

Nowra Indian Myna Conference a Great Success

Bill Handke, President Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

A recent conference at Nowra, a further initiative of the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc, may well be the stimulus for a much wider Indian Myna control program across NSW by local government and community groups.

On 13 May, the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc, with financial assistance from the Commonwealth's Envirofund, sponsored an all-day conference in Nowra entitled "Towards Best Practice Indian Myna Control".

Around 80 delegates attended representing 22 councils throughout NSW, community & landcare groups, government agencies, and universities.

The conference provided the opportunity to inform councils and community groups about the latest knowledge and research on myna biology, ecology, and control measures. It also importantly provided the opportunity to discuss with local governments and community groups the low cost options available to councils to support successful myna control programs. Up till now, some councils have been concerned at the cost involved if they were to undertake control programs.



Initial papers presented included an overview of mynas as an invasive species (Prof Tony Peacock from the Invasive Animals CRC), research on trapping and removal of mynas in the ACT (Kate Grarock - ANU PhD Scholar) and in Blacktown City Council area (Justine Clarke - Blacktown Council & Ricky Spencer - University of Western Sydney).

Chris Tidemann (ANU researcher and CIMAG patron) presented papers on larger scale experimental trapping of mynas at roost sites and trials on the use of carbon monoxide for euthanasia. His research on the use of carbon monoxide will hopefully underpin a nationally-accepted low cost, simple and practical way to euthanise pest birds which is a prerequisite for broad-scale community-action.

John Yim (Veterinary student from Sydney University) reported on initial research into whether mynas carry the pathogens that are killing native birds – such as Tawny Frogmouths – in the Sydney basin. Initial results of this research (only using frozen Hall-based mynas supplied by CIMAG) have been inconclusive, but it is hoped that analysis of Sydney trapped birds will provide more conclusive answers.

Several papers were delivered on the formation and building of groups, co-operation with local governments and agencies, maintenance of volunteer involvement and enthusiasm, trap design and manufacture, trapping techniques and euthanasia. Speakers were CIMAG's Bill Handke, Central Coast Indian Myna Action Group's Matthew Whitehouse and Anna Hernell & Rod Simpson from Shoalhaven.

Tony Peacock demonstrated a new interactive spatial mapping program (MynaScan) which (based on an existing program for rabbits) might be used to record myna densities, roosting and nesting sites.

The afternoon session involved discussions on ways for councils and communities to work together, trapping and public education, animal welfare issues, and constraints to more effective myna management. There was enormous enthusiasm to move forward and to share ideas.

Considerable time was spent discussing a low-cost option available to councils to initiate myna control programs. The model discussed was the "Shoalhaven model" — which had been established following a couple CIMAG presentations in the Shoalhaven. Councils are reacting to pressure from ratepayers "to do something to control mynas", but have varied considerably in their

responses. Shoalhaven City Council has been outstanding in setting up and coordinating more than 30 voluntary groups throughout a large local area and working with men's sheds for trap building.

Other notable reports came from the Tamworth Regional Council where trapping at the local trip has been highly successful; by Jacqui Stol, Jenny Langridge and Chris Davey from the Murrumbateman Landcare Group about trapping at the vineyards there; from the Coffs Harbour group; and from the Bega Valley COMY Task Force where volunteers have so far excluded mynas by targeting them along migration routes and at dairies.

An official from SA attended to learn how the state government could prevent mynas from entering SA from western Victoria, and representatives from the Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne and the Chisholm Institute (both in Victoria) attended to learn how they might deal with them there.

The presentations will shortly be put on our website (www.indianmynaaction.org.au). CIMAG will publish proceedings of the conference and draft a "Best Practice Guide for Indian Myna Control" drawing on the discussions at the conference.

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