

Community-Action: a Model to Reduce Indian Mynas

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Many pest species require concerted government effort to manage or control. They do not lend themselves readily to broad scale community control activity: either because of their location, their characteristics or their behaviours.

The Indian Myna control activities of the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc, however, clearly demonstrate that mynas are one pest that is amenable to a community-action control program.

Such community-action can be either facilitated and supported by local government or arise as a stand-alone activity growing from collective community concern.

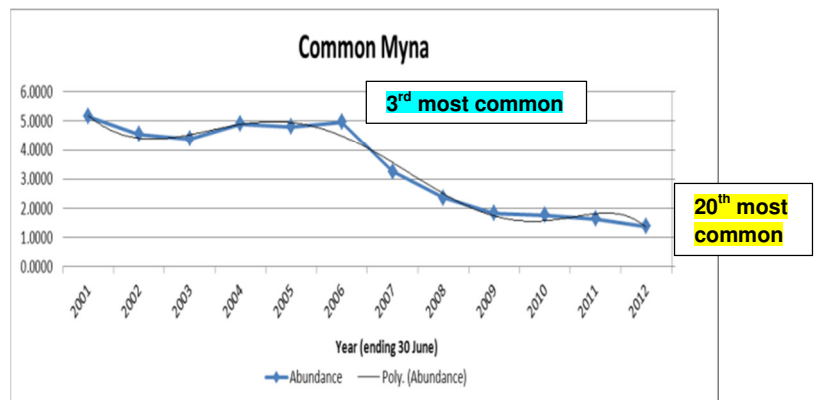
The Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc was formed in early 2006 as a result of concern within the local birdwatchers group (Canberra Ornithologists Group) to the perceived threat to the environment from the high numbers of Indian Mynas across the suburban areas of the ACT, and their emerging incursion into the surrounding nature reserves.

With use of media, networking with like-minded groups, and promotion by high profile environmental champions, the community myna-control movement gained momentum: after 7 years there have been 1477 people from the Canberra / Queanbeyan district who have joined the group, with most obtaining a PeeGee trap for backyard trapping. In addition to these CIMAG trappers, we are aware of many non-CIMAG people who are trapping.

Notwithstanding that many CIMAG trappers do not submit monthly capture data – an issue with many voluntary community groups – CIMAG has monthly records of 45,260 mynas having been removed from the local environment. The true total may well be some many thousands more, if the captures by non-CIMAG trappers and CIMAG non-reporting trappers were counted.

The outcome of this community activity is a profound change in the observed birdlife around Canberra and Queanbeyan. Rosellas and galahs are back in nesting boxes and tree hollows; small birds are back in people's gardens; fewer mynas are scavenging around suburban shopping centres; and many fewer mynas are seen across the district.

The noticeable reduction in myna numbers is confirmed by the Garden Bird Survey data of the Canberra Ornithologists Group – this comprehensive weekly survey across Canberra is now in its 30th survey year. It indicates that mynas were the 3rd most common bird in Canberra when CIMAG



commenced: after 7 years of intense community trapping, mynas are now listed as the 20th most common bird in Canberra. Whereas 4.958 mynas were seen on average by the surveyors within 100 metres of their backyard for every week of the year in 2006, by the end of the 2012 survey year, this had dropped to 1.3 mynas on average each week. A remarkable reduction.

The experience in Canberra demonstrates that myna numbers can be drastically reduced by a concerted, coordinated and sustained trapping program. Moreover, community-action can provide the “large-scale” effort that is needed, without imposing high costs on government.