

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

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



Myna Matters Bulletin # 34 (Winter 2017)

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

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

Mynas on the rebound - Time for a Concerted Trapping Effort

The last two breeding seasons have been good for mynas and bad for us and the environment. Favourable breeding conditions have seen a rise in mynas seen around Canberra – and in some big numbers. People have been reporting seeing flocks of 30 and more mynas around their backyards, shopping centres and schools. We know that with the good late winter and spring rains, mynas have bred up. There have been at least 3 clutches of chicks this past breeding season – resulting in lots of young juveniles around.



Thankfully, not in Canberra

It's a timely reminder that we can't be complacent – if we want a relatively myna-free Canberra-Queanbeyan area, we need to get those traps out and working.

Where people have been trapping they are getting some big numbers – 70 in one backyard in Torrens over March, 97 for the year so far by John and Gillian Secombe in Wanniasa, 40s in Harrison and elsewhere in Gungahlin.

In the first 4 months of 2017, our trappers have reported capturing 2,526 mynas: in all of 2016 we only removed 4,200. This gives an indication of the myna rebound and the need to get back on top of the problem.

AGM – another fascinating night of presentations and discussion

The 2016 AGM held (way) back in December was another great night: Dr Richard Majors and Dr Peter West were the main speakers.

Richard spoke about the research he and his team at the Australian Museum and

Universities of Queensland and Newcastle have been doing to understand the movement of mynas in Australia since they were introduced into Melbourne in the 1860s: you might remember that CIMAG trappers (as well as many other trappers from along the east coast) had provided Richard with carcasses of



Richard and Peter

trapped birds. While we have all known of the introduction of mynas into Melbourne over 150 years ago, and



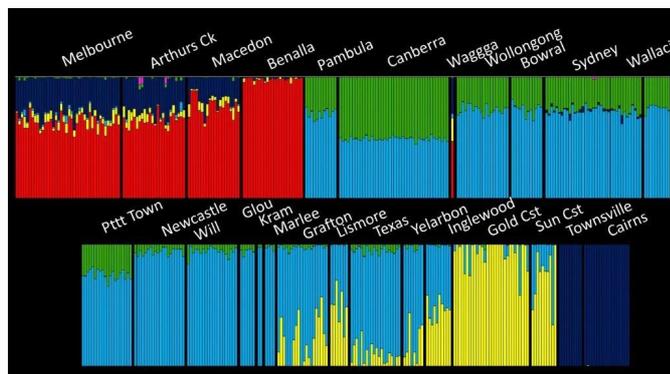
their subsequent arrival in Sydney and Far North Qld, there were a few surprises in the results of the DNA

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tests that Richard and his team undertook on the carcasses.

By colour coding mynas that had close DNA matches, it is possible to map the movement of the various myna populations as they have spread around and about. But a puzzle: what is the derivation of a particular myna population in the Gold Coast / Sunshine Coast area which are distinct from the other myna populations – where did this group come from and when? A mystery indeed - we await further news on this from Richard.



Peter West spoke again about MynaScan - the web-based recording system developed by the Invasive Animals Collaborative Research Centre - and again exhorted CIMAG members to start using it to record / report myna sightings. So we are doing that: **please start recording myna sightings on MynaScan**. Given the explosion of mynas around Canberra, reporting sightings on MynaScan will be a great help in us understanding the extent of the problem. Moreover, by recording myna nesting sites on MynaScan, we can direct Adrian to the area to remove the nest. So pls, go to www.feralscan.org.au/mynascan .



Greg and Bruce – thks for the long service

We also honoured the ten years of service that Bruce Lindenmayer and Greg Flowers have given to the Committee and to the overall myna control program. Both Greg and Bruce have been core personnel in the battle. Greg started trapping in the Hall area before we started CIMAG and his knowledge of mynas and their wanton ways is enormous.

Oh, and by the way we have a new (really an old) Committee. Apart from the previous members who are all staying on, Marg Peachey has returned to the Committee fold. Good to have you back Marg.

Community Corrections now building traps

It has been some time since the Alexander Maconochie Centre has been building traps for us – as the construction work for the goal's extensions had meant the area that had been set aside for trap building was not available for the inmates to make their high quality traps. But lucky for us, Community Corrections have filled the breach: people doing community service orders are now making the traps – and churning out good numbers again. So if you know of anyone who needs a trap, get in touch by email and we will be able to provide one.



Trap building underway

Visit by Singaporeans

We had a meeting with some high profile officers from Singapore National Parks back in February, when they were here on other business. Dr Adrian Loo, Dr Sharon Chan, Dr James Gan and Dr Wee Foong Ang were interested in hearing about our experiences in reducing myna numbers (luckily for us there were no mynas around!), and the lessons they could take away to apply in Singapore. We also took them to see a trap operating in situ. Mynas are also a problem over there: they actually have two species of the pest. A third if you count this sort on the right!



Myna sculptures in Singapore !!

Press Script: I have now been informed by Max Burke that he had lunch with Adrian Loo in the Singapore Botanic Gardens last Saturday: mynas were everywhere.

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CIMAG – Our Facebook page

Our Facebook page is going well: Ray and Ross are finding lots of interesting items to put on to whet your interest and keep you informed. So if you are a Facebook sort of person, check it out and, so Ray tells me, please “like” us. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/Canberra-Indian-Myna-Action-Group-208429189562546/>



Anti-myna T-shirt

One of our enterprising members, John Hobbins, has been doing his bit to promote the local myna control program. John had the T-shirt made up with a transfer of our CIMAG logo. Is it possible that this will be a highly prized and much sought-after fashion item!

While on the topic of promoting the myna control program, CIMAG recently presented to the Australian Vertebrate Pest Conference that was held here in Canberra. The focus of the paper was the role of the community in pest control. This was an excellent opportunity to speak to a very broad audience of government agency and academics involved in pest management of the value of the community-action approach that CIMAG follows.

The Move to Declare Mynas a Pest Animal in the ACT

We previously advised of the submission we had made to the ACT Government to have mynas declared a Pest Animal in the ACT. A recent meeting with the ACT Environment, Planning and Sustainability Directorate explored this matter. They are updating the listings of Declared Pest Animals, and mynas will be considered as part of this process. There were encouraging comments from officials that the myna meets the criteria for declaration – but there is still some way to go in the process, with a draft paper expected to be available for comment before the end of this year.

Animal Welfare – always to be in front of mind

It is always good to be reminded that our myna control program relies on community and government acceptance. For this to continue, we must be mindful of the need to adopt good animal welfare practices. So please continue to take care of mynas that are in your trap. The myna control program is “not about being cruel to mynas, but rather being kind to native wildlife”.

Genevieve’s Myna Distraction in China

The remarkable and multi-talented Genevieve Jacobs (ABC Radio Canberra + much more) was recently in China leading a group to see Chinese landscape garden design, when she saw something that gave her cause to think of home. As you can see from her photo, the Chinese really pamper their mynas – only the best porcelain bowls for their food and water. Mynas are kept as song birds by the Chinese and lovingly admired – but I can’t see that becoming the norm back here.



Congratulations Ryu – 2017 Young Canberra Citizen of the Year

Congratulations Ryu Callaway – our Membership Database Manager and very keen environmentalist. Ryu has packed a hell of a lot into his almost seventeen years: and he is rightly the 2017 Young Canberra Citizen of the Year.

The nomination for the Award outlines his many environmental activities, and also his other awards and achievements. In part it says “Ryu has made an enormous contribution to wildlife conservation in the ACT, demonstrated by his commitment to ongoing monitoring and citizen science activities over many years, on-ground action, and as a role model to other young people. Ryu has been volunteering for the environment in

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a formal capacity since 2007, which began with him signing up to undertake regular Frogwatch monitoring at the age of 7. This led to activities with the Friends of Tidbinbilla and Waterwatch. By 2011 he had joined the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG), Canberra Ornithologists Group, ACT Wildlife, Canberra Nature Map, and started a student action group at school to reduce energy and improve recycling. He is one of the key contributors to eBird with over 850 complete bird surveys carried out and submitted over the past 2 years, and has made more than 1300 postings to Canberra Nature Maps (in the top five). He also participates in a number of long-running systematic surveys such as the Garden Bird Survey, K2C surveys, Jerrabomberra Wetlands Surveys, and the Annual Bird Blitz. He participated in the Latham's Snipe project, as part of a team who affixed satellite transmitters to Snipe via a collaboration with the Wild Bird Society of Japan and the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust."

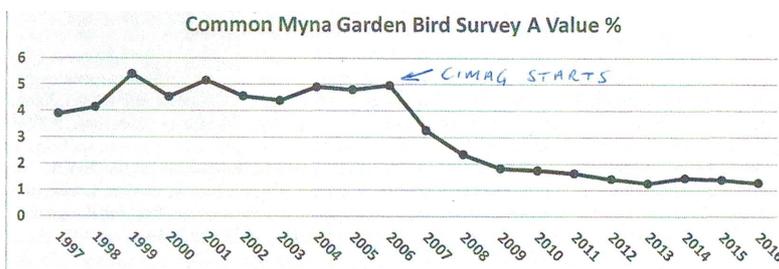
A busy fellow indeed – we are so proud of Ryu and grateful that he still finds time to manage our database.

Adrian's raising his effort – with an Elevated Platform

Previously we have mentioned how Adrian Gallman climbs trees and removes myna nests for CIMAG – it is a control activity in nature reserves where we can't trap. Adrian has now decided to lift his effort – by acquiring an elevated platform (the sort of thing you see tree-fellers and street light-bulb changers use around town – also called a "cherry picker"). This will make getting to those myna nests in very high tree hollows a lot easier and safer. If you have mynas in hollows around your place or in your roof, Adrian's the person to get rid of them. With a 19m reach, the platform can get to places where ladders can't. If interested, contact Adrian through his email womblingon57@bigpond.com or mobile 0419 413 296.

The COG 2015-16 Garden Bird Survey Results are in – with some good news

Despite the pessimistic tone in the first item that mynas are seen around in some big numbers in the



Canberra / Queanbeyan area, the survey results by the Canberra Ornithologists Group Garden Bird Survey indicate that we have held them steady as the 18th most common bird in Canberra again for the 2015-16 survey period: recall that they were the 3rd most common bird in Canberra when we started the program in 2006. They were also the 18th the previous survey period.

This is good news – but we have had this big breeding season since, so let's not think all is well.

Frances' Garbage Bin Euthanizer vs Wayne's Motorbike Exhaust



Innovative people abound! Frances Smith and her neighbour have converted an old garbage bin into a dispatch bin for myna birds. No more bags! Fran hasn't said if there is a patent pending!

Wayne Challen says that his 2011 Yamaha motorbike does an excellent job – even faster than his car, presumably as it doesn't have anti-pollution controls.

More Myna Research Results from University of Newcastle

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 alert its free-flying mates to avoid the trap.

Andrea advises that they are progressing in publishing Marie Diquelou's papers on trap shyness, and that within the next few months they will have some data to finally share with CIMAG about her work. Also,

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Francoise Lermite's first nest box paper is just about to be submitted.

The following studies fit into a line of work in which Dr Griffin and her team are trying to identify the food resources that support myna populations: if you have other observations of feeding behaviours in mynas, Andrea and her team would love to hear from you.

Federspiel, I.G., Garland, A., Guez, D., Bugynar, T., Healy, S., Güntürkün, O., Griffin, A.S. (In press). Adjusting foraging strategies: a comparison of rural and urban common mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*). *Animal Cognition*. Special issue *Animal Cognition in a human-dominated world* (Griffin, A.S. Tebbich, S. & Bugnyar, T. Eds).

Perhaps surprisingly, mynas living in cities take longer to learn about new feeding opportunities than rural mynas; Andrea and her team have suggested this might be because rural mynas, which are most often found in association with horses, rely on insects in horse dung. Horses and dung piles are always present all year round in the same locations in stud farms. Urban mynas often feed around supermarkets and fast food outlets, so feeding opportunities might be more variable in terms of where and when they can be found because they come and go with the activities of humans. This means that urban mynas might take longer to decide to keep coming back to the same place to feed.

Diquelou, M., Griffin, A. S. & Sol, D. (2016). The role of motor diversity in foraging innovations: A cross-species comparison in urban birds. *Behavioral Ecology*, 10.1093/beheco/arv190.

Adapting and developing new foraging behaviours is thought to be an important way in which invasive birds deal with new environments.

All of Dr Griffin's work can be found at: <http://andreasgriffin.weebly.com/publications.html> . And her lab has a new twitter feed: you are most welcome to sign up to follow the lab's research - [mynas@newcastle](https://twitter.com/mynas@newcastle) .

Around the Traps

The Shoalhaven City Council, on the initiative of Councillor John Levett, is re-activating the myna control program that was initially commenced in 2008-09 but fell away: we referred to their program - which was an integration of the council and



community effort - as the Shoalhaven Model and promoted it as the approach to be followed by other councils and communities. Ray Barge and I travelled to Nowra a few months ago, at John's request, to present to a public meeting involving the mayor, councillors, and the community. Now with a much more active and dedicated council and senior management, we expect the program to rebuild to a strong engagement of the community working with council. Anna Hernell from the council is back involved and with her experience and guidance and John Levett's involvement, all will be well in the Shoalhaven soon.

Tenterfield activity - Jane l'Ons reports on the trapping effort up at Tenterfield. She and her husband Martin are running a number of traps in the area and have removed 663 mynas since 2015. Jane reports that a local vineyard was attracting many Indian Mynas during the grape picking season and that starling numbers seem to have grown of late (as mynas and starlings compete for food and tree hollows, perhaps the reduction in mynas is leading to starling numbers increasing). Jane also mentions that Kevin and Laura Noble from Clarence Valley Conservation in Action Group had been up presenting to the Granite Borders Landcare Group in Tenterfield recently. It was very well attended – so hopefully many more people in the area will also start trapping.

Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia – Pohnpei Island, one of the “emeralds of the Pacific” (the largest, highest and most populous island - 34,000 people - in the Federated States of Micronesia, and one of the wettest places on the planet with an average of 7600mm of rain a year) has had an incursion by just a couple mynas. The actual number is still being assessed. Pohnpei has one of the highest concentrations of extant endemic birds of any small island in Oceania, so this is a very worrying development. Luckily the local people have been onto to it very quickly and are launching an invasive species emergency and working up an urgent strategy for how to remove the birds. CIMAG and Susana Saavedra provided info on our different trapping techniques and trap designs. The Pohnpei team will commence removal actions very soon once they determine the best strategy / trap / technique for their island.

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Neil Fowlis of Johannesburg reports that myna populations in **South Africa** have exploded and are out of control. They have now reached the Kalahari. They have been officially declared alien invasive species and enjoy no protection, but as far as he knows there is still no private or government working group in place to combat the problem, although efforts are being made to stop them establishing in Kruger National Park.

Arne Witt of the Kenyan Centre for Agriculture and BioSciences International on the otherhand advises that mynas have not reached **East Africa**. Arne contacted CIMAG to ask about the best person that could run a myna control training course for people in **Saudi Arabia** – where mynas have been a problem for some time. We recommended Susana Saavedra - who we all know as “The Scourge of Mynas and Bulbuls” for her wonderful work in removing (even to the point of total extinction) mynas and bulbuls from a number of islands in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. I understand that Susana is still awaiting news from the Saudis if she has the contract to run training programs on practical activities to reduce mynas in the Kingdom. Hopefully so, and that her training will start an active campaign to reduce mynas across the whole of the Middle East.

Another 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 Ross Gunn, an active supporter of CIMAG for many years, has passed away. Ross and Toni had been at the task for a very long time, and were very successful. Our sympathies to Toni for this sad loss: we will really miss him, and his and Toni’s efforts.

Around the Traps

Trapping numbers for the last few months

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

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May
Mynas	248	229	668	592	682	584	?
Starlings	53	23	8	12	11	37	?

The *reported* capture total is 61,300 mynas and 8,900 starlings since we started in 2006.

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 June 2017

Email: president@indianmynaaction.org.au