

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

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



Myna Matters Bulletin # 39 (Winter 2021)

Dear CIMAG Members and friends: the following provides an update on CIMAG activities.

Success at Last – Indian Mynas now formally Declared a Pest Animal in ACT

Great news – Minister Rebecca Vassarotti has now formally declared Indian Mynas as Pest Animals in the ACT. This is a most profound decision, and we congratulate and thank the Minister for her support in addressing the perils that this invasive bird poses. Well done Minister.

But this must be seen as just the start: Declaration by itself will have little impact on myna numbers or on the threats they pose to our wildlife, horticulture / viticulture, public health and public amenity. This needs to be followed up with practical actions. So we must collectively ensure that the ACT government and bureaucracy do not now sit back thinking the job is done: we have requested that they proceed with haste to establish an Action Plan. In this regard we have given the relevant ACT officers our thoughts on what should be in such a plan.

The main things are:

- . Alexander Maconochie Centre to resume trap building – to be a source of CIMAG traps. (We understand that Minister Mick Gentleman is supportive of this)
- . ACT schools to trap during school holidays: food scraps around schools encourage mynas. (We understand that Minister Yvette Berry would consider this once a Management Plan is developed)
- . ACT Govt to encourage trapping at myna hotspots: where possible at shopping centres, the airport, industrial estates, zoo. (Rebecca Vassarotti is the relevant Minister)
- . Restaurants / outdoor cafes / shopping centres to be required to improve management of food waste – so mynas don't have easy access to food scraps. (Chris Steel is the relevant Minister).
- . ACT Building Code to be amended to require exclusion barriers to roof cavities in houses / public and commercial buildings. (Yvette Berry and Rebecca Vassarotti are relevant Ministers).

It will be helpful to the cause if CIMAG members were to write to the relevant Ministers pressing these points. We will be in contact with thoughts that you could use. Please help out in this way: I'm sure the Ministers would appreciate the contribution.

The Declaration by the Minister gave CIMAG the chance to get further publicity for the movement. In addition to the interview on the day with Minister Vassarotti and Professors Tony Peacock (our Patron) and David Lindenmayer and myself, there were good articles in RiotACT by Dominic Giannini (<https://the-riotact.com/indian-myna-declared-a-major-pest-in-the-act/470736>), CityNews by Nick Overall



Canberra Indian Myna Action Group president Bill Handke and Environment Minister Rebecca Vassarotti. Photo: Nick Overall.

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(<https://citynews.com.au/2021/bill-leads-a-major-push-against-a-myna-problem/>), and interviews on ABC (Mornings and Drive programs) and 2CC (both the Gardening program and Chris Mac/ Ian Meikle's Sunday program). Good publicity indeed but it has led to a raft of requests for traps which we can't satisfy.

Best Wishes for a CIMAG Champion

Bruce Lindenmayer OAM – a stalwart of CIMAG and an eminent Canberran – is going through a tough time at the moment. Bruce is well known in conservation and environmental circles in the Canberra region: reflected in the fact that he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal many years ago and is the 2021 recipient of the Steve Wilson Medal awarded by the Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG) for outstanding contribution to birding and bird conservation over many years. Bruce was also the instigator of the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve – and much more as well. As one of the founding members of the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc and a past Vice President of CIMAG, Bruce has been a key driver for the movement. So we wish him all the best as he deals with a difficult health issue.



Bruce showing the PeeGee trap



Receiving the Steve Wilson Medal



Monitoring mynas for Kate Garrock's PhD research project

Farrer School Kids Make the Case to Education Minister Berry

Five Year 5 kids at Farrer Primary School have been making the case for myna control action so the lives of their generation will still be enriched by Canberra's wildlife in the years to come. 12 yr olds Amelia, Lachlan, Chloe, Will and Josh have developed a powerful presentation on the evils of mynas and what needs to be done to protect our wildlife and amenity. They developed up the presentation as a project in their science and environment course with Ms Katheryn Elliot – and have now presented it to the Youth Parliament (which Minister Yvette Berry attended). The kids gave Jim Kennedy and me a run through of this while it was still in development: it was very good, and the Minister obviously has thought so too as she has asked for a meeting with the 5 to discuss what they think can be done by ACT schools to tackle the problem.

In gratitude for their great effort, the CIMAG Committee has awarded them a certificate of appreciation.

We may need to wait a few more years before getting them onto the Committee !



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Trap requests explode – just like myna numbers

It is possible to gauge the increase in myna numbers by the increase in requests for traps. And at the moment we have a constant stream of requests, but no traps to give: currently 62 requests. While we greatly appreciate the contribution of Corrective Services in having their “clients” make traps for us, sadly there has been a drop off in the numbers being made – because the “clients” have not been fronting up to do their Community Service Orders. Hence the call for the gaol to resume making traps for us – not only were their traps of the highest quality, but the labourers were readily at hand. “The Men of Maconochie” previously made around 900 traps for us, from materials that we supplied. However, when the gaol was expanded, the area that was used for trap making was taken over for something else. We are desperate for them to get back onto the task.



Collecting a trailer load of traps from the gaol back in the “good ole days”

Time to update the CIMAG Website

The CIMAG website – www.indianmynaaction.org.au – has been a primary source of public information on mynas since we started in 2005: each year there are around 200,000 hits. It contains useful information on how to reduce myna numbers in a local area, the PeeGee Trap Plans, and scientific papers on myna ecology and behaviour. And so much more!

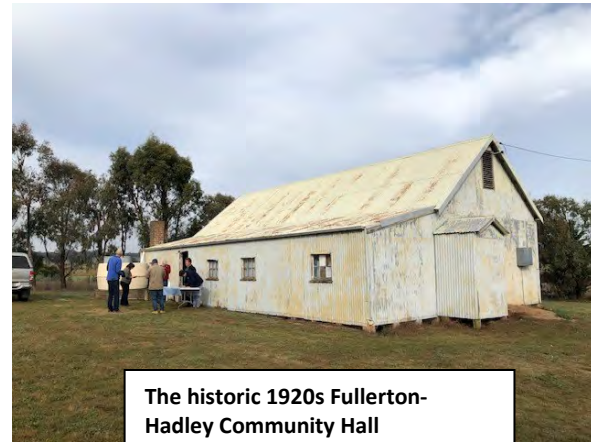


But it is time, we think, to enhance the look and feel of the site. Much of its content is now out-of-date and could be jettisoned or upgraded. Luckily Heather Sommariva has agreed to work up a new look and structure. This is also the time to get your reaction as to what you might want to see on the site: what works for you, what would make it more engaging, what structure is easy to navigate. So if you have thoughts on this stuff, we would be delighted to get them in the mix.

Also it is timely to update our website links to the myriad of myna control programs up and down the east coast. So can councils and anti-myna groups send details of own sites for us to link to and vice versa.

Fullerton-Hadley Trip

Ray Barge, our Vice President, and I went out north of Crookwell back in May to give a presentation to the Fullerton-Hadley Landcare Group. It was a very good, albeit chilly, morning with around 30 people attending – mostly I suspect to hear the entertaining and very knowledgeable McComas Taylor talk on local birds. The locals were also keen to hear of the problems mynas can cause and what to do about them as they have now made an appearance out that way. The talk was in a historic 1920s tin community hall: a real bit of rural history and architecture thankfully still intact.



The historic 1920s Fullerton-Hadley Community Hall

Thankyou Anne Mitchell for inviting us and to the Landcare Group for the scrumptious morning tea and lunch.

COG continues giving Stirling Support, while CIMAG Facebook Group continues to gROW

You might recall that in the last issue of the MMB we mentioned that we were having trouble with our website. Thanks to Julian Robinson of COG, this has been fixed, and COG continues the generous job of hosting us. In the process we have scrapped the CIMAG news@indianmynaaction.org.au and chatline sites. The chatline is redundant now that the CIMAG Facebook Group is set up and growing, thanks to Dan and Heather Buchler. The Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1965719250400803>) membership is

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now approaching 900. The group has members from interstate and around the world. The Facebook group is available to all. We encourage all trappers and prospective trappers (and others) to join and contribute as it is a valuable forum to share your trapping stories and to provide advice to those seeking help.

Jenny's on the case in Bungendore

Jenny Dibley of Bungendore is most concerned at the infestation of mynas in the Bungendore area and is keen to get a group operating out there. In this regard, Jenny arranged with Gary Harb of the Bungendore Men's Shed for Ray and me to give a demonstration on how to make a PeeGee trap. We hope that when Jenny is able to get a group up and running, Gary and his fellow Men Sheddors will help out by making traps for them. We left a goodly amount of trap-making material for them to get that underway – so touch wood (or cage mesh) they will be on the task very soon.

A public meeting will be held in the near future for us to give a presentation – which hopefully will spark the community interest in getting a group going. If you want to participate in a Bungendore Indian Myna Action Group, Jenny is keen to hear from you. If you want to be involved, get back in touch with me and I will pass on Jenny's contact details.

Traps for farmland / and open areas

Mynas and starlings are now across the local rural landscape – but our usual PeeGee trap is not really suitable for large open areas. Adam Amberly, of Amberly Eggs on the Kambah Pool Rd, has been having a problem with mynas and starlings taking his chook food. His Maremma dogs – there to protect the chooks from foxes – were no help at all: asleep at the wheel, so to speak. So we modified one of his chick pens into a large scale PeeGee trap: unfortunately it had very limited success: after trapping 10 or so birds, the mynas and starlings now give it a wide berth. Our next plan is to replicate the success that Greg Flowers out in Hall and some New Zealanders are having with a Ladder Trap. So Ray and I have been at work, making one up: Adam is keen to put this to the test. Hopefully, it will do a better job than our last effort. (Incidentally, the enclosed black box on the top of the chick pen trap is a roosting box where the mynas go into roost at night and then can be shut in and euthanized).



Maremma guard dog asleep at the wheel

We will let you know how the new Ladder Trap performs. Given Greg's success, we think this is an option for lots of small rural properties around about. In particular, it could be the ideal trap for vineyards and horse paddocks throughout the Canberra – Murrumbateman – Queanbeyan district. Perhaps also the answer to the hotspots of the zoo and Canberra Airport precincts, and the Nature Reserves.



The only partly-successful chick pen PeeGee trap.



Ladder Trap under construction

Anti-Myna Groups – Where They Are and Who the Contact Is

Over the years we have compiled a large list of groups and local councils / shires in eastern Australia that are involved in myna control activities – and who the primary contact has been. But over time this has likely

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become outdated. So we are asking all the groups who get this to make contact with CIMAG by return email advising of the groups / councils / shires they know of during this work, their current status (perhaps even numbers of members and success) and the current main contact names and details for the group.

This would really help to ensure that we are reaching as many similar groups as we can. Also as mentioned above, we would like to have our website linked to as many of those groups / councils / shires as possible.

Remember, we are happy to include news from your groups in the MMB. It makes the MMN a much more interesting read to hear of what other groups are doing: not all are on our CIMAG FaceBook Group.

Happenings worldwide

Susana Saavedra advises, sadly, that mynas have arrived in Portugal. It is the Crested Myna. This, I believe, is the first time mynas have arrived on the European mainland. Hopefully a single male so it will be the end of the line for that.

Susana also reports that Egypt is under threat from the Indian Myna and that in Cuba a single myna has survived after a controlled shooting effort last year.



Crested Myna – in Portugal

Trapping numbers for the last few months

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

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun
Mynas	102	425	352	310	226	211	136
Starlings	65	637	68	38	63	20	11

The *reported* capture total is 76,036 mynas and 12,659 starlings since we started in 2006.

We know that this is the minimum number of mynas removed from the local environment, as every now and then we hear of people who have been successfully trapping, either with our PeeGee trap or with another style, and who we never get reports from.

Nonetheless, mynas are becoming more evident and we really need to get hold of more traps to distribute.

Bill Handke

President

CIMAG

20 July 2021

Email: president@indianmynaaction.org.au