

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

Myna Matters Bulletin # 25 (Christmas 2012)

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on CIMAG activities:



Merry Festive Season to all involved in Indian Myna Control Activities



With the year almost over, the CIMAG Committee extends the very best for the festive season and for 2013 to all involved in Indian Myna control activities across eastern Australia.

2012 Highlights

We can look back on a successful year of community / local government activity to reduce Indian Myna numbers across our region and along the eastern seaboard. Amongst the big highlights for the year are that more communities and local governments in NSW, Qld and Victoria are becoming involved, and authorities are recognizing and acknowledging that control programs are having a positive effect. CIMAG was invited to give presentations to a number of major conferences: eg, the Qld Pest Management Conference at Caloundra in July, and we had a number of media invitations to discuss the program – the latter included our Patron, Prof Tony Peacock being on Channel 10's The Project to talk about mynas, and items on A Current Affair and the ABC TV. Also the ACT and federal government have provided grant funding to help with public education and trap building materials. As well we were requested to participate in filming for a new TV series on birds in Australia with William McInnes: see item below.

AGM and Public Info Night Wash-up: a good night had by all!

CIMAG AGM in November kept up its form as the place to be. This year, the 40 or so members and friends who gathered for the night were given a treat from our Patron Prof Tony Peacock. As usual, Tony's insight into invasive animal control and work in restoring the natural balance – using the release of Bettongs in Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve as the discussion focus – inspired us to keep up our myna reduction effort.

A major highlight of the evening was an interactive talk, via skype, by Dr Andrea Griffin from the Newcastle University, about her research on myna intelligence. Andrea's talk was fascinating and indicated that we are dealing with a highly adaptive and intelligent pest animal – they are next to crows / ravens in problem solving. It is apparent from her work that we will need to keep adapting our own strategies if we want to keep on top of this bird – more of that below. I must thank Steve Kraus for his assistance in ensuring that the skype link worked. We would have struggled with the poor facility at the venue without his help.

Darren le Roux, a PhD candidate at ANU, told us about his research on nesting boxes – his research will be valuable in building up our knowledge on mynas and their impact on native birds. Perhaps it might even help to answer the thorny question as to whether mynas should be declared a threatening process under state environmental protection legislation. Seemingly as a reward for his talk, Darren happened to pick up the major raffle prize for the night!



And as usual, Graham Gliddon (in picture above – the one on the right) filled us in on our capture

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records for 2012 and overall. Graham does a wonderful job collating monthly captures and the database that he has compiled is huge and very valuable: to us and to researchers.

The AGM was also the time when there was some turnover in Committee membership: after being mainstays on the Committee since CIMAG's inception in 2006, Alison Russell-French (our first Vice President) and Peter Ormay have moved off the Committee – but only in a formal sense. Alison, as the new President of the Canberra Ornithologists Group will attend CIMAG committee meetings in her new capacity, while Peter will also continue to be involved as an advisor – given his extensive knowledge and experience in environmental and conservation matters. Thank you very much Alison and Peter for your work for CIMAG in the past. We welcome two new Committee members – Ross Dalton and Andy Fuller. Ross and Andy join Bruce Lindenmayer (Vice President), Megan van der Velde (Secretary), Anne l'Ons (Treasurer), Marg Peachey, Rosemary Blemings, Ray Barge and Greg Flowers – and myself. Seeing nobody else put their hand up, I remain the President.

The President's Report for 2011-12 can be read on the CIMAG website (www.indianmynaaction.org.au).

Complacency is not a Myna Issue - or

Are Myna numbers still going down, down, down or coming up, up and up again?

After 6 years during which the number of mynas across Canberra was drastically and then steadily reduced, reports are coming in of an upsurge in myna numbers around Canberra. This may – hopefully – be a false impression, as the juveniles are now emerging and so we might be merely noticing the usual annual upsurge in numbers at this time of year. The preliminary survey results of the Garden Bird Survey by Canberra Ornithologists Group suggest that numbers have been reduced again quite significantly in the past year. But the message here is we can't be complacent that the job is done. These birds are prolific breeders and if we don't maintain the trapping effort, in no time at all we will see them back in big numbers.

So, please, dust off and hose down the trap, bait it up with fresh dry dog food for small dogs, keep the bait fresh (replace if it gets wet or stale), use the mirror trick for wary birds – see below – and keep cats away (if the area smells of cats, hose the area and trap down, and start again).

Mynas are smart, adaptive problem solvers – we need to be as well !

Dr Andrea Griffin's research at Newcastle University on Indian Mynas is showing some very interesting insights into myna ecology and intelligence. Andrea has been studying the behaviour

of Indian mynas since 2006, focusing particularly on their extraordinary learning abilities. She has demonstrated that mynas learn easily about novel dangers, including new predators and dangerous places. What's more, they learn about new dangers from watching the behaviour and listening to the alarm calls of each other. Mynas also stand out from the crowd when it comes to their ability to solve new foraging problems in order to access new food sources. This ability is enhanced when they live in highly urbanized environments, which suggests that it assists them in their close co-habitation with humans. Andrea has recently turned her attention to the implications of these impressive learning abilities to current management practices,

and the possibility of mynas adapting their behaviour to trapping. She has set up a research facility for mynas at University of Newcastle and has several student

researchers working with her on the subject. Her research is supported by several local councils and the Commonwealth Government. For more information, go to: <http://andreasgriffin.weebly.com/index.html>.



**Dr Griffin with Peter Franklin,
our former CIMAG Secretary**



Part of Andrea's research station

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Time for another Myna Conference

After the success of the conference on mynas that CIMAG organized at Nowra way back in 2009, when 27 local councils attended, the CIMAG Committee is looking to organize a similar Conference in 2013. A lot has happened in the meanwhile and now there are many more local governments and community groups involved – so an opportunity for a lot of collective learning.

Plans are still at an early stage but we are pleased that Dr Griffin has indicated she is happy to present her findings, and we anticipate that Kate Grarock will be back in Oz and will do the same, as well as a couple of other researchers. Peter West from the Invasive Animals CRC will give us a report on what MynaScan is telling us. A big section of the Conference will be set aside to hear and discuss reports, experiences and learnings from local councils and community groups.

The conference will likely be held in Canberra in May-June or October 2013.

To help us plan the program, we would welcome any expressions of interest from researchers, environmental managers, public health officers, horticulturalists, local council officers, community groups etc. to present short papers / hold discussion sessions. There are some great success stories out there, and some warnings as well: so plenty to get our teeth into. Just send me an email – president@indianmynaaction.org.au – if you wish to give a paper or report on your experience.

As in the past we do not propose to charge for attendance. It will be Canberra's centenary, so a lot will be happening down here – just one more reason to be part of the Conference.

Join us in Nestbox Monitoring in Canberra Reserves

It's time again to resurrect the nestbox monitoring program in Canberra Nature Reserves. With myna breeding season upon us, we do this to see whether mynas have taken over the nesting boxes (which were erected by Kate Grarock as part of her PhD research on mynas), and if so, to remove them. We are keen to get a few more people involved in the monitoring – like Kumiko Callaway and her kids. You would use a spy camera with a remote screen to see what is in the box and to record the findings. The Rangers for Canberra Nature Reserves were delighted last year when we reported back to them the number of Eastern and Crimson Rosellas, Sugar Gliders and Owlet Nightjars that were using the boxes. We just do this every 3 weeks or so, and it doesn't take up much time: good exercise too. Get back in touch with me if you want to participate – even just once.



Animal Welfare – it's in our interests too

A disturbing report from the veterinarian at the RSPCA recently that some injured mynas were being brought in by trappers to be put down - the Wildlife Centre part of the RSPCA dispose of captured mynas as a service to those CIMAG members who prefer not to euthanize them at home. The birds may have been injured by sharp wire tines or edges in the trap: so can you please check your trap and bend over any sharp wires sticking out so that the trapped mynas can't injure themselves. Also if you notice mynas fighting in the trap – adult males will do this at breeding time – please dispose of them before they badly hurt themselves. As our trapping program will only be acceptable to the community and RSPCA / authorities if we adopt good animal welfare practices, it is in our interests that we are always conscious of the welfare of trapped mynas. If taking trapped mynas to the RSPCA for disposal, it would be appreciated if a donation was made to them for their effort. They do this as a service to us.

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Ted's mynas to be TV stars

As mentioned earlier, a film crew, involving William McInnes, spent some days here in Canberra recently filming for a TV series on birds in Australia - people will know William as the Chair of the Museum of Australian Democracy in Old Parliament House, from his roles in the TV series Sea Change and Blue Heelers, his books and his many other film and TV roles. The crew were here filming what the Canberra / Queanbeyan communities are doing to reduce myna numbers. Jennifer Cleary and Ted Fleming told William about their success in the past of ridding their area of mynas – and in Jennifer's case how this has led to Eastern Rosellas now raising chicks in the nesting boxes in her courtyard. The three decoy mynas in Ted's trap lured another 9 into the trap next morning – unfortunately not while the camera was running. The crew also filmed at the Alexander Maconochie Centre – the gaol – of us collecting traps made by the inmates, Bruce Lindenmayer explaining why mynas are bad news for our wildlife, and Kumiko Callaway and her kids (Rhu, Emi, Yumi, Mia and Misa) checking nestboxes on Urambi Hills in Kambah – to the delight of everyone, they found boxes which had Eastern Rosella chicks and an Owlet Nightjar. Thanks to all involved, with special thanks to Julia Foley and the management at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. The series will be shown on ABC around September next year.

The westward flight goes on – a major worry

More disturbing news that mynas are moving westwards – and seemingly faster than we had anticipated. Reports are that they are now in sizeable numbers on farmland between Cootamundra and Stockinbingal, as well as being west of Narrabri. We really need to get a better handle of where these birds are: so if over the Xmas / New Year break you are travelling out west or up north (in fact anywhere outside the metropolitan areas) and see mynas, please go onto the MynaScan website and record where they were seen.

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

We have reported in the past that a mirror inside the trap can lure in the wary mynas. The limerick says it all.

Mirror, mirror on the wall
Inside the trap, but that's not all
Fresh dog food and water too -
You'll end up catching quite a few.

A mirror fools a wary one
To come on in and have some fun
"I see my friend is in there now,
Must be safe, I'll get in somehow".

A mirror (100 mm x 150 mm / 4" x 6") inside the feeding chamber in line with one of the tunnels is an excellent way to lure in the wary mynas. Seeing their reflection, they are fooled into thinking it is safe inside the trap and happily join their "friend". So if you have wary mynas, a trip to the \$2 shop for a mirror might be a good investment. Just tie the mirror to the inside of the feeding chamber in line with the tunnel.

Your new email address is wanted

If you get a new email address, it would be greatly appreciated if you could advise Marg Peachey and Graham Gliddon of this. Just send an email through to them (margpeachey@gmail.com and g-gliddon@mysoul.com.au). And for those that need to report monthly captures, use this email address for Graham as well.

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Juveniles are out and about

Some juvenile mynas have already been seen out and about with their parents. Juveniles are naïve and can be readily trapped – so long as wary parents are not with them. January and February are usually high capture months – when we get mostly juveniles, the future breeders. Every one we trap and dispose of is doing our wildlife a world of good and giving our neighbourhood some quiet.

Trapping numbers for the last few months

Graham Gliddon's records for captures for the past few months are below. Again a plea from Graham for people to report their captures. Captures have dropped off remarkably over the years: we caught over 1,000 starlings last year, and over 5,000 mynas. Do this year's capture numbers indicate they aren't around in numbers, that they have become trap smart, people haven't got their traps set, or what? Who knows, but as mentioned: let's not get complacent.

	Aug 12	Sept 12	Oct 12	
Mynas	194	190	173	for a total of 3,945 for the year until end Oct 2012.
Starlings	0	4	0	for a total of 492 for the year until end Oct 2012.

The reported capture total of mynas is 43,200 since we started in 2006 to the end of Oct 2012.

Steve's IT Offer to CIMAG Members

Steve, the IT wiz at our AGM, has indicated that he is happy to provide free IT telephone advice to CIMAG members who have a desktop or laptop, PC or Apple. Areas he can cover include: Hardware acquisition, upgrade, fault diagnosis; Software installation and operation; Performance issues; Data backup & recovery; Cloud services; and Phone & internet plans. If you are interested in Steve's generous offer, you can contact him on 02 6100 9933.

Around the Traps

Lots happening, and it's good to hear.

Tracey Poulter, who started up the Wingecarribee Indian Myna Action Program some years ago then moved from that council to work at the Camden Council. She advises that she has been tasked with the job of setting up a **Camden Indian Myna Action Program** in the Camden Council area. Best of luck with that, Tracey.

Meanwhile **Joe Stammer** is re-activating the **Wingecarribee** program – it sort of dropped off in intensity after Tracey left. This is good news, as we see plenty of mynas in Mittagong when we stop for a coffee on the way to Sydney.

The **Wollongong Indian Myna Program** goes ahead in leaps and bounds. **Paul Formosa** reports that to encourage trappers to send in capture and sightings sheets, they have been providing trappers with vouchers for free tubestock plants from the Wollongong Botanic Gardens. Now that is thinking outside the square! The Corrimal Men's Shed guys are not only churning out myna traps but they are also making

nesting boxes – which can act as a trap for mynas. They have a hinged bottom for removing the rubbish mynas put in the boxes. They have also modified a 4 stroke brush cutter for euthanising the birds in the nestboxes: a more engineered version than our "Whipper Snuffer". WIMAG have run 41 workshops with 626 participants, trapped 2335 mynas from 437 traps. A great effort

Myna control activity now seems to be taking hold in **Victoria**. Requests for traps come in from a lot from people in Victoria.

Mt Macedon Indian Myna Program may finally get off the ground after much discussion between the community and the local council.

Luckily the **Yarra Indian Myna Action Group** is showing the way in that State. **Julia Gibson**, the President, and members of **YIMAG** are doing a wonderful job: they have now removed 3706 mynas and provided 290 traps. Their website – www.yimag.org.au – gives the contact details for getting a trap down that way. Julia also says that she had great success in trapping under a roosting tree on her

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farm – trapping over 100 mynas over time – but gave it away as the foxes or wild dogs kept tipping over the trap. This is useful info as we often had reports that mynas tended not to go into traps near roosting trees: we thought that perhaps they regarded the roosting tree as a “no-feed” zone. This says differently.

John Shorten of the **Yarrowonga Mulwala Men’s Shed** reports that they have been asked by the Gecko CLaN (Landcare) to make up PeeGee traps. Discussions are also taking place with the Goulburn Broken Catchment Authority (Gecko CLaN) to form an **‘NE Victorian Indian Myna Control Network’** covering the area of Yarrowonga, Benalla, Shepparton, Cobram, Wangaratta and Seymour. Now that would be a tremendous boost to the myna control effort in Victoria.

While up at Caloundra for the Qld Pest Management Conference, I had the opportunity to catch up with **Josh Childs, Sunshine Council**, who is running a myna control program up that way. Josh mentioned that mynas were in big numbers in certain sections of the council district – luckily we didn’t see any around Caloundra or Noosa, but there were plenty of Spotted Doves.

The **Brisbane City Council** is to hold a forum on Indian Mynas and their impact on biodiversity early in 2013. This will be a good opportunity to promote the importance of managing mynas.

Northern Rivers, Clarence Valley, the Granite Border Country, and Mid North Coast programs of northern NSW have been very active. With so much going on up there on myna control, a conference was held at Murwillumbah involving representatives from **Tweed, Lismore, Byron and Gold Coast Councils** and people from the **Granite Borders** and **Richmond Landcare Groups** and **Kevin and Laura Noble** of the **Clarence Valley Conservation in Action** to discuss approaches and co-operation across the larger region. Laura continues to spread the word far and wide: here at Tenterfield, there at Yamba.

The Gold Coast Indian Myna Program has been going for 12 months, with council outdoor workers making traps on wet days: some 30 to date. Community interest is growing with some 500 mynas euthanized by the council over this time.

The greatest success of the year must be the **Cairns group**. Over a 1000 traps have now been distributed and their estimate is that many thousands of mynas – up to 16,000 – may have removed from the district. For a 12 month effort, this is remarkable.

Grant Funding to continue the effort – and then some more

We have been fortunate to obtain some funding from the federal and ACT governments to continue the myna control program: so thanks to the Caring for Country and the ACT Environmental Grant Programs for their support. Much of the funding will go to updating the various educational materials that we provide to people and groups around Australia on mynas. The ACT Government has also provided some monies to develop and print brochures on Spotted Doves: this is the first step in attempting to control Spotted Doves in Canberra / Queanbeyan before they build up in numbers. We have had a couple of pilot trials to see if we can trap Spotted Doves – using seed – in areas where they have been sighted: but to no avail. Interestingly, Julia Gibson of YIMAG reports that she has been successful in trapping two Spotted Doves – seed eaters – using dry cat food. Go figure that one !

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.

Bill Handke
President
CIMAG
23 Dec 2012