

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

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



Myna Matters Bulletin # 33 (Spring 2016)

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

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

Time for another Concerted Trapping Effort – Ten years On



Get those traps set

Now that the breeding season is upon us, it is the time to hose down the trap, stock it up with dry dog food (for small dogs), and get it out in a quiet spot in the garden. It would be good to trap as many mynas as possible now before they get another chance to breed. Already people are reporting some big captures in October – the most being a batch of 41 caught in Stirling.

Complacency will be our undoing: it will be a real shame if we let the huge success we have had to unravel. It has now been over ten years since we started: what a profound change to Canberra over those years – and to those communities who have copied our success.

A time for Schools to Learn

You might recall that in a previous Bulletin I reported on the very successful myna reduction programs that have been carried out by Nick Hall and Jonathon Downs in conjunction with the janitors at two Canberra primary schools during school holidays. Schools tend to be one of the hotspots for mynas left in Canberra – mynas frequent schools as there is always plenty of scraps in the playgrounds during term: during school holidays, mynas will come to the school in the expectation of an easy feed: without the kids providing that, they find the bait in the traps irresistible.

So it would be really valuable if we could get traps into more schools during the Xmas holidays: if you have contacts at schools, could you please raise this matter with the principal. Advise them of the massive benefits: improved school amenity and lower health risks from having less mynas around schools.

The Move to Declare Mynas a Pest Animal in the ACT

In the last Bulletin we implored CIMAG members (and anybody else) to write to the ACT and federal Environment Ministers requesting that they declare the Indian Myna as a Threatening Process. Separate to this, CIMAG has that mynas be are hopeful that that is now amassing on her PhD research to this action. This strengthen the and state Declaration would to develop action plans to deal with this pest animal: if this happens we can expect a significant kick-up in myna control across eastern States.



written to the ACT Government asking declared a Pest Animal in the ACT. We with the solid base of scientific evidence – especially that of Kate Garrock based in Canberra - the ACT Minister will agree will be a first in Australia and will argument for the federal government governments to do similar things. trigger the requirement for governments

Incidentally, mynas have been declared a pest bird in South Africa: so why not here!

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc: president@indianmynaaction.org.au: ph 02 6231 7461

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

A Great Boost to the Myna Battle

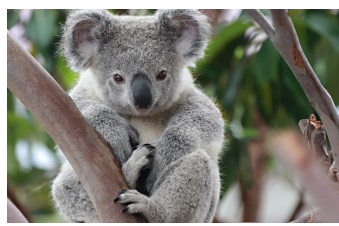
A big boost for myna control has been provided by the federal Threatened Species Commissioner, Gregory Andrews, and Kate Auty, the ACT Commissioner for the Environment. These officials have been promoting CIMAG and the myna control program on their Facebook pages. This is a significant development - having such prominent and respected people as Gregory and Kate on board adds to the myna control culture across eastern Australia. As Threatened Species Commissioner, Gregory has responsibility for progressing policies and strategies that will protect and conserve Australia's iconic wildlife (such as those below). Having Gregory publicly acknowledge the threat posed by mynas and actively promote their control is significant.



✓



✓



✓



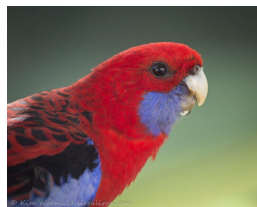
✓



✗

With Prof Kate Auty's acknowledgement of the risks to the Canberra environment from mynas – mynas are voracious predators of insects, skinks as well as the chicks of Canberra's small birds - the public profile and public acceptance of the program has been given a solid boost.

Kate Garrock's research indicated that the native birds below are some of those affected by mynas:



CIMAG – Our Facebook page

Yes, that's right: we have finally moved into the 21st century social media craze. I must acknowledge Gregory Andrews for initiating this new development and for setting up the page for us. Keeping our Facebook page and interesting will be the challenge – so if there is any member who would like to assist in doing this, pls get in touch with me.

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

Our Forthcoming AGM and Public Information Night – have we got a night for you!

This is to be held on 5 Dec at the usual place of the Southern Cross Club at Macquarie, opposite the Jamison Shopping Centre, starting at 7:30pm.

This year we have lined up another fascinating keynote speaker - our entertaining and informative speaker will be Dr Richard Major of the Australian Museum in Sydney. Dr Major, a prominent ornithologist, will speak to us about the results of the myna DNA research that he has been doing on myna carcasses collected from community / council trapping programs up and down the east coast. CIMAG provided the highest number of birds for the project, courtesy of Greg Flowers, Adrian Gallman and Ted Lilley. The research on myna DNA will help us understand how mynas have spread throughout eastern Australia. This will be valuable in knowing how they migrate, the length of time it takes before they are able to build to significant numbers. Richard has been involved in lots of other fascinating research, so this will really be worth hearing.



So put it in your diaries: a “not to be missed” event.

Again, we will devote a good length of time for the interactive public discussion session with the audience.

MynaScan: further developments

Peter West of the Invasive Animals CRC is further refining his ingenious web-based myna recording system. Soon it will be an app for your smart phone, enabling you to record your observations in the field using the geo-location capability of the phone. This will make it very convenient.

CIMAG has its own group site within the MynaScan system: it enables CIMAG members to record myna observations, nesting sites, control activities etc for our group. While we have been requesting members to get involved when they pick up their trap, unfortunately it is much under-utilised, apart from a couple CIMAG members: one of those being Daryl King who has contributed 3,600 records.

We would like all CIMAG members to participate in MynaScan – by recording myna nest sites on MynaScan, Adrian Gallman, who climbs the trees and removes the nest etc, can then hone in on those nest sites.

The Bird has Flown – Peter Bird, that is.

Peter Bird, the feral animal control stalwart of the South Australian Bio-security Dept, has flown from SA government employment. Peter has been the key person in SA dealing with any myna incursions, and has been a strong and active supporter of the CIMAG community-action program. Any myna entrant into the State is promptly “wacked” by Peter – to use his words. He was active in raising awareness in western Victoria of the need to hold the westward march of mynas in Victoria – to actually reduce the prospect of mynas reaching South Australia. But Peter assures us that he is just moving from Dept-paid myna control activity to superannuated-funded myna control (and Bulbul eradication – another serious invasive pest in the Adelaide Hills).

Peter Bird is one half of the Peter x 2 team: the other being Peter West of the Invasive Animals Collaborative Research Centre and MynaScan fame. Both Peters have been enormous helpers to CIMAG and to the national myna control



Peter Bird, on left, with Peter West at the launch of MynaScan

program over the years.

Knowledge is Power – research activity by the Power Brokers

As you know, Newcastle University has been a primary source of knowledge about the behaviour of mynas. Dr Andrea Griffin and her PhD candidates have been undertaking fascinating research over the years. It was their research on myna behaviour and warning calls that alerted us to avoid approaching traps during daylight if there was a myna inside – as that myna may well give an alarm call and tell its free-flying mates

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

that the trap and the person were a danger and were to be avoided.

Andrea mentions that PhD student Marie Diquelou has now submitted her thesis. Her 4.5 year long research focused on the effects of trapping on myna behaviour: she has collected some very important data on the effects of trapping on populations. PhD student Françoise Lermite is continuing her nest box work which includes a collaboration with Queensland: apparently she has made some very interesting observations in the parenting behaviour of mynas and a comparison with some of our native parrots, thanks to the use of trigger cameras on her nest boxes.

In both Marie and Françoise's cases we will need to await the conclusion of the formal scientific process before getting the details of their research results. Hopefully by the time of the next Bulletin, we will be able to publish more details.

Research by Chloé Peneaux (another of Andrea's Newcastle Uni researchers) from opportunistic observations indicates that Indian Mynas appear to have a strong homing instinct when they are moved away from their home base – they are capable of covering long distances: at least as far as 40 km. Homing occurs even when individuals have been held in captivity for a long time. Chloé and Andrea also noted that two long-term bonded pair of mynas remained together from capture, during captive, holding and during post-release travel, and were found near to where they were originally trapped, with one pair known to be breeding. These observations confirm published reports that mynas form lifelong pair bonds. The complete paper can be accessed at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304527301_OPPORTUNISTIC_OBSERVATIONS_OF_TRAVEL_DISTANCES_IN_COMMON_MYNAS_Acridotheres_tristis

Andrea has also provided short summaries of other research that she and the researchers have been doing on identifying the food resources that support myna populations. We will include those in the next Bulletin. All of Dr Griffin's work can be found at: <http://andreasgriffin.weebly.com/publications.html>.

And her lab has a new twitter feed: Andrea says that we are most welcome to sign up to follow the lab's research - [mynas@newcastle](https://twitter.com/mynas@newcastle).

ACT Grant for Myna Nest Removal Project

A big push will now be able to get under way on reducing the chances on mynas building up numbers in the nature reserves around Gungahlin. The ACT Environment and Planning Directorate has given CIMAG a grant to interrupt myna breeding in and adjacent to the Mulligans Flat, Goorooyaroo and Kinleyside Nature Reserves on the north and eastern side of Gungahlin. This is part of the Environmental Offsets Program relating to urban development in Gungahlin: thanks to Louisa Roberts and her colleagues in the Directorate for the assistance they are giving to CIMAG.

These are especially valuable reserves as they contain good quality Red and Yellow Box Woodland habitat. Of particular relevance to us is that mynas are now taking over the nesting hollows of trees in these reserves



and in the bordering suburbs. If allowed to continue, this would put at risk the recent breeding in these reserves by the rare Superb Parrot. Many of you will know of the major campaign across south eastern NSW – especially by the Boorowa Shire - to protect this superbly named parrot.

The way we will be undertaking this project is to again have Adrian Gallman climb the trees and remove myna nests and chicks from tree hollows, with the help from other CIMAG members, the most notable being Greg Flowers. Then we will erect nest boxes nearby at accessible heights to seek to divert mynas to

those boxes rather than using tree hollows: we will then be able to clean out nests in those boxes more readily and remove, and hopefully capture, the hen sitting on the nest at night.

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

Spreading the Word at Floriade and Jamison

Each year the message of “the why and the how-to” deal with mynas is part of Floriade. The “Native Plant and Weed Swap” stall is always an attraction for those who appreciate Australian plants – it can be a welcome relief from the colourful weeds (is that too harsh?) in the rest of Floriade. A trusty band of helpers “person” the stall, handing out information brochures on mynas and explaining how the trap, on display, works. It certainly results in lots of phone calls to CIMAG from interstate people about how they can get hold of a trap. Thanks to those involved – particularly Rosemary Blemings for organizing this each year and being a regular attendee. In a similar vein, thanks to Ross Dalton for organizing for CIMAG to have a stall at the Jamison Shopping Centre as part of the *Parkcare in Jamison* display. Our fourth year there and again a lot of interest by people coming through the shopping centre.



Volunteer Myna Euthanisers - following RSPCA Withdrawal

Most of you will recall that the RSPCA has been a great supporter of the myna control program and had participated by disposing of trapped mynas when people were not able to do that themselves. Most people euthanise the trapped birds at their home but it was most valuable – and appreciated – to have had RSPCA dispose of some for CIMAG members. The mid-year decision by the RSPCA to stop doing this has left a few people in the lurch: that is unfortunate, but a number of CIMAG members have put up their hands to help out when this is needed. So a big thanks to the following who can be contacted if the need arises:

Hall / Gungahlin / north Belconnen: Greg Flowers: contact # 0490 132 146

Inner North: Isobel Crawford: contact # 6257 1860 / 0429 798 887

Inner south (Curtin, Hughes, Lyons, Garran): Mike Mulvaney: contact mulvaney@netspeed.com.au

Curtin: Steve Klaus (contact me for contact details)

Tuggeranong area: Stuart Brittan: contact # 6231 6188 / 0448 218 715

Mawson area: Craig Backhouse: contact # 6286 8926

Pearce area: Steve Flora: contact floras@netspeed.com.au

Weetangera area: Jerry Tipping: # 6254 3455

Holt area: Keith Joliffe: contact # 0427 546 156

Melba and outer Belconnen: Kevin Small: contact kevsmall@ozemail.com.au

News we don't want to hear

Mynas are reported to be rapidly expanding their range westwards in NSW and Qld. John Morten from Yarrawonga in Victoria was up in western NSW in mid-year and estimated mynas numbering up to 600 roosting in Moree. We noticed lots of mynas at Guyra in western NSW about the same time.

Paradise Not Yet Lost

Mynas have made inroads into the Sunshine Coast of south east Queensland, particularly the southern section. And they have been sighted in Paradise, aka, Noosa. Fortunately numbers are still low there and a few people are trapping, so paradise is not yet lost. I have discussed with Jason Sherriff of the Noosa Council arrangements for running a workshop when we are up there later this month – to ensure Noosa will always remain paradise.



Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

Now North Island in the Seychelles is the focus

In previous Bulletins we reported on the great success in ridding mynas on Denis Island in the Seychelles. Now the focus is on North Island, one of the 115 islands in the Seychelles archipelago. Only a small island of 500 acres, it had an estimated population of 1000 mynas – some 200 were trapped by University of Reading students and the Green Island Foundation volunteers (with assistance from a University of Seychelles student) in the first 2 months of an eradication program so there is a lot of hope that this time – unlike two previous attempts in 2005 and 2012 - eradication will be achieved. Let us hope so.

- as well as Ein Gedi National Park in Israel



Shahar Mizrahi, a biology and environmental science student at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has been in touch to find ways to eradicate the few mynas which have settled in the Ein Gedi National Park. Ein Gedi National Park is an oasis on the edge of the Dead Sea in Israel. Shahar says that mynas have quickly built up in numbers in Israel since some escaped from a cage in Tel Aviv in 1997. As a part of a Conservation Ecology course at the University, the students are trying to find a way to tackle the problem, with the intent of passing it on to the Israel Nature and Parks Authority for implementation.

Cyclone Winston to the Rescue

In the last Bulletin I mentioned that Sophie Clay of Treasure Island Resort in Fiji was proposing to start a myna eradication program – but before they could get it underway, Cyclone Winston did the job for them. Mynas have not been sighted since – but the local birds were not affected. Now is the time to visit!

A sad note

From time to time we hear of the death of a CIMAG stalwart. And so again. It was very sad to hear that Richard McCluskey, a strong and active supporter of CIMAG has passed away. Richard was a great fella and we will really miss him.

Around the Traps

The myna control effort around Australia and overseas continues with a flourish.

The **City of Bayside in Victoria** has provided a further grant of \$11,000 to keep the community trapping program going down there. The community program is having great success and this will enable it to have an even bigger impact. The focus in this year with the council money is to expand the community education program with brochures and posters at shopping centres and schools as well as getting the total traps up to around 350 from the current 250. Traps are lent out to people – so far around 1000 people have been involved. Their success has meant that local communities and councils elsewhere in Melbourne have been in touch – so success hopefully will breed more of it.

Barbara Jones of the Far South Coast Bird Watchers Group reports that there has been a surge of activity for the **Bega Valley** Task Force. They have always had low myna numbers, thanks to an early proactive trapping program by a profoundly astute group of birdwatchers /conservationists/ environmentalists. At Candelo 12 birds have been eliminated and 6 caught at McLeod's Hill north of Bega, waiting to be used as Judas birds for another trap east of the Bega township. The small group working on this project will have eyes and ears alert, and are ready to act. This just shows that if a community is activated early before myna numbers balloon, they can keep the birds in check before they become a real problem.

Mynas have arrived in **Araluen**, the delightful spot not too far from Braidwood in southern NSW. Tash Murphy reported seeing a flock of 50-70 mynas in the area. After obtaining a trap, Tash, who lives on a property on the edge of the township, promptly caught 27 mynas in the first week. Tash reports that since then she has not seen any others in the area. Hopefully they got the message that Araluen is simply great without them.

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

Bundaberg Regional Council is again showing the way with innovative approaches. You will recall that the Bundaberg Regional Council was the first to pay a bounty for each myna caught. Now they have developed an Aviary Trap (1.5m x 1.5m x 2m high). According to Spencer Katt from the Council, the Aviary Trap is proving a great success. Two of the traps have been placed in **Childers** and seven around **Bundaberg**, with sufficient food and water for a few days or a week. Spencer says that myna numbers have dropped substantially in Childers. Two neighbours between them have caught 200 mynas.

The **Campbelltown City Council** program goes from strength to strength. 25 workshops have been held with 506 participants since the program started in 2014. The local Men's Sheds have sold 235 traps. One trapper has caught 144 mynas since March this year. The program now has an engaged and enthusiastic group of local trappers who are making inroads into the myna population in the area.

Up **Clarence Valley** way, Laura and Kevin Noble are still hard at it, together with their band of trappers across the region. Apart from their trapping program – which has now totaled almost 9000 mynas - the Clarence Valley Conservation in Action Group (CVCIA) is trialing other control techniques, including mist netting, shooting, an aviary trap *a la* Bundaberg, and nest removal with a tree climber *a la* us. Kevin and Laura have also been giving presentations across northern NSW and southern Qld.

Ron Fink reported mid-year that their program in the **Macedon Ranges** had 250 trappers stretched across 9 towns. So the program has built up very quickly – no doubt those stats are even more impressive now.

John McCrea reports that he hasn't seen any mynas around the **Mudgee / Gulgong** area since he caught a group of 17 earlier this year, but unfortunately there are still a number of them around **Dunedoo and Coolah**. There numbers have been kept in check by the Green Army group trapping in the Dunedoo area. **Dubbo** is reported by Tim Hosking of the Dubbo Field Naturalist and Conservation Society Inc to still be "myna-free".

Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee (B4) in **Brisbane** is still very dedicated to the fight against mynas. Stefan Hattingh has been presenting workshops (to fully booked venues) throughout the year. This has branched out to other City Councils, with two more councils now involved with the myna trapping program. B4C's trapping numbers have been good and Stefan reports that other groups have also done a good job. Stefan has met with Prof Daryl Jones from Griffith University to work up a project on how mynas behave in sub-tropical south-east Qld. They are gathering info on that. At present the Qlders extrapolate from what has been done in Canberra. But there may well be different behaviours between the two populations which might mean the need for different techniques in trapping from us.

Trapping numbers for the last few months

Graham Gliddon's records for captures for the past few months are below.

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	
Mynas	431	238	353	271	115	101	285	for a total of 3,910 for the last 12 months.
Starlings	129	35	8	4	28	1	46	for a total of 559 for the last 12 months.

The *reported* capture total of mynas is 58,292 since we started in 2006, and 8,789 starlings.

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
7 Nov 2016

Email: president@indianmynaaction.org.au