

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

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



Myna Matters Bulletin # 31 (Spring 2015)

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

The following provides an update on CIMAG activities and those elsewhere in Australia & overseas. It is now some time since we put out the last edition of the Myna Matters Bulletin and there is a lot to report: some good, some bad.

Time for another Concerted Trapping Effort



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 mynas get another chance to again breed. The item below shows that we need to get back to the concerted trapping program.

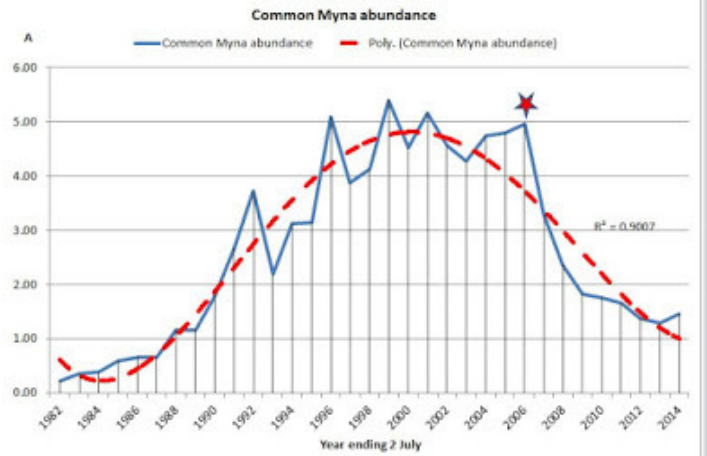
No time for complacency – last survey results a concern

A message we have been fearing – after 8 years of myna numbers across Canberra reducing, the 2014-15 survey by the Canberra

Ornithologists Group (COG) showed a small kick up in average numbers of mynas seen throughout that year. While the overall ranking of mynas has dropped to the 19th most common bird in 2014-15, the average number of mynas seen by the surveyors each week increased from 1.29 mynas in 2013-14 to an average of 1.39 in 2014-15. It doesn't sound much but it is the first time that the weekly average hasn't dropped since CIMAG started in 2006. The star in the diagram above shows when CIMAG started the backyard trapping program. Myna numbers crashed with the intensive trapping effort of CIMAG members.

Martin Butterfield, an eminent local birdwatcher and former manager of the Canberra Ornithologists Groups' Garden Bird Survey, has noted this change and recalled the experience of pest bird control programs overseas – in particular the House Crow in Tanzania where he lived for a period. After great success in reducing numbers of the invasive House Crow, the government control program was abandoned – leading to a resurgence of the pest bird. Martin's advice to us is one to heed: "This should be a big message for the folk of Canberra to sustain their support for CIMAG and not to say that because the Mynas have dropped from 3rd most common species in the GBS to the 20th that the war has been won."

A timely reminder that we need to re-capture our earlier trapping enthusiasm in any hot-spots.



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Residual Hotspots - A Lesson for Schools

Canberra and Queanbeyan schools are one of those residual hotspots: but we have a lesson for them. Nick Hall and Jonathon Downs have been showing the way with trapping at two Canberra schools during the current school holidays. A remarkable story has been Jonathon's trapping at a Tuggeranong primary school. Jonathon had arranged with the principal to trap in the school grounds during the current school holidays. When we visited at the end of the school term to speak to the janitor about the project, mynas and some starlings were everywhere, feeding on scraps left by the kids in the playground that day. Bird droppings were over seats etc and surely must be a health concern. In 8 days of trapping, Jonathon removed 73 mynas and starlings – and more were lining up to enter the traps to get some food. No doubt the absence of kids' school lunch scraps during the first days of the holidays made the birds a tad peckish ! There will be a big surprise for the teachers and kids when they return for the last term: perhaps even a totally myna-free school. Nick's effort at another school has also paid off with good numbers, but as he had done that previously, the overall numbers were lower. Time more schools followed these examples.



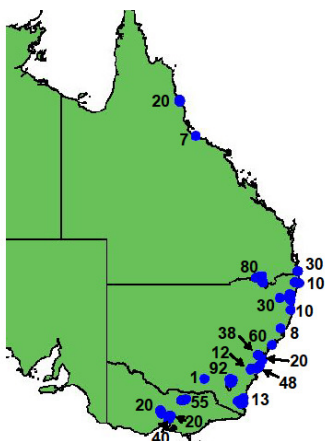
Dead mynas – playing their role as research assistants in battling Climate Change

Who would have thought: Indian Mynas as aids to renewal energy. Brett Lane and Associates approached us some time ago to see if we can provide dead mynas to assist them in a project to calculate the casualty rate of wind farms on birds and bats. The dead mynas are used to determine the rate of animal scavenging under wind turbines. If foxes, crows, eagles or cats are scavenging killed birds and bats under the turbines before they can do their counts it affects their estimates of the casualty rate. Placing dead mynas under the turbines helps them to calibrate their estimates of scavenging and therefore the casualty rates from wind turbine farms. So there you have it: there are two good things about a dead myna.



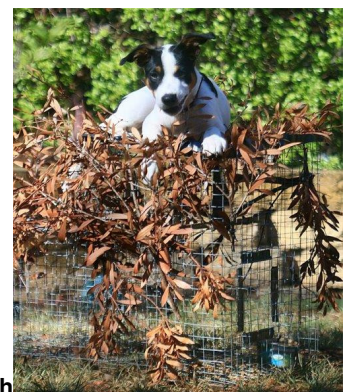
Richard Major's DNA Project

Richard Major of the Australian Museum in Sydney is still in the process of analysing the DNA from mynas collected from community / council trapping programs up and down the east coast. The input has been extremely good with myna bodies sent from as far north as Cairns (20 bodies) around to Macedon (20) and Benalla (55) in Victoria. A surprising big number (80) were sent from Texas in Qld, which suggests that mynas are a big problem there. But there was a bright spot. David Read from Wagga Wagga sent in one body: it is the only one he had sighted in the area, and he was fortunate enough to shoot it ! Hopefully it is the last one he ever sees there. CIMAG supplied a goodly number (92). Thanks to Ted Lilley and Greg Flowers for sending our carcasses up to Richard. Our contribution also included the eggs from myna nests that Adrian Gallman removed last season as part of the CIMAG Myna Nest Removal Project (more of that later). 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 says it will be some time yet before the analysis is complete and he can advise of their conclusions.



Will this work?

Nathanael Coyne is wondering how successful his trapping effort might be this season. A guard dog taking his role way too seriously!



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Australian Local Govt Association pushes for National Program

Councillor Bruce Lowe, the instigator of the Victorian City of Bayside Indian Myna Control Program, advised in June that a motion he put to the Annual Conference of the Australian Local Government Association (representing 560 councils Australia wide) for it to advocate to the federal government for a national program of Indian Myna control had been agreed. A great initiative. Such action from community leaders like Bruce may yet see a concerted, sustained and comprehensive program across eastern Australia. The need for such a wider campaign on mynas is becoming ever more urgent as we are getting constant reports of mynas moving westwards. If they get hold in the farmlands and woodlands of central Queensland, NSW and Victoria, there will be a significant and alarming decline in our woodland birds.

Mynas as a Threatening Species – Time to Campaign with Environment Ministers

It is time for the federal and state governments to declare mynas as a threatening species. The research by Chris Tidemann and Kate Garrock at the Australian National University and the experience overseas now provide the scientific basis that Indian (Common) Mynas have a serious deleterious impact on native birds. It would be of great assistance in our efforts to protect Australia's biodiversity if CIMAG members and other concerned Australians wrote to their Minister for the Environment and to Greg Hunt, the federal Minister for the Environment, requesting that the Indian Myna be declared as a threatening process. This would require the governments to be more active, including in developing management plans to control this pest. The following are the sorts of things you could include in your letters:

- You are greatly concerned about the threat posed by the Indian (Common) Myna to Australia's biodiversity.
- The research at the Australian National University now gives the scientific evidence that this introduced pest bird is having a significant deleterious effect on our native wildlife. Mynas out-compete native hollow-nesting birds – rosellas, Kookaburras, cockatoos etc - for tree hollows, and evict birds and small mammals from hollows, killing chicks and destroying eggs. The research also indicates they have led to a decline in small birds, such as Willie Wagtails, Superb Fairy Wrens, Grey Fantails, Silvereyes, and Rufous Whistlers.
- This scientific research reflects our own lived experience in noting the decline of native birds in our area as myna numbers have increased over the years.
- The experience overseas, most recently in Tahiti and the Seychelles, clearly shows that when mynas are removed from the environment, local bird numbers rebound.
- Given the serious impact mynas can have on our wildlife, it is time for the government to declare the Indian (Common) Myna as a threatening species, and as such, support action at the community and local government level to remove this threat from the environment.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would advocate for the protection of our wildlife from the threat posed by mynas, by writing to the federal Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600, and to your own ACT or State Environment Minister.

On The Perch – doing their bit to educate people



A recent visit to the new aviary "On the Perch" near Tathra in far south NSW (on the site of the former wonderful award-winning Kangarutha Nursery) was a very pleasant time. Steve Sass, an ecological consultant and a knowledgeable "birdo", has established this new aviary with a good range of native, African and Asiatic birds. Steve is doing his bit to educate visitors about mynas – even to the extent of having myna statues in the gift shop. If taking a trip to Tathra to see whales, drop in to On the Perch – you will see some beautiful birds, but the only mynas you will see are made of plaster.

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Our Forthcoming AGM and Public Information Night

This is to be held on 18th Nov at the usual place of the Southern Cross Club at Macquarie, opposite the Jamison Shopping Centre, starting at 7pm. This year our entertaining and informative speaker will be Michael Mulvaney, who has so many hats he could start a millinery shop. Again, we will devote a good length of time for the interactive public discussion session with the audience.

As CIMAG sees a need in the next few years to be active in the new housing areas of Gungahlin, West Molonglo and West Belconnen, we would like to entice people from those areas to come to the meeting and to participate in the program. It would be wonderful if somebody from those areas joined us on the Committee – so please think about that. Also we need to address the now gender imbalance on the committee: we are heavily represented by males so could do with some female advice.

Nest Removal Project

You may recall that last year we commenced a Myna Nest Removal project in which myna nests, chicks and eggs were removed from tree hollows (and also from urban structures) around Canberra. This was a way to remove mynas from areas (like nature reserves and shopping centres) where we could not put traps. That activity resulted in Adrian Gallman clearing of 64 nests, and removing 114 chicks and 52 eggs. With that background and with concern about the spread of mynas into Mulligans Flat and Goorooyaroo Nature Reserves adjacent to Gungahlin, we are again undertaking this activity, and with a special effort around Gungahlin. So if you know of a myna nest in a tree hollow or in a nesting box or in a building in the Canberra-Qbryn region, get in touch with me on 02 6231 7461 and we will swing Adrian into action.

The Overseas News – Eradication: so it can be done

In past editions of the Myna Matters Bulletin, we have been tracking the myna reduction programs overseas. Some wonderful news here.

Arjan Groene of the Green Islands Foundation in the **Seychelles** tells us the great news that mynas have been eradicated from **Denis Island**. Check out the following links on why they have done this and how they have done this. In the last MMB I mentioned that you needed to book your air-tickets to Denis Island. Even more reason now!

<http://www.greenislandsfoundation.blogspot.com/2015/07/green-islands-foundation-completes.html>

and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFAXJDyWIBs> Although they can never be 100% sure that no bird has been hiding in the forest somewhere for the last 4 months, Arjan is confident that they have removed the last solitary bird. What a great effort. Congratulations to all.

Bill Nagle of the UN Pacific Invasives Initiative operating out of NZ, reports that the **Pacific atoll of Fakaofu in Tokelau** (a territory of New Zealand some 500 kms north of Samoa) is now free from the troublesome cousin of the Indian Myna, the Jungle Myna (*Acridotheres fuscus*). The community of Fakaofu have been at the task for as long as CIMAG has been in action. Trapping on a very small atoll is difficult and it has taken consistent effort since 2006 to find and destroy nests and eggs and harass birds, but two recent surveys have not found mynas. So it is reasonable to declare success! As Bill, says, the people of Fakaofu deserve congratulations for sticking to the program over such a long time.

Last Xmas I mentioned that the Indian Myna eradication effort on **Atiu, Cook Islands** was nearly complete, with a small residual group of mynas being hunted down. We haven't heard if that "Eradication Day" has arrived. Hopefully Atui is the second Pacific island to succeed in eradicating mynas.

Tahiti's Indian Myna and Bulbul reduction program to save the Tahitian Monarch is going brilliantly: you will recall that very few Tahitian Monarchs are left in the wild: they were thought to be down to 19 birds.



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Mynas and bulbuls attack the Monarchs and also kill the chicks. After Susana Saavedra's trapping campaigns in gardens at the entrance to 3 critical valleys removed 1695 mynas and 1040 bulbuls in 2012 and a further 741 mynas and 849 bulbuls in 2013, the locals removed a further 801 mynas and 1312 bulbuls in 2014. This program involved 69 trappers in 2012, 32 in 2013, then 20 trappers in 2014. Following these efforts, 10, 12 then 11 chicks were raised during 2012, 2013 and 2014 breeding seasons. That is a wonderful result, and the Tahitian Monarch now numbers 53. This control program also included shooting and poisoning of introduced birds and is being continued in 2015. An effort to be proud of: congratulations to all involved.



Around the Traps

The Cairns community is noticing a difference. In the few years that the Cairns community have been trapping mynas, the number of traps provided to the community and the number of birds removed has been astounding. In a visit to Cairns in July I was fortunate to meet up with Peter Goulding, the President of the Cairns group, for a chat, and also to accompany the local birdwatchers for some early morning bird watching. The bird watchers – and they know their stuff – were highly complimentary of the Cairns program and were quite adamant that they had noticed a drop off in numbers within parts of Cairns. However, the mynas are still spreading and are now quite common up on the Atherton Tablelands.



The Bayside Indian Myna Action Group (BIMAG) control program is going very well. Sandringham Men's Shed was the major producer of their first traps but they were struggling to keep up with demand, so they have resorted to buying additional traps from other sources. Demand is still exceeding supply. A good initiative is that they have arranged for four vets to help in the disposal of trapped mynas. Encouragingly, other city councils and civic groups are evaluating what the Bayside group are doing. Hopefully those other councils and communities will see the good work being done by BIMAG and replicate that in their areas.



Alan Thomas & Tim Large of the BIMAG Production and Distribution Team

Jay Duncan, President of the Yinnar South Landcare Group in Gippsland mentions that they have received some funding for a pest animal project and they are developing up a myna control program with those funds. We wish them all the best.

Meanwhile, Sam Hand of the Mornington Peninsula Shire advises that they are working towards having a program in place this financial year.

**ROYALLA
LANDCARE**



Royalla Landcare has been providing the community with information on identifying and controlling mynas. There had been a few sightings in various spots in the Royalla area. However, at a recent Royalla Round-Up they were advised by local residents that the presence of Indian Mynas was more widespread than had previously been thought. Maryke Booth is the contact point for anyone in the Royalla area wanting to get a trap.

Josh Dyke, the Pest Management Coordinator at Gladstone Regional Council in Queensland advises that they are currently in the process of developing a management program for Indian Mynas up their way.

If council and community Indian Myna control groups have news to report in MMB, just let me know by email.

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Trapping numbers for the last few months

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	August	
Mynas	472	503	570	359	340	328	230	161	for a total of 2963 to date
Starlings	21	12	171	46	1	0	17	1	for a total of 270 to date.

The *reported* capture total of mynas is 53,850 since we started in 2006 to the end of August 2015.

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
3 Oct 2015

Email: president@indianmynaaction.org.au