

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

Myna Matters Bulletin # 24 (Winter 2012)

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on myna-control activities:



Kate confirms what we thought

Kate Garrock has now finished her PhD research and data collation on Indian Mynas, and her 5 papers from her research are currently going through the scientific review process. They will be published in the months ahead.

Kate says that the PhD as a whole has been quite successful in investigating the impact of the Indian Myna and she believes it advances the scientific understanding of this species considerably. That said, she notes there will still be a very large gap between what the science can prove and what community observations and experience indicate.

She has told us enough about her findings to confirm our program (and all the other similar programs) have been on the right track. Mynas are displacing native birds from nesting hollows, they do reduce the breeding opportunities of native birds by out-competing them for hollows, and, importantly, our trapping program is having a significant impact on their numbers.

It is great to have that confirmation through a rigorous scientific research project. Kate says thanks to CIMAG and the many people who have helped her throughout her research.

Northside Snuffer – now open for “business”

Those CIMAG trappers on the northside of Canberra who previously had been going to the RSPCA in Weston to dispose of their trapped mynas, can now do a much shorter drive to Hall where we have set up a Snuffer Trailer to dispose of the birds. This was the Snuffer Trailer that



Chris Tidemann had built for his research on mynas at ANU: Chris kindly donated it to CIMAG. Greg Flowers has the Snuffer and is happy to help people out who would prefer not to euthanize the birds at home. So if you want to take advantage of this service, just contact Greg (ghughf@gmail.com or on 0477 005 414) to arrange a time to take them to his place at Hall.



The “Mac” back on track

After a quieter time in making traps, the Alexander Maconochie Centre has been churning out the traps. So much so that we have almost caught up on the waiting list. Thanks to the people at the gaol for their work and support for our efforts in reducing myna numbers in the region. Also thanks to the Yurung Dhaura team of indigenous natural resource management trainees and their supervisor, Joe Stephens, for the traps they are making.



To those who have been waiting a long time to get a trap, our apologies. We were swamped with requests, but are now getting on top of that. However, we are having trouble getting in touch with some people who were on the waiting list – perhaps a change of email address or even a change of phone numbers has meant that they are not getting the good news. Or perhaps, more likely, I can't read my own handwriting! So if you were after a trap and haven't as yet had the call, get back in touch. Or if you know of anybody in that boat, please pass on the news: a trap is awaiting and mynas are a-calling.

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A Current Affair and ABC TV Interviews

Since the last Myna Matters Bulletin, the CIMAG success was covered in two TV interviews: a long item on A Current Affair with Damian Murphy (Brian, his father is a CIMAG member) and another on ABC.

All good stuff - it has immensely promoted the cause of myna control across the eastern States. If you missed the ACA item, you can see it on youtube: type the following into your web search engine: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FJUs4UHifs> .

The ACA item in particular lead to a flurry of inquiries from people from Cairns to Melbourne. There are likely to be local councils all up and down the coast being pressured by their ratepayers to help facilitate the establishment of community-action groups in their areas. Naturally we are willing to assist in that process where we can, as we have elsewhere.

Spotted any Doves?

Many "birdos" from the Canberra Ornithologists Group and within CIMAG, as well as ACT government officials are concerned at the growing numbers of Spotted Doves – previously called Spotted Turtle Doves – that are being seen in Canberra and Queanbeyan. This non-native dove



has all the hallmarks of a concerning invasive species. A clear distinguishing feature is the spots on the back of the neck: white spots on a black background. Also they have a distinct coo-ing call. Alice Springs had a population explosion of these introduced doves after some were released from an aviary up there: the numbers built up very quickly to over 10,000 – and had a severe impact on the numbers of native doves and native pigeons. We don't want a similar thing to happen here.

While Spotted Doves are not a target species for our group, we would be interested in hearing from CIMAG members and friends whether they are seeing them around their way. Also, while they are not likely to enter our traps as we use dry dog or dry cat food, if by chance you do get one in the trap, you can dispose of it humanely like the Indian Myna and Starling. But please be very careful that it is not our native Crested Pigeon.



At 92 yrs old – is Frank our oldest Campaigner?

Just to prove that age is no barrier to continuing to do your bit for our native wildlife, Frank Atkins of Waramanga has started trapping to reduce mynas in his area. In the very first setting of the trap, Frank caught 8 mynas. The question arises: is Frank, at 92 years of age, our oldest active trapper? If you or someone you know might be able to challenge Frank for the auspicious title, can you let us know? It need not be someone from the Canberra / Queanbeyan district. We might have a "trap-off" challenge for the Best Nonagenarian Trapper!!

The beat goes on

CIMAG trappers had a successful year in 2011 and have continued to "beat down" myna numbers for the first few months of 2012. Graham Gliddon reports that a total of 5,764 mynas and 1,188 starlings were caught in 2011. Although the myna numbers are below those we were catching in our heyday – some years ago – we are very happy as this tends to reflect the general overall reduction in mynas across Canberra and the nearby NSW region.

The captures for 2012 so far are reasonable: the early months of course were when the naïve juveniles were out and about – easy targets. For some reason there was a lull in numbers in March and April but a lift in May. Perhaps the colder weather meant there was fewer insects around and the dog food looked like easy pickings.

Jan12	Feb12	Mar12	Apr12	May12
495	517	242	290	419

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The total of captured mynas reported in to Graham to date since 2006 now stands at 41,971.

Where are the “hotspots”?

Many of the trappers responding to Graham’s monthly email for captures have indicated that they are not seeing or hearing mynas around their place. That is great news, but if you know of any lingering “hotspots” in the suburbs, particularly any roosting sites, let us know. We know that shopping centres and schools still remain a refuge for them. If only...

The Nesting Boxes in Reserves

You will recall that Kate Grarock, as part of her research on the impact of mynas, erected over 200 nesting boxes in nature reserves adjacent to 15 Canberra suburbs. When Kate finished her data collection, CIMAG had an agreement with the ACT Government to “manage” the nesting boxes. A number of our members regularly monitored the boxes to see what was occupying them over the 2011-2012 breeding season. If mynas were breeding in them, then we had permission from the nature park rangers to humanely dispose of the birds.



There were some very pleasant surprises. Firstly, contrary to our fears, mynas had not occupied most of the boxes. Quite a few of the boxes had rosellas or signs of rosellas having occupied them:

and others had sugar gliders. But the great joy was seeing that 9 of the boxes were being used by Owlet Nightjars.

A big concern has been the number of nesting boxes that were occupied or had been occupied by bees. Bee numbers were very high in the reserves adjacent to Theodore and Fadden. We had been told that birds will not re-occupy a nesting hollow / box if it had previously been occupied by bees – we do not know this for certain. But if it is the case this is most concerning as it would mean that native birds will have even fewer hollows in which to breed.

Because of the concern with bees, Kate had arranged with a local apiarist, Dermott, to remove boxes with bees / or remnants of bee hives. So far, Dermott has removed about 40-45 boxes.

Trapping near Roosts – does it work?

For some time the thought has been that mynas do not enter traps if they are placed near roosting trees: people have mentioned that while there might be scores or even hundreds of mynas in a roosting tree in their back / front yard, they are not going into their trap. It is as if the mynas in the roost have collectively determined that the roosting area is a non-feeding area: ie “don’t eat where you sleep”!

We would like to get a better idea on whether that is the case or not. So, if you have put your trap near to a roosting tree and either had success or failure, can you let us know - send an email to president@indianmynaaction.org.au.

Flat roofs – does trapping flat-line?

One more piece of conventional wisdom is that as mynas are ground scavengers (apart from when the figs in your backyard are ripe or the grapes are coming on nicely) they will not go into traps that are placed high off the ground – such as on a flat roof, say of the carport.

But this piece of “wisdom” was shattered recently when a trapper reported catching over twenty in his trap on top of a flat roof. So again, let’s hear of your experiences. If you have tried the trap out on the top of a flat roof and have had success or it hasn’t done any good, let us know.

Owlet Nightjar in nesting box on Mt Taylor



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Mynas doing unspeakable things: can we get the evidence

We constantly hear reports of mynas doing undesirable things – entering houses, eating off kitchen benches, attacking babies in basinet, fouling patio tables, swooping pets etc. Distressing as these cases are, we tend not to have photos of the happenings (I am not suggesting that if a myna is pecking your baby you first reach for the camera!). But if you do have photos of those sorts of happenings, can you again send them on to us.

It is these “nuisance” traits that make the myna an urban pariah.



Myna mess on outdoor table

MynaScan: its working well, but can do with your sightings

Peter West from the Invasive Animals CRC reports that the MynaScan website - for recording where myna birds are (available at www.feralscan.org.au/mynascan) - has now attracted a total of 3,600 records of sightings, and hundreds of damage and control data records. This information is helping to reveal trends in populations, their range and hence the emerging threats. But if we want to get the best possible picture of their range and the damage they cause, MynaScan needs more records. So go onto the website and record your sightings: its fun. It would also be particularly valuable to get your sightings of mynas if you happen to be travelling north, west or south outside your region: areas where in the past there have been few myna sightings.



The other exciting news on MynaScan is that it will soon be available in a mobile phone-friendly version, allowing anyone with a smart phone or mobile phone to enter data in their local area using mobile technology. That really makes it easy when you are out and about. It's another ingenious approach by Peter West.

Also the Invasive Animals CRC has also been busy developing and distributing information packs to local governments, catchment management authorities, and community groups. For these and further information, contact Peter West at the Invasive Animals CRC on (02) 6391 3887 or peter.west@dpi.nsw.gov.au.



Victoria Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) draft conclusions on Mynas

The Victoria SAC has released its draft conclusions in respect to a proposal that Indian Mynas be listed as a “Potentially threatening process” under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. Overall, the SAC concluded that there was insufficient scientific evidence to conclude that mynas were a threat to native fauna. Its conclusions are really founded on what it sees as a lack of rigorous scientific evidence to prove the case, while acknowledging the vast amount of anecdotal reports. This is very disappointing. The SAC is taking public submissions on its draft conclusions. CIMAG will make a submission, drawing on the following points: a) The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the world's pre-eminent conservation body, has listed the Indian Myna on its list of the 100 most invasive species; b) the recommendation ignores a fundamental conservation principle - the “precautionary principle” that is a fundamental tenet of conservation: ie, “if in doubt as to an impact of a particular action or thing, take a cautionary approach”; c) the SAC should consider the impact of mynas at a local / regional level on species diversity in metropolitan Melbourne – even if they are not listed as threatened throughout Victoria. The impact of mynas on hollow-nesting birds / mammals is recognized world-wide. People who visit Melbourne would be aware that mynas are the most common bird seen, with native bird diversity much reduced.

If you want to see the SAC draft conclusions get in touch and I will forward the material. It does not seem to have been placed as yet on the SAC website.

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Around the Traps

From the North to the South – the beat begins

Great news from Cairns in the north to the Yarra Valley in the south.

The **Cairns Rotary Indian Myna Eradication Society (CRIMES)** is going extremely well. Peter Goulding, the President, reports that so far they have distributed 700 traps in the area; that is a huge number in just a few months. What's more, Peter reports that great numbers are being caught. Quite a few of the trappers have caught over 250 mynas in this short time. This is very welcome news for the locals and visitors to Cairns who have seen the native birdlife devastated over the past decades to the point that few native small birds are seen in the city area. We can all hope that the great work by Peter and the people of CRIMES means that the local native birdlife will be back.

Down in Victoria, the **Yarra Indian Myna Action Group (YIMAG)**, with Julia Gibson as founder and President, is ratcheting up its program. Good numbers are being caught – with one new trapper in Eltham catching 109 in his first 10 days of trapping. Now that is making a dent! We always knew they had an Indian Myna problem down that way, but at this rate, that will not be a problem for much longer. Well done to Julia and the team down there.

While down in Victoria, the **Royal Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne** continue to run their myna trapping program. While they report that numbers of captures are slowing, they are pleased that the overall numbers of mynas in the Gardens have noticeably dropped. But particularly pleasing is the correlation of an increase in native bird species in the Gardens as the myna numbers have dropped. This is most valuable research and replicates the anecdotal experience here, as well as research results in New Zealand.

The **Murrumbateman Landcare Group** has continued their efforts with very pleasing results. MLG volunteers set up the traps in farmland mainly during the myna breeding season, while in the vineyards they trap when the grapes are ripening when the birds can be a major problem for growers. The vignerons in the Murrumbateman district have been delighted that the number of mynas attacking their grapes over the 2012 ripening season were considerably reduced from the year before. It would seem they are getting on top of the problem as while they trapped over a hundred birds in 2010-2011, they only caught 25 in the 2011-12 season.

Tien Pham of the **Mid North Coast Indian Myna Project (Coffs, Bellingen, Nambucca)**, reports that on June 6th volunteers from across the NSW mid-north coast gathered in Gladstone for the Myna Control Network Meeting. This is an annual event and brings together key volunteers involved in myna control activities and provides members with an opportunity to share their experiences, assess progress and coordinate future activities to more effectively tackle the myna menace. The network is made up of hundreds of community volunteers involved in a range of control activities including trapping, trap building, euthanasia support, surveying, education and awareness raising. Representatives from supporting agencies such as Landcare and the National Parks & Wildlife Service also attended and provided advice on issues such as animal welfare and opportunities for more funding support for future activities. Tien Pham and Justine Elder - Project Officers - were on hand to present awards to local volunteers in recognition of their great effort and dedication.



Some happy volunteers at the Myna Control Network Meeting

John McCrea from the **Mid Western Indian Myna Group** in Mudgee-Dunedoo reports the effort continues over there with Simon Ferguson now having caught 110 in Dunedoo and 14 in Burrengong. The efforts by John and Simon are really important as they are halting the westward movement of these pest birds. There has still only been 1 myna caught at Mudgee with only one other seen. John keeps a pair of mynas in an aviary to entice any free-flying mynas that come into the district to visit the aviary – and the trap. This technique is used by Simon with good effect

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at Dunedoo, and is a trick that is worth employing in rural areas. One bad report from John, though, is that National Park Rangers have reported seeing mynas at Coolah Tops, and John has seen a couple north of Warrumbungles NP. Worrying, indeed.

The myna control activities by **Clarence Valley Conservation in Action** goes from strength to strength with Laura and Kevin Noble in the vanguard. There are many lessons that we can learn from their approach. Over autumn, the



Kevin Noble of CVIA getting the first Nortec traps

CVIA had stalls at the local shows / markets in a number of the towns (Maclean, Grafton, Tucabia, Nymboida) and, as can be seen from the photo, they get lots of interest – and volunteers – to help the program. Kevin reports that volunteers from the Nortec Education and Training company are now making traps for them – the CVIA took delivery of the first 10 traps just recently.



CVIA stall at Tucabia markets

The recent CVIA newsletter gives a reminder to trappers that persistence pays off: a CVIA trapper who had no luck catching any mynas for 13 months was rewarded for persistence by catching 45 over April and May. Captures by CVIA volunteers now stands at over 2550 over the past 2 years.

The **Eurobodalla Myna Control Program**, thanks to the dynamo Courtney Fink-Downes from Eurobodalla Shire Council, is still very active. The council has 100 traps that it lends to people in the shire, and Courtney is also busy at nights speaking to public forums to get the message out to the community. It has certainly been a big effort – particularly for a new mum – but it is paying off as they have had some very good results. Courtney reports that Broulee is now totally myna-free after the last pair were eliminated a few weeks back.

Wollongong Indian Myna Action Program

The WIMAG program is going gang-busters with lots of community interest. Cassie Martiensen reports that 29 workshops have been held involving 463 people; the Corrimal Men's Shed has made 276 traps; and so far their reported captures amount to 1231. Congratulations to all involved. Also Wollongong City Council is funding Dr Ricky Spencer and Dr Julie Old of the University of Western Sydney to investigate the success of a community trapping program in Wollongong.

Hawkesbury Indian Myna Action Group program is going very well. Read about it on:

http://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/46719/BushcareNewsletterVol13Issue1Autumn2012.pdf .

Macleay and Hastings Landcare have received a grant to extend their existing myna work.

Justine Elder has been employed as project officer to run the program, which will focus on monitoring the spread of the birds, and establishing local Action groups in Indian Myna hotspots to trap the birds. This is good news as it increases the area where control programs are active. Myna control programs now stretch from Tweed / Byron to Port Macquarie / Kempsey.

Get onto the CIMAG email Distribution System and Chatline

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 . To get onto the CIMAG Chatline, send a blank email to chat-subscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au and then start posting messages.

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.

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