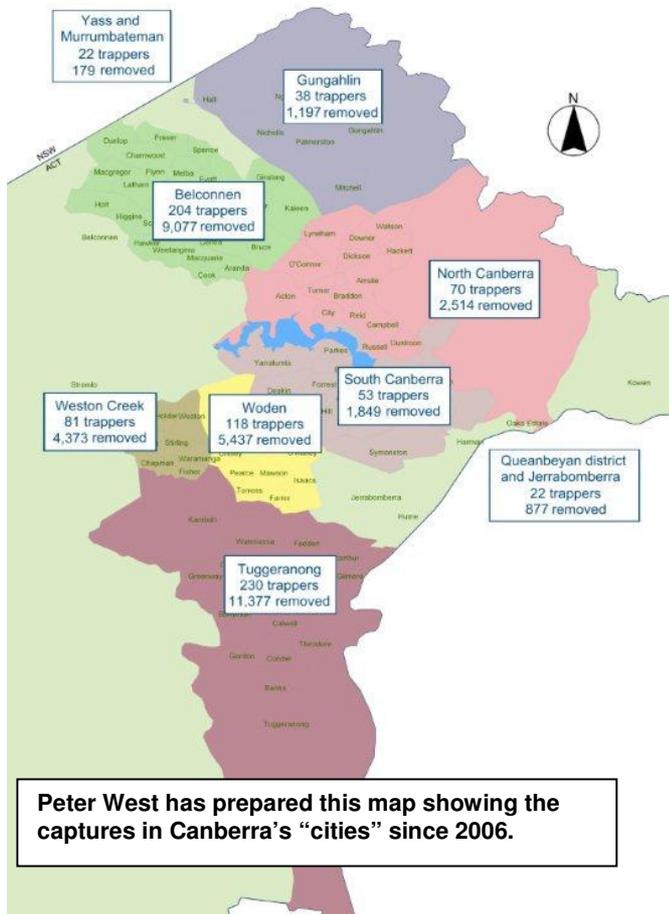
Murrumbateman Landcare Group is getting their traps out as the ripening season for grapes approaches. They find this is the most effective time of the year as the mynas come in to raid the vineyards: and one which pays big dividends for the vignerons over there. No doubt we will be able to drink their success!

Trapping numbers for the last few months

Reasonably good number of trappings over the past few months although again we find that wary mynas are avoiding traps. Time for us to move to the nesting box trap – but awaiting a new protocol on that before distribution. We have over 150 people waiting for a trap: sadly the gaol has not produced as many this year as last. This is a real shame as when traps go to new areas we always get good capture numbers. The recent reported monthly numbers are:

	Apr 11	May 11	Jun 11	Jul 11	Aug 11
Mynas	564	662	430	340	237
Starlings	61	36	12	3	13

for a total of 38,296 mynas to end August 2011. The attached chart shows trapper numbers, total captures by suburb for six-monthly periods to June 11.



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
28 Sept 2011