

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

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



## **Myna Matters Bulletin # 32 (Summer 2015 / 16)**

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

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

### **Hope you had a Merry Festive Season**



With the year now over, the CIMAG Committee hopes you have had very joyous festive season and that in 2016 you will continue the important task of Indian Myna control activities.

### **2015 – What a Year it’s Been!!**

We can look back on 2015 with some satisfaction that the community-based myna control movement across eastern Australia continues to grow, with recognition and support of key institutions, governments and community organizations.



Here are a few highlights for the past year that are worth mentioning.

### **Some Good Numbers During the Year for CIMAG in Canberra**

- a. Men of Maconochie (the inmates of our gaol) produced their 950<sup>th</sup> Trap
- b. CIMAG membership reaches 1905
- c. 1800 traps out to good homes since we started
- d. Close to 200,000 hits on CIMAG website in 2014-15
- e. 53,000 known removals since we started (would be many more if everybody reported in!)

and importantly, more activity up and down the east coast and overseas.

### **2014-15 AGM: another good night**

CIMAG AGM and Public Info Night in November was again a very pleasant and informative night. It is always good to see so many CIMAG members attend. This year,

Dr Michael Mulvaney, the guest speaker kept us entertained – and informed, of course – with a wide-ranging presentation. Our patron, Professor Tony Peacock, opened the Public Info Night and thanked CIMAG members for our amazing achievement - proving wrong those who said efforts to control mynas would not work.

A big part of each AGM is to recognize CIMAG members who have made a significant contribution to controlling Indian Mynas. And this



The CIMAG AGM audience – fully engrossed, of course!



Dr Michael Mulvaney – his veggie patch doing well with myna compost

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

year we had three rippers: **Daryl King, Greg Flowers and Adrian Gallman**. As CIMAG members know, Daryl has been at the forefront of myna research for many years and has been the initiator of CIMAG projects. Of particular relevance of late is the Nest Removal Project, which also involves Greg and Adrian – Adrian as the tree climber who removes myna nests from tree hollows as a way to reduce mynas in nature reserves and public areas. Congratulations Daryl, Greg and Adrian: this is well due recognition for their considerable contribution.

The President's Report for 2014-15 can be read on the CIMAG website.

## The New CMAG Committee

The new Committee will sound very familiar. I can't give the Presidency away despite many efforts, Ray Barge is the new Vice President (taking over from Bruce Lindenmayer who has been doing a great job of this for many years), Ross Dalton as Secretary, Andy Fuller to keep us solvent as the Treasurer with Greg Flowers and Nick Hall as Committee members. There is room on the Committee for additional committed members: so if interested, just give me a hoy. We need to address the gender imbalance.

## The Curious Case of the Moth and the Myna

Jim Kennedy has found a reference in an old Natural History of Victoria edition to the fascinating connection between a day-time moth - a rarity in itself - *Agarista glycine* (the Vine Day-Moth) and the introduction of Indian Mynas in Melbourne in the 1860s. This moth totally changed its feeding habits when vines were introduced to the Australian colonies: so much so that it became a serious vine pest, made worse when children (who had been engaged to pick them off the vines) were compelled by a new law on compulsory education to attend school. The Acclimatisation Society acclimatised the myna in the 1860s in the hope that it would do the job the school kids were forced to forsake, as they were doing well feeding on grasshoppers and locusts in the Melbourne market gardens. Alas, the mynas gave the Vine Day-Moth a big miss and went straight to the grapes!

## The Search for The Holy Grail – exactly what is the best bait?

King Arthur and the Knights of the Roundtable had it easy. For us the search is perennial: our Holy Grail is to find the best bait to put in the trap to lure mynas. We usually suggest to people that dry dog food for small adult dogs is the way to go (but not bread or seed as that attracts native birds), but others have found all sorts of other attractants. The most recent additions to the list are: cooked white rice; cherries (the white/yellow Napoleon variety); Aldi \$4.99 cat food in a black bag sachet by Silvesters, 1kg, Seafood Platter, Tuna, Vegetable and Prawn flavour (all in one); corn flakes; and apricots. In the past, suggestions have included the melted cheese on a take-away pizza box, cooked bacon rind, puppy food. So, if you have a snack that the mynas can't resist, let us hear of it.

## Myna Research

Myna research provides insights into myna ecology and behaviour that has in the past provided guidance on better approaches to myna control. This is invaluable. So will be the conclusions of current myna research by Daryl King here in Canberra, by Dr Andrea Griffin and her team of PhD candidates, including current research work by Francosie Lermite - at the University of Newcastle and Dr Richard Majors at the Australian Museum. As their findings are released we will let you know the results and how it may affect our techniques.



Adrian up a tree removing a nest



Lithograph of the Vine Day-Moth

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

## Mynas – now shown to spread avian malaria to native birds

A new study has discovered Indian Mynas pose another threat to native birdlife: by spreading the avian malaria parasite. The study looked at more than 260 mynas caught across south-east Queensland, together with published data on more than 3,000 mynas and native birds across the region. Griffith University PhD researcher Nicholas Clark said up to 40 per cent of the pest species carry the parasite in south-east Queensland....”.



Slide of the Plasmodium relictum parasite

Avian malaria is caused by a parasite known as Plasmodium relictum, which ultimately destroys red blood cells by reducing oxygen circulation. Parasite carrying mosquitoes spread the parasite to birds who, in turn, passed it to other birds. To better understand the range of this disease, researchers from Griffith University observed Indian Mynas in the South East Queensland region of Australia. Some of these birds were also found to be carriers of more exotics strains of malaria. This puts native birds such as parrots, magpies and butcher birds at an increased risk of infection.

"Malaria parasites are common in Australian birds but through the use of genetic techniques I have discovered they are more diverse than originally thought," Nicholas said in a press release. "These malaria parasites seem to have little effect on the mynas but could be harmful to native birds as they come in contact with each other." Nicholas' work suggests they are exposing native birds to new diseases. According to Nicholas, "I believe we as a society have under estimated the threat they can cause." Now ain't that the truth!

## Susana is off again on another Crusade

Susana Saavedra, the indefatigable myna hunter from the Canary Islands off the west coast of Africa, is now on her way to American Samoa to undertake a trapping program of the Indian Myna and the Jungle Myna - and any Bulbuls that get in her way. You will recall Susana as the person who has been involved in eradicating mynas on a number of islands off the coast of Africa and Spain. In recent years she was involved in removing mynas and bulbuls in the Pacific, most notably from 3 valleys in Tahiti in an endeavour to protect the endangered Tahitian Monarch (see MMB # 31 for a report on her great success there. *Update: for the first time in many years the population has topped 50 birds with 17 pairs incubating 31 nests last summer and fledging 12 chicks.* Small gains but with a species so close to extinction, this is a welcome outcome.) We cross our fingers that she will be able to introduce another successful myna control effort in American Samoa. She is getting the job done in the Pacific, island by island – but that may take her some time unless the governments and communities of those island countries catch on to the need to protect their native bird populations, their local food production, their social amenity, and their wider ecology. Here's hoping!

## Have Mynas Reached South Australia?

From time to time we get reports from South Australians that mynas are in their gardens: on questioning / inspection the reports tend to stem from a confusion with the native Red Wattlebird, which is also an aggressive bird. But a more disturbing report has come forward recently of a sighting of 4 mynas at Salt Creek - a spot along the Coorong, and this from a man who knows his birds. It would indeed be very disturbing – a disaster - if mynas have breached the natural barrier between South Australia and Victoria. The spot along the Coorong seems like an unlikely spot for mynas but the experience of the recorder would imply that the record is correct. Luckily Peter Bird from Biosecurity SA is on the case: Peter mentions that from time to time a myna is reported and the SA emergency response team (Peter on his push bike) is then activated to do it. As far as they know, SA is still “effectively” myna-free, but it is only vigilance and Peter Bird's quick response to reports that will keep it that way.



The Coorong near Salt Creek

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

## **When 3 becomes 37 - a lesson to get that trap working**

Just before Xmas we noticed 3 mynas on our back electricity wires. So Carl behind us and Peter next door put out their traps. In the week before Xmas, Carl caught 10 mynas and Peter caught 6. In the first fortnight of 2016, Peter caught a further 21 mynas: so the 3 mynas turned out to number 37. Just goes to show that the ones you see aren't necessarily the only ones around. It also is a timely reminder that traps now need to be out there working. **So please, dust it off, hose it down, stock it up and get it out there.**

## **Currawongs and Mynas**

John Cuthbett reports a fascinating experience: he has quite a number of Currawongs in his area and twice when he trapped a myna, he then observed a currawong opening the door of the containment chamber – presumably to get to the remaining dog food in the cage rather than the myna (but who knows: they may have been after live food!). Now he has cable tied the door shut to ensure Currawongs cannot flick open the two wire latches that hold the door shut. Unfortunately in both cases the mynas escaped.

Now why can't we see more of this: a Currawong flensing a myna at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands in Canberra.

## **Mynas, Starlings and now a Spotted Dove**

It is not uncommon for some CIMAG trappers to catch high numbers of Starlings – another pest bird (in taxonomic terms, mynas are actually members of the Starling Family). One such person lately has been Carol Hoskin of Bonner who caught 44 starlings in Nov and a further 46 in Dec. But for a first for us is the report by Jim and Anne Dehlsen of Downer who actually caught a Spotted Dove (not caught in their trap but transferred to it for disposal). These are a new invasive pest in Canberra – they are thick in other cities and we are anxious not to replicate that situation.



## **CIMAG on UK TV Program**

Last week CIMAG was involved in filming for a UK TV program on pest control. Filming involved a UK pest control man having some hands-on experience with us in making and setting up traps and disposing of trapped mynas: all the time discussing the reasons why we are doing this, our techniques, and our success. The CIMAG approach of community-action for a pest animal is not an approach adopted in the UK, so it was somewhat eye-opening for him. The program is likely to be shown in the UK early next year, but it may be some time before we get to see it in Australia.

## **Interest from Fiji grows**

Treasure Island Resort (yes that's right!), may be the next resort in Fiji that will be tackling the problem of mynas. Sophie Clay, their environmental officer, has been in touch. Sophie says they have a lot of endangered endemic birds, however the myna population is growing and she is trying to implement a strategy for controlling this. She is conscious of guest sensitivities, but sees their key priority is to ensure the important local bird populations are secure. A myna-free island resort in Fiji: that really would be a Treasure Island.



## **Shortage of Traps – can we get back those not being used?**

CIMAG has been very fortunate that the Alexander Maconochie Centre – our gaol – has been making traps for us (with materials we provide) and have almost made 1000. But of late they have been slow in churning them out. This has resulted in a severe shortage just at the time when lots of people are after traps because of the increased numbers of juvenile mynas that are around. If you have a trap in very good condition that is not being used, do you mind returning it so we can pass it on.

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

## **Juveniles are out and about**

Lots of juvenile mynas have been seen out and about with their parents. Juveniles are naïve and can be readily trapped – so long as wary parents are not with them. January and February are usually high capture months – when we get mostly juveniles, the future breeders. Every one you trap and dispose of is doing our wildlife a world of good, and giving your neighbourhood some quiet.

## **Around the Traps**

Between each Bulletin we get to hear of more activity in Victoria and Queensland: this is very heartening.

The **Darebin Parklands**, a bushland park 7km north east of Melbourne CBD, is running a multipronged program under the guidance of Senior Ranger Peter Wiltshire and Michael Mann. It involves trapping mynas, a monitored nestbox program, designing an anti-myna nestbox for Eastern Rosellas, and putting cameras in nestboxes to film the birds. Their aim is to get rosellas back nesting in the reserve. Let's hope this has been a successful breeding season.

**Inglewood**, a town west of Toowoomba, has been running a trapping program for 2 years. The activities of Bob Lindner and Darryl Bleach were featured on an ABC program a while back – you can see it on <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-02/indianmynacatchers/6901270> and <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-02/two-retirees-vs-indian-myna-birds/6899936>. The program has been supported by the **Queensland Murray-Darling Committee** based at Goondiwindi. Lisa Sutton of QMDC reports that due to the 2 years of trapping, myna numbers are now much lower, and sightings of their iconic Pale-headed Rosella continue to increase - a flock of budgerigars have also been seen for the first time in many years. There are 23 myna traps in use throughout Inglewood that are managed by volunteers as well as 3 on rural properties in a 10 km buffer zone around the town. Trapping continues to expand with strategic inclusions such as road houses along the highway to Yelarbon. **Yelarbon** (40 km away) has 15 traps in use and bird surveys have been underway since November 2014. There is not yet enough data to show trends, however they will continue to work on this during 2016. Other groups in the area are not well enough established to have data yet. Due to a lot of interest generated locally, Lisa will work with these groups to have a more interesting update during the year.

**The Bayside Indian Myna Action Group** in Melbourne has completed a report to the Bayside City Council on their 2015 operations. (The program was initiated by Councillor Bruce Lowe and bank-rolled by Council). BIMAG had a number of innovative aspects to their program and during the course of the year they moderated the program to deal with some issues that arose – relating to disposal and trap supply. Stephen le Page, the BIMAG Coordinator is quite upbeat about the trial program being a success. He reports that there is overwhelming community support for the program and they see a number of ways to improve its reach and effectiveness across the district – even to the point of drawing nearby councils into the effort. This is tremendous.

Josh Dyke, the Pest Management Coordinator at **Gladstone Regional Council**, advises that they are in the process of developing an Indian Myna management program. Best of luck with that, Josh.

Trapping results for the **Mudgee and Dunedoo** area over the last year or so indicate that mynas are spreading widely through the area. John McCrea of the **Central West Indian Myna Control Group** mentions there are a few mynas that turn up around Mudgee from time to time, but as soon as he hears about them he gets onto them as quickly as possible. In Dunedoo there is still a moderate number of them scattered around, even though they have been trapping them at a steady rate for about 8 years. Some big numbers have been caught at specific locations: 44 were trapped on a farm 12kms south east of **Mendooran (east of Gilgandra)** in March last year, while 32 were trapped at a house in Dunedoo in May. A few have now been trapped at Wongarbron just east of **Dubbo**, and there has been a report of mynas seen at Dubbo Airport. This is all very disturbing stuff, but it is good to see that the local people are involved in the fight to keep their numbers down. A Green Army crew had been pressed into making traps at Dunedoo.

Mitchell Clark, the Environmental Project Officer for the **Campbelltown City Council** reports on a very busy – and successful - year for their program. There have been some 435 participants at the 18 workshops which they have run (following the Wollongong approach), some 170 traps sold by the Men's Sheds (generating \$8500 for the sheds), with reports of 430 mynas trapped (from the 28 people who reported back in). The program suffers – as do many of the volunteer community programs – of many (if not most) trappers not bothering to report in their captures. So we can be confident that their captures are a lot more than the 430.

**Cowra**: a number of mynas have been reported in and around Cowra. Next week CIMAG will give a couple of presentations to the Cowra Woodland Bird Program and the High School science students about the CIMAG

# Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

**Patron: Professor Tony Peacock**

program. This, hopefully, will help develop a control program in the area.

## Your new email address is wanted

If you get a new email address, it would be greatly appreciated if you could advise us of this. Just send an email through to [president@indianmynaaction.org.au](mailto:president@indianmynaaction.org.au). For those that need to report monthly captures, use the following email address for Graham: [ggliddon@tpg.com.au](mailto:ggliddon@tpg.com.au)

## Trapping numbers for the last few months

As you know, Graham Gliddon does an excellent job of keeping track of myna captures and has all sorts of intriguing statistics. He gave a taste of that at the AGM. In 2015 CIMAG trappers removed 3480 mynas and 423 starlings. The most successful suburbs were Kambah (366), Kaleen (208), Monash and Conder (139), Giralang (134), Jerrabomberra (120), Gordon (111), Higgins (105). A big surprise is that no mynas were reported to have been caught at Banks, Narrabundah and Farrer despite there being heaps of mynas there and 24 people with traps in Banks, and 18 traps in each of Narrabundah and Farrer. Again a plea from us for people to report their captures.

	oct	nov	dec	
Mynas	237	224	216	for a total of 3,480 for 2015.
Starlings	43	27	69	for a total of 284 for 2015.

The **reported** capture total of mynas is 54,729 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](mailto:news-subscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au). To get onto the CIMAG Chatline, send a blank email to [chat-subscribe@indianmynaaction.org.au](mailto: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  
1 Feb 2016