

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

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



Myna Matters Bulletin # 37 (Summer 2020)

Happy New Year to all. Let's hope 2020 is a good year – after a horrific start.

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on CIMAG activities.

AGM and Public Information Night – a great success.

The 2018 AGM and Public Information Night was held in early December with our Patron, Prof Tony Peacock, and the Keynote Speaker, Prof Kate Auty who is the ACT Commissioner for the Environment, in attendance - together with a good roll-up of CIMAG members and the public. Prof Auty's address was truly inspiring, drawing together the myriad links that are needed to establish a sustainable environment and society. The Commissioner referred to the ACT State of the Environment Report – in which she has mentioned CIMAG as a model for community engagement.

Dan Buchler spoke of the advantages of people accessing the CIMAG Facebook Group site. Dan explained that the information and tips that other trappers around Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the indomitable Susanna Saavedra of the Canary Islands provide are of great assistance. Tips on what bait to use, how to respond if mynas become trap-shy etc. All good information from people who have found some answers. Dan also explained how easy it was to get access to the site without becoming a wider Facebook user. So

persuasive was Dan in extolling the virtues of our Facebook Group that our Patron was compelled to join straight away! You can follow Tony's lead by logging on to

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/1965719250400803/>

We welcome Jim Kennedy to the Committee. At this stage the Secretary's position is still vacant and we would welcome a CIMAG member to take up the role that Ross Dalton has surrendered. Ross will still stay on the Committee, which will have Ray Barge continue as Vice-President, Dan Buchler as the Treasurer, Greg Flowers, Bruce Lindenmayer and myself as President. The President's Report for 2019 is on the CIMAG website.



Our Patron logging onto the CIMAG Facebook site

Leaving Town for Holidays – first dismantle the trap

If you are looking to get away from Canberra / Queanbeyan's smokey environs for the next few weeks, please remember to dismantle your trap to avoid any unpleasant surprises when you get home. Just separate the Feeding Chamber from the Containment Chamber and ensure there is no free feed left in the trap to entice birds or lizards in for lunch. And while on the animal welfare side on things, if you have your trap set – and now is the time for that – please make sure that there is always a good supply of clean water, food and shade for any trapped birds. We want them happy and comfortable so they entice others to the trap.

Also with the dry times continuing, please put water out in bowls for native birds, kangaroos, echidnas etc.

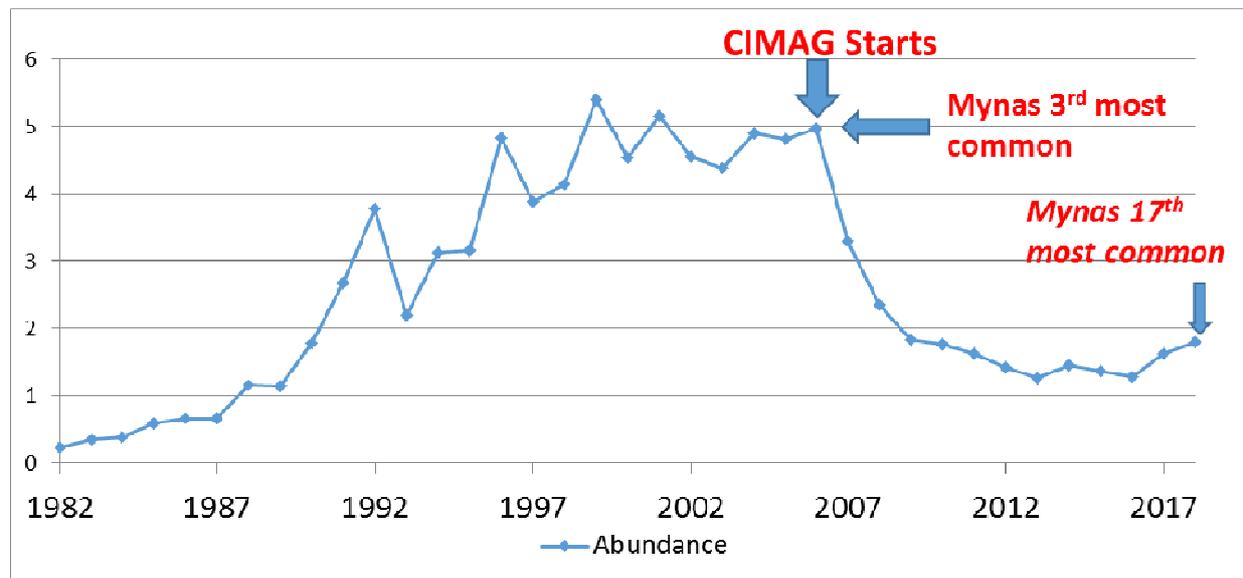
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It is all in the numbers: but what are they saying?

You all know of Graham Gliddon, our Capture Database Manager, and the wonderful job he does each month collating all your captures. Graham's Database is an enormous repository of information: so much so that it has been used in PhD studies. It shows captures by individual trappers, suburbs / towns by month over the past 14 years of CIMAG's existence. From which we can get some really useful – and at times puzzling / disappointing information (more later on). The other most valuable dataset is that from the Canberra Ornithologists Group's Garden Bird Survey: it shows the rise of mynas since they were introduced into Canberra in the 1960s and then the rapid decline once CIMAG operations began.

COG Garden Bird Survey: Myna Abundance 2018-2019



You can see the great impact that the CIMAG community-trapping program has had since we started: but you can also see that myna numbers have risen a little from the best situation back in 2013 when they were the 20th most common bird in the area. There has been a rise in myna numbers in the past few years: we think this is a direct consequence of fewer new trappers when we had difficulty in supplying traps when people wanted them, and the drop off in trapping by earlier trappers, for whatever reason. We want to rectify both those circumstances. So let's get back to when we were really knocking their numbers down.

This is the time to do that: the naïve juveniles are coming out of their nests and are ripe for the picking, ie trapping. Let's have a concerted trapping effort by **all those with traps** up to end March so we have a big hit on the next generation and their accompanying parents. If this is highly successful it will tell us that it is not myna wariness / smartness that is leading to lower capture numbers and higher myna abundance. Please dust / wash down the trap, stock it up with nice dog biscuits for small adult dogs and get it out into the garden.

Goulburn Community Joins the Fight – as does the Hall Community

There have been a few trappers in Goulburn over the past years but Sue Theron of Goulburn has been galvanising the Goulburn community to get a coordinated program underway. With Sue's enthusiasm and skill we are hopeful that the Goulburn effort will intensify. Sue organised for Greg Flowers, Dan Buchler and me to give two presentations to interested Goulburnians. The meetings were well attended and we are hopeful that it will lead to many more people tackling the problem in that area. We have offered to provide traps gratis to the emerging Goulburn group to help get them started.

A similar story for Hall. Greg Flowers – a Hall resident who started trapping there before CIMAG was established and who was involved with Chris Tidemann (the eminent ANU myna-control researcher and our first Patron) – and I were invited by Rhondda Dickson to talk to a gathering of concerned Hall people. A large

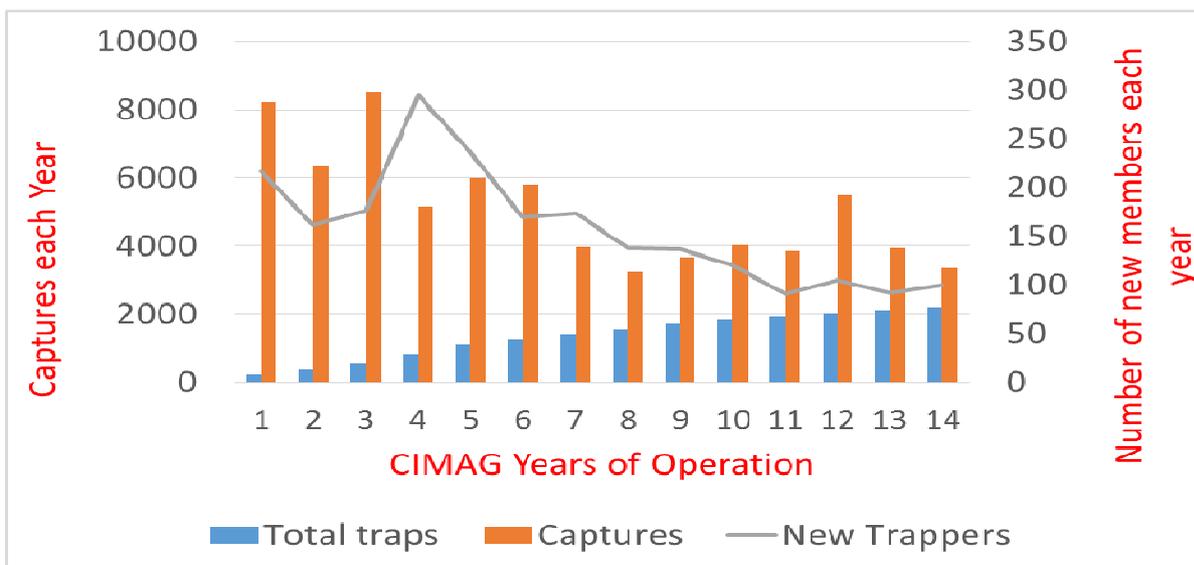
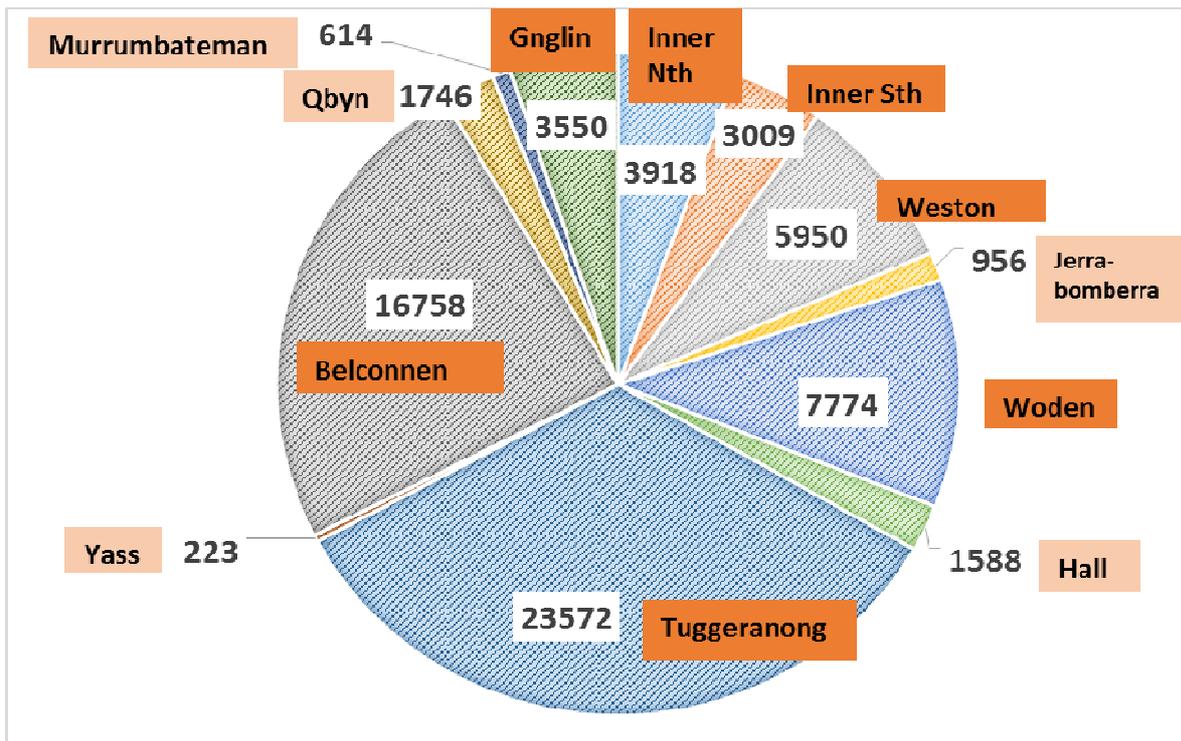
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group attended and as a consequence a coordinated program is being established. They have ordered 5 traps which will be loaned around to people in the area. The Hall Progress Association will fund a donation for that. Mynas and starlings are aplenty in the area so a coordinated Hall trapping program will be of great assistance to the 10 locals who have traps already. Judy Roberts borrowed Rhondda's trap: got 57 mynas and 34 starlings in 9 days this January. It was not uncommon for Greg to catch over 200 starlings and up to a 100 mynas a year.

Some Graphs for you to ponder from Graham Gliddon's Database

Myna captures by area in Canberra since CIMAG started in 2006

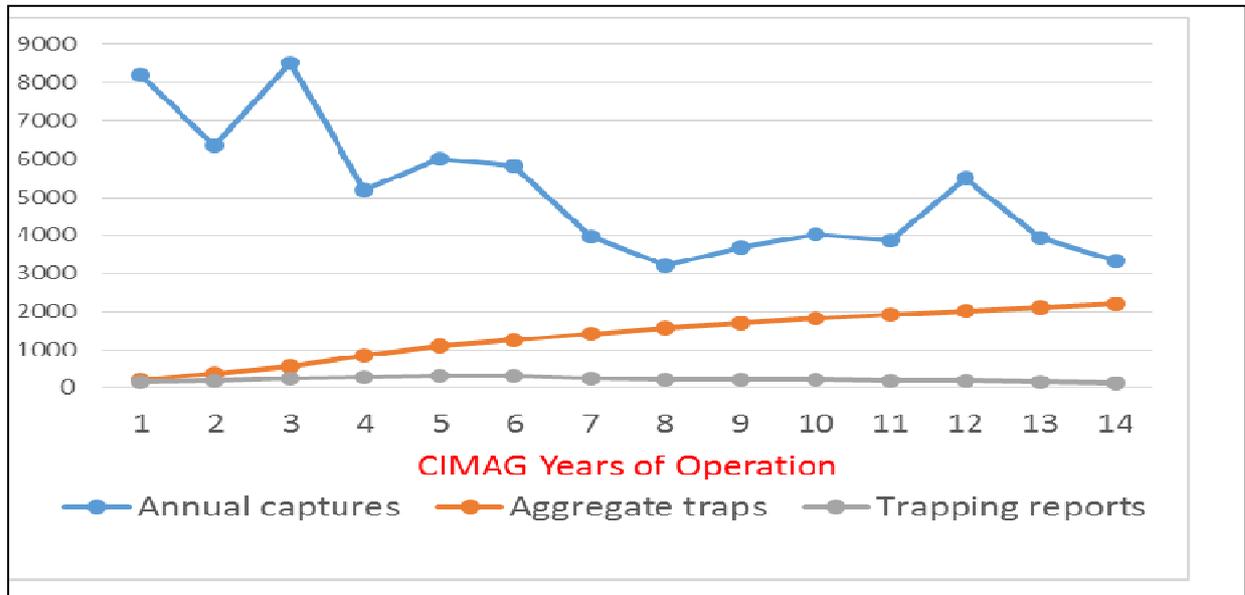


The above shows annual myna catch, total number of traps and the number of new traps provided each year.

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

There is a puzzle in this next graph showing trapping success declining while trap numbers increase and trapper reporting to Graham being very low. In fact, the reported captures come half from new trappers and half from old trappers, despite there being only around 100 new trappers each year and over 2000 other people with traps.



Now this is one where we are wanting to get underneath the figures. Accordingly we would ask all CIMAG members to send back a response to these questions. This would be really handy for us to work out what things we need to do better.

1. Have you ever set up the trap? Yes No
2. If not, was the problem:
 - a) didn't have all the extra stuff, ie extra dog biscuits or grey water hose or plastic bag for euthanizing
 - b) didn't have time as too busy with other stuff
 - c) couldn't bring myself to actually euthanise the birds.
3. Are you trapping currently? Yes No
4. If not, is it because
 - a) no mynas around / don't see any mynas
 - b) too busy with other things
 - c) lost interest.
5. If you are trapping, do you send your monthly capture figures to Graham Gliddon? Yes No
6. If not, is it because:
 - a) I don't get the monthly email request from Graham
 - b) I only do it if I have caught some
 - c) Even if I do catch some, I can't be bothered reporting.

You can either scan this page with your response and email back to me, post it (to CIMAG, 6 Fanning Pl, Kambah, ACT 2902), or send me an email with your response, such as 1. Yes; 2. b); 3. No; 4. c) etc.

If you are not currently receiving a monthly email request from Graham for your captures, but have captures to report, please email him at ggliddon@tpg.com.au with a copy to me at president@indianmynaaction.org.au. Graham drops people off his list if there is no response for some time.

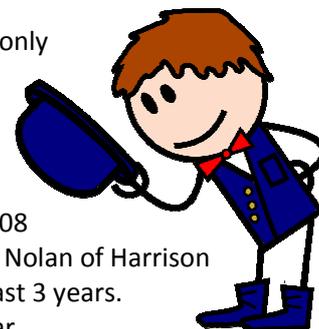
Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

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Trapping success: some get big numbers.

I mentioned earlier that Greg Flowers gets some big capture numbers: he is not the only one, fortunately.

Lots of people have caught over 50 mynas in each of the last year, and hats off to all of them. An effort needing special mention is that of Joe van Dyke in Karabar (a suburb of Queanbeyan) who over the 3 years 2017-2019 has caught 670 mynas. A staggering effort. Other impressive efforts are from Russell Wenholtz of Holt with 408 mynas in the last 2 years, Keith French of Gilmore with 377 in the last 2 years, Gerry Nolan of Harrison with 306 over the past 3 years and Paul Russell of Gowrie with 245 mynas over the last 3 years. Peter Grealy of Kaleen takes a prize for trapping 157 mynas / 236 starlings in one year.



Trapping in new areas will often get very big captures. All those mentioned above started trapping in those years.

Now these efforts need to be replicated by the rest of us (if there are birds around). Remember not to be lulled into a false sense of myna free-ness. Even if they are not observed they may well be cruising through your area at various times when you are inside or at the shops.

CIMAG Facebook Group

Dan and Heather Buchler report that interest in the CIMAG Facebook Group is increasing rapidly – in fact 50 people joined in one day after Heather posted a message to the Canberra Notice Board Group.

As mentioned earlier, the site is an excellent place to get all sorts of tips. In recent times there has been a discussion on possible modifications to the trap that we use. Also there has been a discussion on what is a good bait for mynas. In no time at all, Dan and Heather have got some 353 people involved sharing news and advice.

We hope the CIMAG Facebook Group forum will form the basis of an international exchange amongst myna controllers. It has been going great guns, but we are keen to have more people involved. So, go to <https://m.facebook.com/groups/1965719250400803/> and become involved.

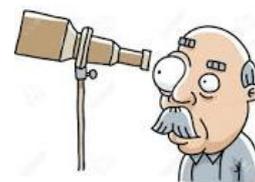
The Move to Declare Mynas a Pest Animal in the ACT

During the course of the last year, ACT Government released a draft of their Declaration on Pest Animals, which now includes Indian Mynas. We still await the formal Declaration, which we see as the trigger for the Committee to advocate for actions within a specific Myna Management Action Plan that would require authorities, business and the community to tackle the myna problem. For example, restaurants and cafes to keep skips covered and to promptly wipe down outside tables to stop mynas getting an easy feed; for schools and other public institutions to be active in managing their environment and to trap in certain circumstances – eg in schoolyards during holidays. Schools are a particular focal point, as mynas can pose a health hazard: their fecal dust and droppings can harbour a number of dangerous pathogens which can affect the school kids and teachers.

We have offered the Government assistance in preparing a Management Plan. When the Declaration occurs we will seek your support in advocating to the ACT Government for it to go the next step.

Where are the Myna Hotspots and Trouble-spots?

To assist us in focusing our efforts for the forthcoming year, we would like your insights as to hotspots and trouble-spots across Canberra. We know schools and industrial areas can be high population spots. Where else? Do you have any contact with businesses / school teachers or principals at those spots or friends who live nearby? And can you pinpoint specific schools for us to follow up with.



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Squeamish about Euthanasia – Call a Friend

From time to time new trappers can't bring themselves to dispose of their trapped birds. We have a number of people scattered around the ACT who are willing to assist. So if this is putting you off from helping control this pest bird, get in touch by email or go onto the Facebook Group site and we will line somebody up close to you to help out. For those out of the Canberra region, a post on our Facebook Group site might get you in touch with someone nearby to you who is willing and able to help out.

Never let a myna out – or approach a trapped myna during daytime

We have learnt from the work by Dr Andrea Griffin of Newcastle University that mynas are extremely intelligent birds: just marginally less intelligent at problem solving than Ravens / Crows. As such they will learn to avoid the trap and you if they sense or experience danger. So it is important to reduce the risk of mynas becoming trap wary / trap shy, as they will pass that knowledge of danger onto others. Accordingly, it is critical that mynas are never able to escape, and certainly not released from the trap. So if you are wanting to transfer a trapped myna into another trap for it to be used as a decoy / judas bird, make sure you place an old rag / t-shirt completely over the door opening and put your hand underneath that to catch the bird. If you don't do this, there is a real chance trapped mynas will whizz passed your hand before you can stop them. Also another way to stop mynas learning that the trap is bad, is for people to not approach the trap during daytime if there is a myna in it: it may give an alarm call and warn other free-flying mynas that you and the trap are bad news.

Magpie one better than the Canary

The canary (of "canary in the coal mine" fame) has established a global reputation as a fore-warner of danger. A magpie in Newcastle goes one better and thinks it is an Emergency Services Vehicle. Ray Barge (our Vice President) was present when his son-in-law Gregory Andrews (CIMAG member and former federal Endangered Species Commissioner) recorded a magpie at a friend's place in Newcastle imitating an Ambulance or Fire Engine. This is now posted on the internet which you can see by googling "Magpie Mimics Fire Engine". Ray says that it even gave the whoop-whoop sound, but this was not recorded. It has been doing this for some time, apparently, so is not in response to the recent bushfires as some of the media reports stated. Check it out.



Trapping numbers for the last few months

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

	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Mynas	149	473	337	183	167	231	125	172
Starlings	44	46	37	17	12	31	260	56

The *reported* capture total is almost 71,870 mynas and 10,359 starlings since we started in 2006.

Get onto the CIMAG email Distribution System

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.

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.

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11 Jan 2020

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