

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc

Patron: Professor Tony Peacock

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



Myna Matters Bulletin # 36 (Autumn 2019)

Dear CIMAG Members and Friends

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

Time for Good News and the Bad

Apologies for the long delay since the last Myna Matters Bulletin. A lot has been happening in eastern Australia and overseas on the myna battling front. Some of it very good, but some not what we wanted to happen. Read on.

AGM – another fascinating night of presentations and discussion

The 2018 AGM held way back in December was another great night, with a good roll-up of keen CIMAG members. This year we did not have an external keynote speaker as in previous years, but rather a presentation from the Committee on why we in the Canberra - Queanbeyan area are doing this and the results of our collective efforts. It is good to be reminded of this, and also that this is one issue where community action can have a significant positive impact. That is not the case with most pest animals. The Committee is much the same, with some welcome new members: Dan Buchler who has swung into action as the new Treasurer and Facebook Manager, and Martin Hanson. Thanks go to Andy Fuller for being the Treasurer for a goodly number of years.



An enthralled AGM audience!

A Very Tight Squeeze Indeed

It is rare that anything other than mynas and starlings enter our PeeGees myna trap: it is so cunningly designed by Peter Green that only small meat-eating birds are able to get through the tunnels into the feeding chamber: we never hear of magpies or ravens or currawongs getting in to the dry dog food bait.

So imagine a Victorian trapper's surprise when she checked her trap one morning and found this waiting inside the trap for another helping. It taxes the imagination to figure out how a grown fox could squeeze through such a narrow gap.

I don't expect that this will become such a regular feature as to warrant us marketing the trap to farmers as fox control equipment!



An unusual capture

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Mynas: too many for comfort

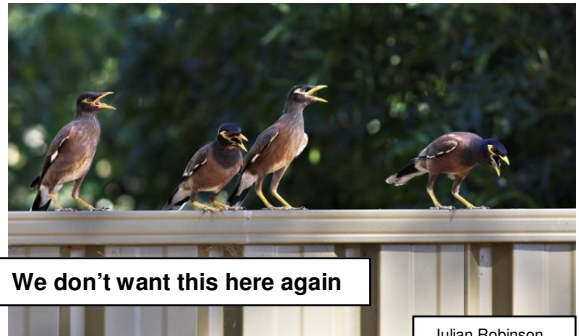
The trapping effort in the Canberra / Queanbeyan area has dropped off a fair bit over the past 18 months. And it shows: mynas are now more obvious in many parts. So it is time we got back into a concerted trapping effort. The last two breeding seasons seem to have been good for mynas despite the harsh conditions: there is never a drought in cities with plenty of dog / cat food in people's backyards and plenty of morsels to scavenge around shopping centres and schools!

The trapping effort has also been affected by the reduction in new trappers coming on board – that has been as a consequence of us not being able to provide free traps to people when they want one. The January capture figures reflect this: in January 2018 we had 111 people report in, while in 2019 we only had 80 people report. And the number of birds captured in January reflects this. Given that we have now provided over 2400 people in the area with traps over the past 13 years, the effort is somewhat lacklustre.

It is 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. So please, put them to work – for all our sakes.

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, and Joe van Dyke in West Queanbeyan got 55 in April.

In the first 3 months of 2019, our trappers have reported capturing 1942 mynas: in all of 2018 we only removed 3922 mynas. This gives an indication of the myna rebound and the need to get back on top of the problem.



Julian Robinson

Thanks to all CIMAG Donors: the response was overwhelming

Late last year the CIMAG Committee sought financial support from members as our finances were in a parlous state: we had previously funded our program expenses from donations received from people getting new traps, but with the much fewer traps being made and hence passed out, our finances suffered badly. But the response from the membership was quite overwhelming: thanks to everybody who chipped in, some with huge donations. As a result we will be financially buoyant for quite some time. The donated amount summed to just under \$14,000.

Truly remarkable, and a reflection of the environmental consciousness of people in our region.



Re-Homing pre-loved traps

With myna numbers again on the rise, we need to be able to meet the requests for traps when people get in touch. Despite the best efforts of Correctional Services, trap building by people doing Community Service Orders has not been sufficient to fill the need, when we need them. So, if you have a pre-loved trap that is just collecting dust, and if it is in excellent condition (with only dust defacing it), we would welcome getting it back. But please, only return traps if they are in very good condition – otherwise it takes us quite some time to restore them to mint condition for passing on to other interested people. You can return them to me or Ray Barge in Kambah on the southside or Greg Flowers in Hall on the northside. (The other option, of course, is to dust it off and put it to work yourself).

It is time to thank the Men of Maconochie for their efforts over the years – they made a bloody good trap: in fact 988 of them.



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CIMAG – Our new Facebook Group site

CIMAG started a Facebook Group in December last year. It is an interactive forum and is intended to disseminate information about the myna menace and provide a forum for discussing issues such as trapping techniques, baits and disposal options. Some members are looking for traps and others want help or advice, post videos and photos of their trappings or report on their success.

So far we have around 270 members and numbers are steadily increasing. Many people have had no previous association with CIMAG. While most of our membership is from the ACT, some of the group come from interstate and overseas, including New Zealand, South Africa and the Canary Islands.

Dan Buchler, Ray Barge and Ross Dalton are finding lots of interesting items to put on the new site to whet your interest and keep you informed. So we invite you to join and participate. You should find it rewarding. 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 Dan is keen to have more people involved. So, go to

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/1965719250400803/> and become involved.

Mynas Doing their Bit for Research on Little Eagles

Who would have thought - mynas can have a useful role after all: as live bait to trap Little Eagles. Michael Mulvaney of the ACT Environment Directorate has been collecting data on Little Eagles – a magnificent but, unfortunately, vulnerable species in the ACT - as part of a project in determining how best to maintain a viable population in the ACT.



They have located 9 breeding pairs in the ACT and a further 4 in nearby parts of NSW, who this year raised 8 chicks. The project involved attaching trackers to some of the birds and recording their movements to see where they go, feed and breed. But the hard task was to capture them so as to attach the trackers. Mynas to the rescue: as live bait in traps. Quite some success: eight Little Eagles were captured and have since been providing some astounding data. To the surprise of everybody involved, our Little Eagles – perhaps like most other Canberrans – love to travel, and all tracked birds left our region in the non-breeding season. One has been recorded travelling up to Bundaberg in Queensland, then over to Port Pirie in South Australia and then to the Gippsland area in Victoria. Quite some distance.



PS: to those concerned, no mynas were harmed in the making of this project !!

The Move to Declare Mynas a Pest Animal in the ACT – public consultation paper about to be released

We previously advised of the submission we had made to the ACT Government to have mynas declared a Pest Animal in the ACT. After a considerable time, a consultation paper is being released by the ACT Directorate for public comment on 6 May. Mynas are just one of a suite of animals under consideration to be declared pest species in the ACT. But the Declaration regarding mynas needs to have some follow-up action. We have offered the Government assistance in preparing an Action / Management Plan which would impose obligations on various institutions and businesses. 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 because their fecal dust and droppings can harbour a number of dangerous pathogens which can affect kids.

Now is the time to advise the government of your concerns about the impact of mynas on our wildlife and

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urban amenity. The Public Consultation period is the time to press the Government that a Management Plan must be developed that imposes obligations and direct action. Without that, Declaration is meaningless.

Gungahlin a Hotspot, and a Troublespot

It is becoming more frequent that people from Gungahlin are asking for traps. Mynas have now well and truly expanded into the new suburbs over there. And not only that: last spring mynas were calling from the area where the endangered Superb Parrot nests in the Goorooyaroo Nature Reserve near to the new suburb of Throsby. This is a great concern. So if you are living over that way, we need you: need you to help protect the iconic Mulligans Flat, Kinlyside and Goorooyaroo Nature Reserves from the incursions of this pest. If you are able to help out with backyard trapping, that would be a great help. If so get in touch for your trap and starter pack.



Help needed to protect this bird

In previous Bulletins we have mentioned the CIMAG project to protect these reserves from mynas – made even more critical in the light of Superb Parrots now nesting in the area. It is now time to re-assess the efficacy of the nestbox aspect of that project. The expectation was that mynas would occupy the 30 or so nestboxes we have erected in the area, having been drawn away from tree hollows, and thus enable us to capture them at night at the nest. Alas, this has not happened. Mynas have overflowed the nestboxes and set up home in tree hollows well into the reserve. The element that was to stimulate mynas rejecting tree hollows in favour of the nestboxes – ie constant disruption of their nests at the tree hollows – never eventuated to the extent needed. The compensation to this disappointment was that Eastern Rosellas found the nestboxes just right – and occupied many of them. However, very hot spells of weather in the last two breeding seasons meant that many of the nests were abandoned: perhaps the nestboxes just got too hot.

And while in the Gungahlin area, it is worth mentioning that trapping by Ranger Nick Thorne in an area of the Gungahlin grassland reserves has been very successful. Nick took Ray, Ross and myself out to find a suitable spot to set up a trap. It wasn't too long before Nick reported back that his first effort resulted in 19 mynas being captured. The grasslands area is in very good condition – a far cry from much of the grasslands in the south. Mynas are voracious feeders and can badly affect grasslands fauna – some like the Golden Sun Moth, Perunga Flightless Grasshopper, Grassland Earless Dragon, and Cooraboorama Raspy Cricket are rare and endangered.



Perunga Flightless Grasshopper

Given the concern about the threat posed by mynas in the Gungahlin suburbs to the Mulligans Flat, Goorooyaroo and Kinlyside Nature Reserves, we have printed leaflets that we would like to have delivered to the suburbs bordering the reserves. If you can help out, please get in touch.



Ross letter-boxing

A Revisit by the Singaporeans

Representatives from Singapore's National Parks Board, who now have responsibility for feral animals, met with CIMAG last August to look at ways of scaling up our local trapping program for application over there. This was a revisit as Dr Adrian Loo and some of his then colleagues met with us previously. This time Adrian was accompanied by the Director of the Board, Dr Ken Er, Dr Ben Lee and Dr Gervais Lee. (Both Dr Er and Dr Loo have a Canberra connection as both studied at ANU). Singapore has a major myna problem, with both the common myna and the even more aggressive Java myna being present in big numbers, creating a major loss in social amenity. They visited a couple of local trappers: a place in Waramanga with 6 in the trap, and then a trap in one of Canberra's schools. As you can see, Adrian and Ben were engrossed in seeing how the trap works.



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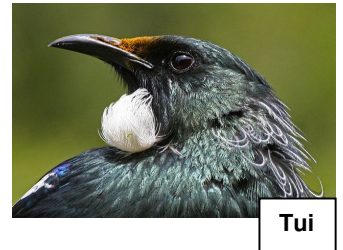
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Around the Traps - Happenings Elsewhere

It is always good to hear of myna control developments in new areas and to provide any support that we can. So we have been delighted to hear from Sally Hughes of Corowa District Landcare that together with West Hume Landcare and with funding from the NSW Dept of Primary Industries and Landcare NSW, they are wanting to get on top of the myna problem that is emerging in their area. We wish them all the best – it is too nice an area to be inundated with Indian Mynas. Hopefully we will hear some good news from Sally in the near future that a program has now been initiated with promotional support of the local council.



Meanwhile, across the Ditch, the New Zealanders are continuing their program of combatting mynas together with a host of other pest animals. I was interested to hear from Adrian Gilbert of Whangarei, who has been providing PeeGes traps to people since 2011, that his trappers have reported the capture of 20,310 mynas as at Dec 2018. A remarkable figure and indicative of the number of mynas over there. While we all know of the problem of possums, stoats and weasels over there, Adrian also mentions that their list of pest animals include the Australian Magpie. The NZ Department of Conservation some years ago listed Mynas and Magpies as the threats to the Kakupa (NZ Native Wood Pigeon) as both prey on its eggs and chicks. Similarly with the lovely NZ Tui.



Speaking of active communities, the Cairns group is still myna-busting in a big way. They have now handed out around 1800 traps. They calculate that each trap would catch on average 47 mynas, so the assumed total captures is a remarkable 85,000 birds. Their success has meant that the Cook Shire Council, based around Cooktown in the very far north, has requested the Cairns group to run a training workshop for Council staff and residents – mynas have now clearly become a problem that far north.

On the alarming news of mynas spreading, Susana Saavedra from the Canary Islands mentions that mynas are now in Egypt. Susana, who is our international pacesetter, has also mentioned that she has been tackling another highly invasive species, the Indian Ring-necked Parakeet. She has eliminated them from two islands in the Canary Islands.

The Perennial Question: What is the Best Tucker?

We have previously mentioned the sorts of food that trappers are finding useful in getting mynas into the trap. When we pass out the traps we mention to people that the standard bait is dry dog food for small adult dogs – ideally something which has a good odour and stands out (red is better than brown, but manufacturers seem to be using more brown colouring these days). People have reported success with lots of other food – cooked rice, preferably dyed red with cochineal food dye; left-over roast chicken; cheese from a pizza box; cooked bacon (I am getting hungry just typing this!). A Monash trapper has success with shredded cheese. When figs and grapes are ripening, mynas seem to forsake other bait for these – and some trappers have had success putting figs and grapes in their trap.

If you have found a particularly good bait, let us know.

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”.

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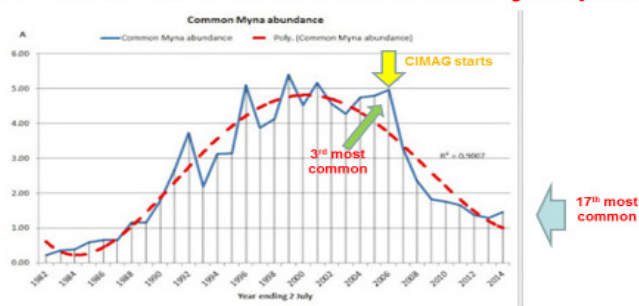
Squeamish about Euthanasia – Call a Friend

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 and we will line somebody up close to you to help out.

The COG 2017 – 2018 Garden Bird Survey Results are in

The survey results by the Canberra Ornithologists Group Garden Bird Survey for the 2017-18 period were released in March – and indicate that mynas have indeed made a comeback of sorts. Whereas for the past few years they have been recorded as the 18th or 19th most common bird, in the past survey year they crept up as now being the 17th most common bird in Canberra. Recall that they were the 3rd most common bird in Canberra when we started the program in 2006. So one more reason to up the trapping effort.

2017-2018 COG Garden Bird Survey Report



At least 69,000 mynas removed from the local environment

Trapping numbers for the last few months

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

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Mynas	228	235	243	156	316	326	606
Starlings	30	29	139	20	35	10	6

The *reported* capture total is almost 69,500 mynas and 9,800 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. You can get onto the CIMAG Facebook Group at <https://m.facebook.com/groups/1965719250400803/>.

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

5 May 2019

Email: president@indianmynaaction.org.au

Canberra Indian Myna Action Group Inc: president@indianmynaaction.org.au: ph 02 6231 7461