

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

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



Myna Matters Bulletin # 30 (Christmas 2014)

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on CIMAG activities and those elsewhere in Australia & overseas:

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 2015 to all involved in Indian Myna control activities across eastern Australia.

2014 – What a Year it's Been!!

We can look back on 2014 with some satisfaction that the community-based myna control movement across eastern Australia continues to grow, with recognition and support of key institutions, governments and community organizations.

Here are a few highlights for the past year that are worth mentioning.

Some Good Numbers During the Year for CIMAG in Canberra

- a. Men of Maconochie (our gaol) produced their 850th Trap
- b. CIMAG membership reaches 1800
- c. 1600 traps out to good homes since we started
- d. Around 200,000 hits on CIMAG website in 2013-14
- e. 50,550 known removals since we started (more if everybody reported in!)

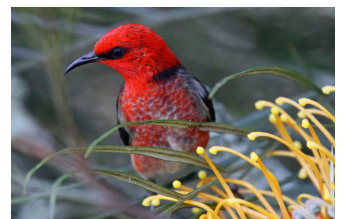
and importantly, 43 groups are operating in eastern Australia (that we know of).

2013-14 AGM: a Small Intimate Affair!

CIMAG AGM and Public Info Night in November, while attended by a smaller number of people than usual, was nonetheless a great night. Our patron, Professor Tony Peacock, opened the AGM and thanked CIMAG members for our amazing achievement - proving wrong those who said efforts to control mynas would not work. They have. In his own backyard, sightings of native birds have replaced mynas, compared with 6-7 years ago. He also commended CIMAG on its role of “citizen science”. Professional scientists had initially regarded recording by community members of data on pest distribution largely only having “PR value”. Experience with sites such as MynaScan and others, show that citizen-provided data assists science. CIMAG had a role in starting this process, Tony said.



The knowledgeable Bruce Lindenmayer OAM (and also our Vice President) gave a fascinating talk on “50 Years of ACT Birds”. This year is the 50th anniversary of the Canberra birdwatching group and Bruce mesmerized us with photos and stories of the changes in birds in the ACT over the past half century. Well done, Bruce.



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The CIMAG Committee for this coming year is the same as before – but with the huge gap of Rosemary Blemings who has decided to have a rest from the Committee. Rosemary has been a stalwart of CIMAG since we started in 2006, being very prominent in the public education side. Luckily for us, we have prevailed upon her to continue spreading the word at Floriade and Community Festivals about the threats posed by mynas. Rosemary has truly been the ACT's Dancing Shiva – with lots of fingers and hands in lots of ACT conservation pies.

The Committee comprises Bruce Lindenmayer (Vice President), Andy Fuller (Treasurer), Ross Dalton (Secretary), Marg Peachey, Ray Barge, Greg Flowers, Peter Ormay, Nick Hall and myself (as President). There is room on the Committee for additional committed members: so if interested, just give me a hoy. We need to address the gender imbalance.

At the AGM presentations were made to Rosemary in appreciation of her efforts and also to Dorothy Stolfa and Noel Atcherley for their wonderful support and assistance over many years.

And as usual, Graham Gliddon filled us in on our capture records for 2013-14. Graham does a wonderful job collating monthly captures and the database that he has compiled is huge.

During the Public Information session, Greg Flowers and Adrian Gallman spoke about their nest removal activities (more of that below) and Nick Hall delighted people with tales of his Fiji myna trapping experience (reported in the last Myna Matters Bulletin – if you missed that, read about it on our website: www.indianmynaaction.org.au).

The President's Report for 2013-14 can also be read on the CIMAG website.

Nest Removal: the next phase in control

With community trapping having done an extraordinary “knock down” job – delivering a substantial reduction in myna numbers across Canberra / Queanbeyan region – the next phase is to complement that with removing nests, eggs and chicks where that is possible. Adrian Gallman and Greg Flowers have been doing that. Daryl King provided the impetus for this initiative after his many hours of researching myna nesting behaviour, developing theories on the importance of interrupting their “safe” refugial nests. At this stage they are concentrating on nests in trees in northern Canberra. They have been doing detailed monitoring of the hollows before nest removal, weighing the chicks that have been removed and forwarding their bodies to Richard Major at the Australian Museum, as part of a widespread research project on myna DNA. As mynas put a lot of energy into laying, incubating and tending to chicks, removing the nests and their contents will hopefully teach mynas to avoid nesting in tree hollows and also allow, hopefully, native birds to again use those hollows. Destroying their breeding opportunities is also very important as it reduces population recruitment and future breeders.

So far they have removed 14 eggs, 65 chicks & 3 adults from 16 nest hollows and 2 nestboxes.

We are interested in getting further reports on nesting sites – but for this to be valuable to Greg and Adrian, it would be best if the reports were quite specific as to where the tree hollow with the myna nest is: street number etc rather than a general reference as a tree along “x” street or in a reserve.

If you want to remove nests from trees and buildings, please be careful with ladders and always remember to dispose of the chicks and adults in a humane way: quick, painless and stress-free.

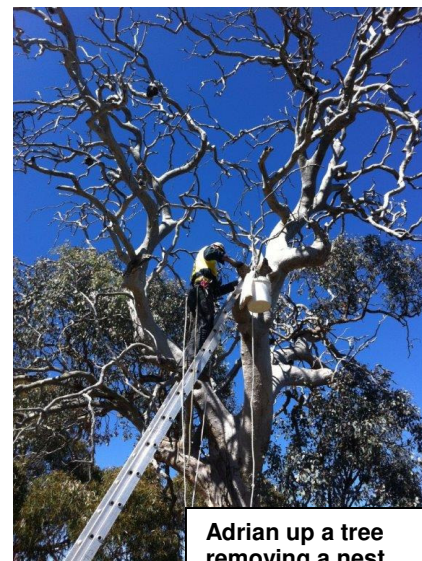
An overall reminder for trappers as we come to summer: animal welfare is paramount.

Please make sure birds in traps are well cared for: plenty of water, food, shade and pets kept away.

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Rosemary - our own Dancing Shiva



Adrian up a tree removing a nest

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Bad Politics and Mynas – both not wanted

Geoffrey Dabb from the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) had an interesting take on a possible attempt by an unpopular politician to garner some local public support.

Geoffrey's humorous photoshop images are well known amongst COG members. He is also well known for his exquisite photographs, for his deep knowledge of birds and his detailed well-researched presentations at COG meetings. If you are interested in hearing fascinating talks about birds, come along to a COG meeting (7:30pm at the Girls Grammar School) – Chapel Street Entrance on the second Wednesday of each month. You really will not be

disappointed: there are a lot of profoundly smart and interesting people around.

Myna DNA Project

As mentioned above, Richard Major of the Australian Museum, in conjunction with the well-known and highly respected Dr Andrea Griffin of the Newcastle University, is wanting frozen myna carcasses from three different regions in Canberra for DNA analysis as part of a project to assess myna movements. So it would be good to get frozen mynas from the north side of Canberra (and Greg Flowers is helping with that from the nest removal project), from central Canberra and then from south Canberra. But our biggest hurdle in helping Richard and Andrea is having a spare freezer for this purpose. So far, there is a reluctance to have the carcasses mixed up with food in the freezer of the domestic fridge! Who would have thought! Can anyone help?

Ryu Callaway – our new Membership Database Manager

Ryu will be giving up lots of time over his school holidays to help us get the CIMAG membership database up to date. You may recall Ryu as one of the Callaway family which featured in the ABC TV series "Hello Birdy" when they filmed CIMAG activities here in the ACT - and some years ago when his mum and sisters Misa and Mia featured in a Canberra Times Gang Gang article about checking nesting boxes on Wanniasa Hills, near Fadden. Incidentally Ryu still does that, so he is a great contributor to CIMAG.

ABC Item on Noisy Miners and Indian Miners

ABC TV news ran an item last Saturday on Noisy Miners (the aggressive Australian native honeyeater) being a worse problem than the introduced Indian Myna, apparently based on some research that will be reported on by the Griffith University in Brisbane sometime next year. The journalist, Eric Tlozek, also had an item about it on ABC on-line. Without having seen the report and understanding the basis for this rather curious claim, we would just say that Noisy Miners are in big numbers in Brisbane (perhaps in greater numbers than Indian Mynas) and in woodlands, and can be very aggressive even down here in woodland reserves, such as parts of Mulligans Flat. However to conflate the two is silly and to seek to argue that one is worse than the other is pointless. If an animal or weed species becomes a pest species it needs to be managed or controlled. Indian Mynas are amenable to community control: it is difficult to see how that approach can work for Noisy Miners – for a start Noisy Miners are native birds and can't legally be harmed. Geoffrey Dabb makes the point, in the insert, that Noisy Miners are as Australian as the emu.

Bruce Lindenmayer puts it like this:

"The issue of human modifications to the environment leading to native species becoming pests comes up all over the place. It is an issue with Noisy Miners who thrive in environments where humans &/or their livestock have degraded or fragmented the top storey or removed the



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understorey, excluding the small insect eating birds. In the ACT we have to accept that as a community we have established splendid nature reserves which are occupying land that potentially could be sold for many hundred million dollars as real estate over coming decades. It is unthinkable that we would not then manage and protect that 'investment' and to preserve, as far as possible, all their biodiversity. Fenner School work in the Riverina has clearly shown that new plantings/restoration projects with mixed species attract the little birds, not Noisy Miners."

Nicking off to Fiji

Nick Hall is going back to Fiji in January to resurrect the myna control program at the Outrigger on the Lagoon Resort. Lindsey Palmer and Peter Hopgood of the resort had reported that things were going really well – 1334 mynas were removed from the resort in the first few months after Nick was there last January, and the native birds were thriving – but that things have since dropped off drastically. Hawks are attacking the mynas as they approach the traps and something is getting to them when they are inside the trap. As a consequence the program has ground to a halt until remedial action can be taken. Hopefully Nick can deliver that, while his wife Jane and kids relax.

The Pacific – not so peaceful for mynas now

Things are ramping up in the Pacific: countries and islands and resorts within countries are taking on myna control activities: **Tahiti** to protect the Tahitian Monarch Flycatcher; the Outrigger Resort in **Fiji**; **Atiu Island** in **Cook Islands**; **Kiribati**; **American Samoa**. What a change in just a few years! The demonstration effect at work: people and governments just needed to see that something can be done to reduce these pests, that all is not beyond them, and that the community are strong allies in the effort. Canberra has played a part in that. We eagerly await the word that **Atiu Island** is totally myna-free after a tremendous effort over years by Gerald McCormack, George Mateariki aka Birdman George, Jason Tuara and Susana Saavedra. And many others. Gerald advises that there

might be only 30 adult mynas left, but some have bred. Progress has been slow as mynas become scarce. Drop-door traps with a decoy bird are still working well for George and the shotgun is effective with Jason. Whereas Jason used to shoot just over 100 mynas-a-day in late 2010, now he works hard for one or two per day. They have had many predicted dates to complete the eradication: but now expect they will be "gone by May". If so, it will be the first island in the Pacific to have totally eradicated mynas, and a huge inspiration.

And the **Seychelles** are continuing the effort to protect their native birds from mynas. At one point the total world population of the Seychelles Magpie Robin (see photo top right) was down to 12 birds: then rat and cat eradication, later on habitat rehabilitation and most recently myna control measures have protected it. So now after translocation to several islands (including Denis Island where myna eradication is

currently taking place by the local NGO Green Islands Foundation), it is up to 290 birds spread out over 5 Seychelles islands: 45 of the birds are on Denis Island. The population of Paradise Flycatchers (photo left) had dropped to 60 birds but after pest control measures the overall population has climbed to 270 birds (20 Paradise Flycatchers were translocated to Denis Island in 2008 - making it one of only two places in the world where this bird occurs – and after initiating the myna eradication on Denis Island those 20 birds have increased to over 60 individuals). The Seychelles Warbler (photo bottom right) numbers had dropped to 26 but with myna control, now hover around 300 (60 Seychelles Warblers were translocated to Denis Island in 2004). With these birds now re-established on Denis Island there is a concerted effort to ensure they are protected from mynas. The estimated number of mynas at the start of the eradication program was between 1000 and 1200 – they are estimated to be less than 100 now. Arjan de Groene, General Manager, Green Islands Foundation advises that they are planning the final stages of the myna eradication effort on the Denis Island – a private hotel resort island. That would be good to see, and hopefully it happens very soon. Best book your flights to Denis Island now.



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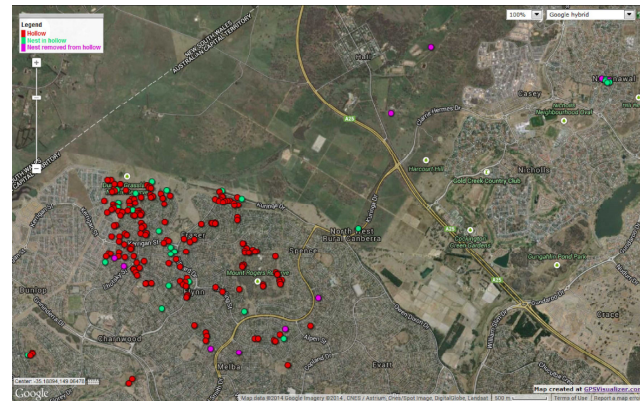
Singapore has both Indian Mynas and Java Mynas: they are very obvious when you spend any time in the city. Recently I had a meeting with Dr Wong Hon Mun, the Group Director of the Singaporean Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority, to discuss how the experience here in Canberra might be replicated over there. Some very different circumstances over there which pose a bigger challenge in getting a community-action program underway. For a start, as most citizens live in apartment blocks, the opportunities for backyard trapping activity is much less, so a different approach might be needed. Nonetheless, I left the meeting with a strong sense that Dr Wong and his colleague see myna control as needed. That, and controlling scrappy pigeons, would make one of the world's best modern cities unbeatable.



Interest in **South Africa** is growing with a number of people getting in touch – from National Park Field Ecologists to Bird Watcher Groups to general citizens. Let's hope it takes hold there as well.

Geo-Coding project

CIMAG, COG and MynaScan hold lots of data which if brought together on geocoded maps would be very useful in identifying where gaps in our coverage are and where to make a concerted effort. Greg, Adrian and Daryl are geo-coding the nesting hollows and where they have removed nests. Putting this all together will be highly valuable: but we need someone with the skills and time to help do this. Any takers?



Around the Traps

Some good news on new local councils developing Indian Myna control programs in their areas.

Bayside City Council in Melbourne has now initiated a program, which will give the movement in Melbourne a big push along. The Beaumaris Men's Shed will be making the traps for them.

Campelltown City Council in Sydney has also started a program. They kicked this off at the end of August – and have already run 5 Indian Myna Bird Education Workshops, at various community venues – which have all been filled or oversubscribed. Just shows that the public are desperate to get involved in a well-run program. Mitch Johnson, the manager, previously worked at Wollongong City Council and is adopting their approach. The feedback from participants has been very positive and the connection with the three local Men's Sheds is proving to be a very valuable: they have already made 74 traps in no time flat. There is strong community interest in the program: 148 people have attended the workshops, and Mitch has had a further 340 enquiries by locals on how to participate in the program: all in a very short time. This is good news.

Meanwhile, **Sutherland Shire Council** is still going strong with continuing strong public interest. They have been very innovative in the past and are now assessing their long-standing program to see if there are successful approaches elsewhere that they should adopt, particularly in the areas of trap production and distribution.

The Wollongong Indian Myna Action Program overseen by the **Wollongong City Council** is still going very strongly. They will be holding their 70th education workshop this Friday – all people who wish to trap are required to attend a workshop before the Corrimal Men's Shed will provide them with a trap. A very sound policy as incorrect technique can lead to poor results. So far 921 locals have attended the workshops and some 655 traps have been handed out.

There has been interest in getting a program up and running in the **Kiama** area, but nothing has got off the ground so far. This follows the drop off in the Jamberoo program. A regional approach across the Illawarra with Wollongong and Shellharbour Councils might provide the impetus.

The **Camden Indian Myna Trapping Program** is still being operated by the Camden Council with Narellan Men's Shed supplying traps.

The **Cairns Remove Indian Mynas** campaign continues to impress: the Cairns Men's Shed has now made and sold just over 1500 traps. The CRIM group is again surveying trap owners to get a better handle of the numbers caught: just 30 trappers alone account for over 5,000 birds caught and dispatched since the program

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started in 2012. It is much harder for the group to know how many have been caught by the other trap owners. They are also participating in the Australian Museum's myna DNA research project. The ornithologist that surveys bird numbers at the Cairns international and domestic airports advises that myna numbers within the airport precinct were lower in 2013 and 2014 than in any of the preceding 8 years. Now that finding is very heartening and must be largely or wholly put down to their trapping efforts.

The disheartening news from John McCrea of the **Central West Indian Myna Control Group** are the first reports of mynas in **Dubbo** township and a report of mynas at **Parkes**. The movement westwards is on. Hopefully John's public awareness-raising work with the local ABC radio and Local Lands Service for the locals to report and trap mynas will help slow the spread.

Trapping is still going on in the **Clarence Valley: the CVCIA group** tally is now 6,500 from Feb 2011 to Dec 2014. Kevin and Laura Noble report that in many locations where there are trappers, there are either no longer any mynas or only a couple of very wary birds. There are still pockets of larger numbers but no trappers at those locations. They recently assisted Northern Landcare Support Services at **Kyogle** with an Indian Myna workshop and are participating with the Australian Museum with their DNA research on mynas. They have already sent down 11 frozen mynas.

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 your neighbourhood some quiet.

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. For those that need to report monthly captures, use the following email address for Graham: ggliddon@tpg.com.au

Trapping numbers for the last few months

Graham Gliddon's records for captures for the past few months are below. Again a plea from us for people to report their captures. Captures have dropped off remarkably over the years: and the lower trend continues: hopefully indicating that there are many fewer around to be caught !

| | aug | sept | oct | nov | |
|-----------|-----|------|-----|-----|---|
| Mynas | 230 | 99 | 171 | 153 | for a total of 3,292 for 2014 up until end Nov. |
| Starlings | 6 | 12 | 17 | 54 | for a total of 284 for 2014 up until end Nov. |

The *reported* capture total of mynas is 50,550 since we started in 2006 to the end of Nov 2014.

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 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
17 Dec 2014