

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

*National 2013 Award Winner  
for  
Environmental Innovation & Protection  
by Keep Australia Beautiful*



## **Myna Matters Bulletin # 29 (Winter 2014)**

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on CIMAG activities and those of other groups and local councils around the country **and now news on overseas activities.**

### **2014 Environment Award to CIMAG founder and President**

The Vice President of CIMAG, Bruce Lindenmayer, provides the following information:

“The Keep Australia Beautiful Award to our group last November – the National Environmental Innovation and Protection Award – was wonderful recognition of our effort to protect our local environment from the threats posed by Indian Mynas.

This recognition has now been supplemented with an Award by the Conservation Council of the ACT Region to our President, Bill Handke, in June this year. The Award is the “2014 ACT Environment Award” for protecting the environment as founder, President and driving force of the CIMAG myna control program.

Again this award indicates the success of our myna control program.

Well done indeed, Bill”.



### **Wollongong Indian Myna Program – finalist in NSW KAB 2014 Awards**

Great news that Wollongong City Council and the Wollongong Indian Myna Action Program has been selected as a finalist in Keep Australia Beautiful's Sustainable Cities Awards for NSW for 2014. Paul Formosa of the Council has been the driving force behind the program together with the Corrimal Men's Shed in making traps and the trappers of the Wollongong Indian Myna Action Group. Let's hope they can take this out – we will hear on 18 July - and then go on to win the Nationals.

### **National Indian Myna Conference – presentation now on YouTube and DVD**

A report on the 2013 Indian Myna Conference held in June last year was included in the Special Edition Myna Matters Bulletin (#27) – it is on the CIMAG website in the Myna Matters Bulletin section. This included the excellent summation of the presentations by Ian Fraser, our eminent naturalist.

The presentations were video-ed and we have had that turned into a DVD – copies have been forwarded to most councils along the eastern seaboard from Far North Queensland to western Victoria. We have additional copies available if you want one.

We have also put the presentations on YouTube as well. To get them, search for “2013 Indian Myna Conference, Canberra”.

So, if you want to hear all about the latest research findings, new control approaches, the dangers that mynas pose to our wildlife, how MynaScan works, what other communities and councils are doing, get in touch for a DVD or watch them on YouTube.

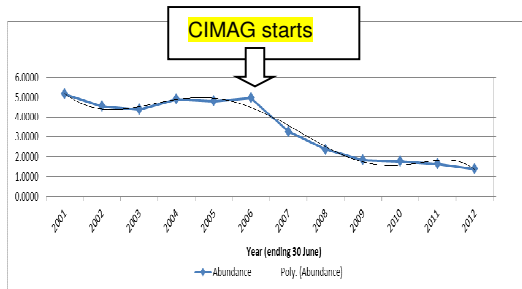


# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

## Mynas – the decline is still happening

The Canberra birdwatchers (COG) Garden Bird Survey results for 2012-13 are now available: and the results continue to reflect our work is successful. Myna numbers in the Canberra region continue to decline. They are now the 18<sup>th</sup> most common bird – they were the 20<sup>th</sup> most common bird in the previous survey year: but don't despair. Their absolute numbers continued to decline –



the drop in ranking reflects that the Starling and Yellow-faced Honeyeater numbers dropped even more than myna numbers did. No concern felt about Starling numbers declining (our trapping in 2012-13 removed 281 Starlings as well as 3,551 mynas). The COG backyard surveyors across all of Canberra / Queanbeyan region saw on average each week of the year a maximum of 1.294 mynas at a time within 100 metres of their backyard: this figure was 1.385 mynas in the previous survey year and 4.985 mynas back in 2005-06 when we started our trapping program.

Can anyone remember what it was like back in 2006!! If not, spend a day in Sydney or Melbourne.

While this is very heartening news, we still get reports that there are still pockets of mynas around the region and that some areas are seeing a build up of numbers again after years without them. All this just reinforces the message that control of these pest birds is an on-going task – up to now we have been winning, but if we become complacent we might be back to where we started.

So dust off the trap, wash it down and get it to work!

New approaches, such as removal of known myna nests in tree hollows and in buildings would be valuable to supplement our trapping program. If you have a myna nesting site near you, please send us the details. We are geo-coding those – and looking for active climbers.

## 50,000 is a beautiful number – and we are almost there

Our CIMAG trappers have almost reached the magical number of 50,000 mynas reported as having been removed from the Canberra–Queanbeyan environment since we started CIMAG in 2006. This is the *reported* monthly number – bear in mind that some trappers do not bother to advise their monthly captures (**shame, shame**). As usual, Graham Gliddon keeps track and collates the CIMAG database. So if you haven't reported in to Graham for any month's captures this past year, please send him an email ([ggliddon@tpg.com.au](mailto:ggliddon@tpg.com.au)) advising him. It is never too late, and it is valuable.



Photo: Peter West

## CIMAG in ABC TV series – “Hello Birdy”

You might recall that CIMAG was asked to participate in filming for a new ABC TV series on birds in Australia that involved William McNnes, actor and author.

The program - “Hello Birdy” – was aired earlier in the year. Hopefully people didn't miss our segment – featuring Ray Barge, Ted Fleming, Bruce Lindenmayer and Kumiko Callaway and her children, and myself. The program gave positive coverage of Canberra's myna control activities.

Unfortunately the time allocated to CIMAG's activities was shortened and so viewers missed out on hearing Jennifer Cleary's wonderful story of trapping the mynas that were threatening to take over the nesting boxes for Eastern and Crimson Rosellas she had put up in her courtyard. Once the mynas had been removed, rosellas started using her nesting boxes again. It was also a shame that the program didn't show Kate Garock talking about her research at ANU, and her inspecting her nesting boxes in the nature reserves (Kate's PhD research has been ground-breaking. Read her research results in the Scientific Papers section of our website [www.indianmynaaction.org.au](http://www.indianmynaaction.org.au) ).

The Director of the program has given us the footage of Jennifer Cleary's interview with William: I have shown that at presentations, and Jennifer and her story are a big hit.

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

## **International tales: 3 great and uplifting, 1 alarming and disconcerting**

Those who have been to the Pacific Islands are aware that Indian Mynas and Jungle Mynas have decimated the local native birdlife: they are virtually the only birds seen. Mynas are in plague proportions around holiday resorts and villages. But 3 recent experiences in Fiji, Tahiti, and the Cook Islands are causes for celebration.

In **Fiji**, the **Outrigger on the Lagoon Resort** earlier this year sought CIMAG's help to get a trapping program going, and CIMAG member Nick Hall (and his family) happily answered the call. Nick took over a flatpack version of our PeeGee trap and quickly made a few more traps, to have 6 traps set up around the resort. Over 4 days of fine-weather trapping, Nick, with assistance from the local resort workers, removed 180 mynas and 30 cane toads. The irresistible lure for the mynas and the cane toads was hot potato chips. The resort management, Peter Hopgood and Lindsey Palmer have kept the program going, with great results. Lindsey, the resort Executive Assistant Manager, recently reported that "trapping is still working a treat, with a total of **1,334 Myna** birds caught by the end of May. The native birds are thriving and loving their new environment."

The resort is a changed place. Now we have a "**myna-free**" resort to go to in Fiji, thanks to Peter, Lindsey and Nick, and the local resort workers. **Go there and see for yourselves.** This sets a model for other resorts and villages around Fiji and the Pacific Islands. Let's hope they follow the outstanding lead of the Outrigger on the Lagoon Resort.

The inspiring Susana Saavedra of the Canary Islands, has worked her magic on **Tahiti**. You will recall that Susana was a big hit at the 2013 Indian Myna Conference and for her one-person crusade – totally successful – in removing mynas from various



**Outrigger on the Lagoon Resort, Fiji**

### **The beautiful Tahitian Monarch**



islands off the coast of Africa and Spain. Susana was engaged by a European conservation body to remove mynas and bulbuls from 3 valleys in Tahiti that had decimated the population of the critically endangered **Tahitian Monarch**. Very few are left in the wild: they were thought to be down to 19 birds. Mynas and bulbuls would attack the Monarchs as they went to their nest hollow and also killed the chicks. In Susana's trapping campaigns, 1695 mynas and 1040 bulbuls were removed from gardens located at the entrance of each valley in 2012, and 741 mynas and 849 bulbuls were removed in 2013. This involved 69 trappers in 2012 and then 32 trappers in 2013. Thanks to this program, the Tahitian Monarch has had a

wonderful reprieve. Following these efforts, 31 chicks were raised. That is a wonderful result, and the Tahitian Monarch now numbers 46: congratulations to all involved. Susana is now off to the Atiu Island in the Cook Islands – to be part of the final program there – see the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the good news stories, below.

**Atiu, Cook Islands:** after a five-year battle, the people of Atiu are hopeful that by September this year, their island will become the first in the South Pacific to be free of mynas. "When we first started off we estimated there were 12,000 to 13,000 myna birds. Now there are less than 100," said George Mateariki. George leads the program against the Indian Myna. The bird was introduced to the island in the early 1900s to control the Coconut Stick-Insect but soon became a pest itself. To see more of this great story, go to <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-25/hunting-down-the-common-myna-in-the-cook-islands/5475868>



**George saving Atiu's birds**



# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

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Now for the disturbing story: a few weeks ago I received an interstate phone call asking if CIMAG could provide live mynas. Thinking that the person wanted them as decoy birds for trapping in his backyard, I was only too happy to put him onto someone up his way - **Martin Gauci** from the **Hawkesbury Shire Council** - who could arrange to get trapped birds from the **Hawkesbury Indian Myna Action Group**. But on my further probing it turned out the person was planning to export them to **Malta** as pet cage birds. He claimed that he had clearance from Maltese quarantine authorities to bring them in. We contacted Susana Saavedra (who was back home in the Canary Islands) and she got into action - making contact with the Maltese authorities and presenting the case against letting these pest birds in to Malta. We haven't heard the result - but no mynas are being provided by us or the Hawkesbury Indian Myna Action Group.

## Australian Vertebrate Pest Conference

At the end of May, I attended the Australian Vertebrate Pest Conference in Brisbane where I gave a presentation on the CIMAG success story - it is of great interest to government officials and academics involved in pest control. The key message of the presentation is that this is one pest whose attributes make it highly suited for wide-scale community trapping: it is sedentary; commensal - ie lives around people; conspicuous - always around; social - so it flocks; unpopular; and readily enters traps for food. The community-action approach is highly desirable as it enables high numbers of traps to be deployed by the community at little or no cost to government, and with the prospect of significant captures and thus impact on myna numbers.



## Needed - Membership Database Manager

Help! One of the important tasks that is required for smooth CIMAG operations is maintaining the CIMAG membership database. As we get new members coming on board, their contact details need to be recorded, and they are sent a "Welcome" package of material. Also their details are forwarded onto Graham Gliddon for him to include on his capture database.

Is anyone willing to take on this task for us? Some recompense will be provided.



## Effective Factors Workshop

Bruce Lindenmayer and I attended a workshop up at Mt Stromlo in June organized by the ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions to consider the "Factors Required for Effective Invasive Bird Control". It involved senior academics from Universities around Australia plus Peter West of the Invasive Animals Collaborative Research Centre and Peter Bird from the SA Biosecurity Dept. Prof David Lindenmayer from the Australian National University attended, as did Dr Andrea Griffin, the eminent myna researcher from the University of Newcastle, and two of her PhD students. Interestingly of the 14 people attending, 8 were senior academics from overseas who are currently working in Australia.

Naturally a lot of discussion was on the Indian Myna, although we considered a wider range of invasive birds, including native species that have been accidentally or deliberately released in places they shouldn't be: eg Rainbow Lorikeets in Tasmania, Kookaburras in WA. A report on the deliberations is currently being written - we believe it will be a very useful in setting out the practical aspects and approaches that need to be satisfied to be effective in controlling invasive birds.

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

## Mynas: now advertising stars – who would have thought!

Who would have thought, indeed! The brand “Mothers Car Polishes, Waxes and Cleaners” are using the “Vile Beast” in their advertising campaign, referring to when mynas “unload (their) lunch on our cars”. They say they are going to get a cat with sharp claws – better they get a trap!



## Join a new CIMAG group within MynaScan

The MynaScan website now hosts 2 new services to help CIMAG:

- 1). A new MynaScan page has been specially created for the CIMAG community group to help our members better use this free mapping resource. To view the page, visit [www.feralscan.org.au/mynascan/cimag](http://www.feralscan.org.au/mynascan/cimag).
- 2). A new data sharing tool has also been developed allowing people (members of CIMAG or not) to share their MynaScan data directly with CIMAG, and allowing members to view data from the entire CIMAG community.



If you want to share sightings and records you enter in MynaScan with other CIMAG members, please email me (email [handke@grapevine.net.au](mailto:handke@grapevine.net.au)) with the message “Please invite me to join the CIMAG group in MynaScan” and I will send you an email invitation. Once you accept the invitation (you will have to login to MynaScan to undertake this step), you will be able to see all the records entered by other members of CIMAG in MynaScan.

In the coming months, we encourage you to join this new CIMAG online group, and record your data in MynaScan. You can record as little or as much as you like, such as sightings of myna birds, where they are nesting, where they are roosting, what damage they are causing, and what actions you are taking to deter or control mynas. CIMAG hopes all members can join the online group, and share their data with other members. Building better mapping data about where mynas are breeding and where they are causing problems will help us better target areas for trapping and nest removal.

The next task for MynaScan will be the creation of monthly reports to CIMAG, allowing the group to be alerted about new nest sites and new problem areas.

For further information, please contact Peter West (Invasive Animals CRC) e-mail [peter.west@invasiveanimals.com](mailto:peter.west@invasiveanimals.com) or phone 02 6391 3887 or email me.

## Trapping numbers for the last few months

Graham Gliddon's records for captures for the past few months are below. Again a plea for people to report their captures: very few trappers are providing monthly reports. Only 87 trappers (of 1580 CIMAG members who have traps) reported in May, while the highest monthly reporting rate for the year was just 148. Even if you haven't caught any, please respond to Graham's monthly request.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Mynas	658	453	375	260	197
Starlings	94	53	23	7	10

for a total of 2878 for 2013-14 up until end May by 187 trappers.

for a total of 275 for 2013-14 up until end May by 33 trappers.

The *reported* capture total of mynas is 49,300 since we started in 2006 to the end of May 2014.

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

## Around the Traps

**Victoria – State on the Move:** there seems to be a lot now happening in Victoria on myna control – or at least many councils and communities have been in touch with CIMAG to discuss ways of getting things moving in their area. Hopefully we will be able to report in the next Bulletin that the **Bayside, Port Philip, Stonnington, Macedon Ranges, and Venus Bay** councils are working with local communities to get myna control programs under way.

In **Gippsland**, **Harry Hof** reports their myna control program is still going strong and they now have retail outlets for traps from Bairnsdale to Warrigal: the Fulham Prison is making the traps as well as some Men's Sheds and a local school. Harry reports that the reduction in myna numbers has been quite noticeable, with feedback from trappers that thousands have been trapped.

**Julia Gibson** from the **Yarra Indian Myna Action Group** in Victoria, reports some huge captures by some of their trappers. The reports are coming in to her from the YIMAG trappers of the return of native birds into their gardens. Now that is a story that all of us up here know well: when mynas are gone, the native birds are back. It has been a busy time for the Group. They have been running information sessions all over the place. So far they've trapped a total of 7,729 birds.



**Ron Fink and Kate Daniel** from **Macedon Indian Myna Action Group** report on the busy first 12 months of their program: and there are some really good stories to tell. Council has offered to design and run a backyard bird survey to gauge the abundance of mynas and native birds across the shire – this will hopefully involve landcare and other sustainability group members. Some 150 traps are now out in the community: collection from the Fulham Prison using a trailer was a long and apparently hair-raising trip. The standout trapping towns are Woodend – 612 mynas removed over the 12 months with now 54 traps in the area; Gisborne - 182 mynas removed in the first 6 months; and Newham – 50 mynas removed in April. Another 75 traps have been ordered from Fulham Prison, but luckily for Ron and Kate they now have alternative delivery arrangements. Ron has been talking to the local vignerons – mynas love grapes – about starting trapping. The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Festival held earlier in the year was a great opportunity for awareness raising for the Group: Kate says that there was non-stop interest in the program and the trap that was on display - they went home hoarse but happy.

**Melanie Addinsall** of the Gecko CLan (Landcare) Group **Benalla Indian Myna Action Group** is very active, build traps which are sold via local agriculture supplies been in operation for around one year and has built and which have been distributed in the Benalla area. The about the threat of Indian Mynas through information sessions and publicity in local newspapers and radio. The group has set up its own page on MynaScan, to assist with the collection of trapping data.



tells us that the meeting each week to stores. The group has sold hundreds of traps group raises awareness

At **Venus Bay** on the south east coast of Victoria, **Mae Adams** of Venus Bay Eco Retreat – set within the idyllic conservation zoned Coastal Banksia Woodlands - reports that Indian Mynas are becoming more prevalent in the bushland, and are often seen in large numbers in nearby residential and farming areas. They have started occupying nesting boxes for wildlife. Landowners are being encouraged to trap to protect native bird nesting and feeding sites.

**Ron Smith** of **Ulitarian Society** in **Coffs Harbour** tells us that myna numbers are still low and under control in the area. There is a large network of trappers throughout the district who still pick up a few mynas which is keeping the numbers down. Coffs Harbour City Council remains very supportive.

Lots of things are happening in **Wollongong**. Being selected as a finalist in the NSW KAB Sustainable Cities Awards reflects the innovative approach that is being taken down there to myna control and community engagement. **Narelle Zahra and Paul Formosa** of the **Wollongong City Council** tell us that they have conducted 64 workshops with a total of 848 participants, and have purchased 614 traps as part of the **Wollongong Indian Myna Action Program**. 3,940 mynas have



# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

been removed (that they know of) since March 2011. The research partnership with the University of Western Sydney's Invasive Species Unit has been extended for a further 12 months. The research maps the distribution and abundance of mynas and native birds, investigates the home range of mynas, as well as compares myna morphology in the Wollongong area. Myna home range research was performed on two trapped birds. These birds were fitted with a glue-on VHF transmitters then radio tracked for three weeks using triangulation. The home ranges for both birds were similar, with both birds generally residing within the area where they were trapped. These birds' home range occupied an area of 10ha and 14ha. This is all valuable research work, and the information on home ranges will be of interest to groups in similar habitats and with similar myna population densities.

**Barbara Jones** from the **Far South Coast Myna Action Group** mentions that their prize 'removalist', John Jessop, at Coolagolite in the north of the shire has now stopped counting at just over 500 mynas and new intruders are slowing down. John has a dairy and is near a power easement, so they were seemingly using that as their laneway from the north. John's great effort means that mynas are being intercepted before getting further into the Bega Valley. About 700 mynas have been removed from the Bega Valley. The other good news is that **Andrew Morrison**, Environmental Assets Officer with the Bega Valley Shire Council is active in promoting the program and in getting the message on myna control out to the community. This will be a great help. Andrew Morrison opened the connection with **Eurobodalla Shire Council's Courtney Fink** who arranged purchase of 10 small traps made by the Batemans Bay Men's Shed, supplied courtesy of Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority. Bega Valley Shire Council is now listed along with FSCB as the email contact for sightings.

**Tracey Poulter** from the **Camden Council Indian Myna Program** reports enquiries regarding Indian Mynas are now coming from the majority of suburbs and across the rural areas across the Camden local government area, and not just the more urbanised areas. The Camden Council has ten traps which are being circulated through the community. The Council will be launching its new website in late July 2014, and residents will have the opportunity to find out about Camden Council's Indian Myna Program online. Since April 2013, 461 Indian Mynas have been removed and a dozen starlings. One of the local Men's Sheds is considering making the traps, which would greatly assist.

The **North Sydney City Council**, through **Ramin Khosravi, Gareth Debney and Andrew Scott**, is continuing to promote myna control amongst its ratepayers, including by running their PeeGee trap building workshops at Hutley Hall in North Sydney. These workshops provide local people with advice on myna control - and the bonus is they take home a working trap.



Happy North Sydney ratepayer making a trap

**Pam Gray** of **Tweed Shire Council** advises that the council program is still being implemented. Some 96 PeeGee traps are out in the community and an estimated 12,000 mynas have now been caught over the six years of the program. Despite the effort, numbers are still generally high and spreading – it is noted that nearby dairies and the local racecourse are sources of re-infestation. An encouraging - and uplifting – aspect is that there is now consistent control in some valleys. In particular, Limpinwood Valley is "clean" and 3 women – a sheep farmer, a cattle farmer and a tree farmer – are cleaning the valley of mynas each time there is a re-infestation. Pam also reports good trapping activities in Murwillumbah. Tweed Shire Council now has a permanent Pest Management Officer - so mynas are receiving due attention as part of their pest control program.

**Daintree Gerrand** advises that traps are still being loaned out by the Hastings Landcare Inc in the **Port Macquarie-Hastings area**. Daintree reports that where people have been successfully trapping in both urban and rural areas, there has been a discernible drop in myna numbers.

**Kevin & Laura Noble** report that the **Clarence Valley Conservation in Action** group based around **Grafton** has now passed 6,000 captures. Kevin and Laura continue to spread the word at community market days etc. They have a trailer decked out as a Mobile Myna Education Centre. During May

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

they drove to Bathurst with a trailer load of 31 traps and conducted a successful workshop for the Bathurst Regional Council. Twenty five people attended from local areas including Orange and Lithgow Councils. Hopefully the presentation and the traps will get a program running across the area. With a slight modification to size, Kevin has now found a good way to transport the PeeGee trap: the feeding chamber fits inside the containment chamber for travelling, thereby reducing the cost of sending the trap by courier or post. It just needs a tweak at the end to reseal the containment chamber, and bingo – there is the trap. A baseline survey is about to get underway by local ecologist, Dr Greg Clancy, to find the Indian Myna “hotspots” in the Clarence Valley.

**Nambucca / Bellingen / Coffs Harbour: the Mid North Coast Indian Myna Group** have finished their 5 year grant and are transitioning into a voluntary group, dependent on good coordinators and trappers supported by councils and Landcare. It will be quite a change from having a salaried project officer but based on the group up that way, I'm sure they will make a go of it.

While in Brisbane for the Australian Vertebrate Pest Conference I caught up with **Wayne Cameron** of the **Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee**. B4Cs covers a big part of Brisbane. It is undertaking a pilot project on community trapping under the auspices of the Brisbane City Council. Its early days yet, so they are feeling their way. I gave a talk to the group - which included people from surrounding areas - on the Canberra experience, so hopefully that was useful to them.

Things are continuing to move ahead up in Cairns: **Peter Goulding** of the **Cairns Rotary Remove Indian Myna Program** advises there has been a re-organisation of the group which now includes broader representation on the Committee, including from the Cairns Regional Council and the Men's Shed. This will greatly assist the administrative aspects of the group. The Men's Sheds are very active in trap building: there are now 1450 traps out across the Cairns area, and the capture numbers – believed to be somewhere between 20,000 - 30,000 are showing. Peter says that consistent and strong anecdotal evidence tells them that native bird numbers are growing, particularly in inner suburbs where many mynas have been culled. This is great news: just one more reason to go up to Cairns to escape the southern winters.

## Caring for our Wildlife

CIMAG was established to protect our wildlife from the threat posed by Indian Mynas. But there is another way you can also protect our wildlife – and that is to report and take sick or injured animals to ACT Wildlife.



## Your new email address is wanted

If you get a new email address, it would be greatly appreciated if you could advise us of this. Just send an email through to [president@indianmynaaction.org.au](mailto:president@indianmynaaction.org.au). For those that need to report monthly captures, use the following email address for Graham: [ggliddon@tpg.com.au](mailto:ggliddon@tpg.com.au).

[www.actwildlife.net](http://www.actwildlife.net)

## 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](mailto:news-subscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au). To get onto the CIMAG Chatline, send a blank email to [chat-subscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au](mailto:chat-subscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au) and then start posting messages.

If you are interested in having someone from CIMAG talk to your organization or work group about the threats posed by mynas and what CIMAG and others are doing, just get in touch.

Bill Handke  
President  
CIMAG  
13 July 2014