

Tackling the Dreaded Indian Myna by Bill Handke, President, CIMAG

A group of concerned Canberrans has got together to form the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc. (CIMAG). CIMAG wants to protect Canberra's native birds and mammals from the serious threat posed by the alarming increase in numbers Indian Myna (or Common Myna) in the Canberra region.



Indian Mynas are a serious environmental threat to native wildlife because they take over nesting hollows, evicting birds and small mammals, and prey on nestlings. Their threat to wildlife worldwide has been recognized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with its inclusion on the IUCN's list of 100 most invasive species in the world. Indian Mynas, by nesting in roof cavities and foraging around outdoor cafes and shopping centres, also pose some small risk to human health as they carry a number of diseases. The nesting material they bring into roof cavities and into other spaces in buildings can also be a fire hazard.

CIMAG has the aim of protecting native birds from the threat posed by the Indian Myna (or Common Myna), through a strategy that involves:

- raising public awareness that this bird is a serious environmental threat, not just a nuisance;
- informing the public on how to limit the Mynas' spread by reducing its feeding, nesting and roosting opportunities; and
- a humane reduction program.

A trapping program for mynas is an essential part of any strategy to control these pests. CIMAG has established such a program using traps that only target non-native birds: mynas and starlings. This is perfectly legal and CIMAG requires that any trapping and euthanising be done in line with its Protocol on Animal Welfare that has been cleared by the RSPCA. Trapping has proven highly successful: one member trapped 665 in his backyard in six months while another member captured 40 mynas and 37 starlings in his first week of trapping.

The group operates as an association of like-minded individuals who are interested in working, individually or collectively, in implementing an agreed strategy to tackle the Indian Myna problem in Canberra and the surrounding region. The group keeps informed of developments via an email network.

While it is unlikely that mynas can be completely eradicated, unless a start is made to reduce and control their numbers, there is a risk that we will lose many of our native birds — particularly parrots. However, with community effort some balance can be brought back to natural systems to give native birds and animals a better chance to resist these foreign invaders.

To learn more or to become a member of the Group, contact Bill Handke on 6231 7461 or handke@grapevine.net.au or go to the CIMAG website: www.indianmynaaction.org.au .