

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Dr Chris Tidemann



President's Report 2007-08

It is my very great pleasure to present this 2007-08 President's Report for the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc (CIMAG).

In short, 2007-08 was a year of achievement and continued progress. Across all of our areas of activity the task of reducing the threat posed by Indian Mynas has gone from strength to strength.

Firstly I would like to pay tribute to the support and guidance of our patron, Dr Chris Tidemann, the eminent ANU research fellow, and to the CIMAG Committee for the work in this second year of CIMAG's operation. CIMAG is indeed fortunate to have such prominent local people as Bruce Lindenmayer, Jenny Bounds, Alison Russell-French, Greg Flowers, Peter Franklin, Anne l'ons, Peter Oram, Rosemary Blemings and Peter Green on our Committee.

CIMAG operates as a loose association of like-minded members who individually and collectively work to implement the CIMAG Strategy. This Strategy — developed earlier by the Committee to guide and direct our efforts — recognizes that a multi-layered approach will be needed to achieve our common overarching objective. That objective is to reduce the presence of Indian Mynas in our region and thereby reduce the threat they pose to our wildlife and the nuisance to our urban and home environments.

The following touches on the activity and highlights of the past year.

Firstly, the outcome that we have been seeking — a reduction of mynas across Canberra and surrounding areas — is happening. While many people mention that they are seeing fewer mynas, the 2007 Garden Bird Survey of the Canberra Ornithologists Group confirms it. For the very first time the numbers of Indian Mynas across Canberra suburbs has fallen. This is put down to the efforts of CIMAG members. Our collective endeavours are paying off, with at least 18,200 mynas removed from Canberra suburbs. As not all CIMAG members report their captures, and there are many non-CIMAG people who are trapping because of our easy-to-make trap, this number could well be around 25,000. This would equate to between 15%-20% of the myna population in Canberra in two and a half years. A quite remarkable and significant result.

The merit and success of CIMAG's activities have been recognized. In this regard, both the ACT and federal governments have come in behind CIMAG's activities and provided grant funding this financial year (totally \$28,000 between them) to expand our program of public awareness and education, and in trap making. Furthermore, NSW local councils and conservation / environmental groups regularly approached CIMAG for assistance in developing similar programs in their areas, and scores of people across eastern Australia made contact to get information and advice. The CIMAG website

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(www.indianmynaaction.org.au) is a source of information and advice that is highly regarded. Our thanks to David Cook for managing the site and developing it in a way that people find easy-to-use and valuable.

The **public education and awareness raising** activity of CIMAG has been intense over the past year. CIMAG has developed and printed a series of public education brochures / pamphlets and poster (with the grant funds provided by the two governments) that are written for various audiences: the general public, schools, and businesses. Marie Lake, Jane Tuckwell, Jenny Bounds and Rosemary Blemings have done a wonderful job in developing these informative and eye-catching documents. Members are encouraged to get copies of these documents and circulate them to groups and schools in their area.

In an endeavour to get the message out to the broader community over the last year, CIMAG Committee members have addressed two major Conferences and given 7 public presentations to local government and community groups in Canberra and as far afield as Coffs Harbour, Tamworth and the Shoalhaven. Regular references to CIMAG activities by Ian Fraser and Dr Tony Peacock on ABC 666 and by Merylyn Condon on her 2CA gardening program have given the group and its activities a high profile across Canberra, as did a WIN TV news item. In addition to providing public presentations, CIMAG members have given trap building demonstrations to a number of NSW organizations. Our thanks to Mik and Peter Ormay for their efforts in this regard and for their work in refining trap building techniques.

It is most pleasing to see the new level of activity across NSW — groups are forming along the east coast of NSW and as far inland as Tamworth, Mudgee, Dubbo — to tackling mynas. CIMAG's success and its direct / indirect support may well have helped to stimulate this new flurry of community activity.

The **membership** of CIMAG continues to grow strongly. With now just over 500 members (up from 322 this time last year), and with some 440 members who have been trapping at some stage, CIMAG has become a major community-action group in the ACT. This provides CIMAG with opportunities: we are now better placed to have a closer engagement with the ACT Government and the business sector to expand our activities across ACT public and private places.

A constraint on the CIMAG trapping program has been the difficulty in keeping up with the demand for traps. While funding support from the governments is enabling us to obtain the materials to make free traps for CIMAG members, the demand continues to outstrip our capacity to build them in the numbers required: currently some 85 traps are on order. We have held a number of working bees where CIMAG members have assisted in making traps. Our thanks to all those who participated in this: they are fun evenings and the beer and pizza afterwards is a good reward for a job well done. In regard to trap building, we have been delighted that in discussions with the ACT Government officials, it is likely that the Alexander Maconochie Centre (the new ACT jail) will assist by building traps for us once it opens in the near future.

CIMAG wishes to see its activities based on **sound research**. In this regard we are privileged to have Dr Chris Tidemann as our patron and other prominent scientists — such as Professor David Lindenmayer and Dr Tony Peacock involved. During 2007-08, ANU and the Collaborative Research Centre for Invasive Animals agreed to a CIMAG

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suggestion of funding a PhD student to undertake research into Indian Mynas: this PhD project commenced in February this year and will be valuable follow-up research to that previously undertaken by Dr Tidemann and his students. The Canberra Ornithologists Group and Birds Australia have indicated financial support for this four year PhD project, being undertaken by Kate Grarock. In addition, CIMAG has been supporting Dr Tidemann in some of his other research, particularly in assessing the most humane euthanising approach. All this will be a major boost to our knowledge on Indian Mynas, on the best strategies for reducing their numbers, and on whether we are able to have a significant long term impact on their numbers.

The Treasurer's report reflects the healthy financial position of the Group. The financial grants provided by the ACT and federal governments now enables the group to develop public awareness / education materials and to obtain the materials for trap building. This has been a great fillip to our efforts. As well, our thanks to all those members who have made donations to the group to cover the administrative cost of our activities. This is greatly appreciated and enables the group to operate effectively.

While 2007-08 has been highly successful, there is still much more that needs to be done by the group in the future. Some of the challenges that remain are:

- consolidating / expanding our trapping program and complementing our backyard activities with effort in public spaces
- establishing a close working relationship across ACT Government departments
- maintaining member interest and activity and recruiting new members to maintain a high scale of trapping across all areas of Canberra and the surrounding region
- ensuring that our activities are based on sound and up-to-date science and to contribute to scientific research in conjunction with ANU
- obtaining tax deductibility status for the group
- establishing a regular and reliable source of trap construction
- fostering similar community-action groups across NSW and particularly in Victoria and Queensland.

Bill Handke
President
Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc.

12 August 2008