



Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Inquiry into Common Myna control efforts

March 2024

Introduction

The Conservation Council ACT Region appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity regarding the inquiry into Common Myna control efforts. The Canberra Ornithologists Group (COG), a Member Group of the Conservation Council ACT Region, supports this submission and contributed expert knowledge and evidence based information to it.

The Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) is a highly invasive species, recognised internationally as such by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).¹ To ensure Canberra's nature, people and culture can flourish, our urban landscapes need to host biodiverse and resilient green spaces. Biodiversity in the ACT region is under strain from invasive plants and animals. Across the country nature is under stress as natural areas are becoming increasingly degraded from invasive plants and animals.²

Since its introduction in Melbourne in the 1860s the Common Myna has extended its range across Australia. It arrived in the ACT in 1968. The birds are territorial and aggressive, killing the chicks of native birds, destroying their eggs, and pushing them out of nesting hollows. This is hugely concerning as the ACT acts as a refuge for a number of hollow-nesting endangered birds, including the Superb Parrot and Gang-gang Cockatoo. Furthermore, the Common Myna potentially preys on some of the Territory's most important, and endangered insect species, the Golden Sun Moth and Perunga Grasshopper. Additionally, the Common Myna poses a threat to residents' health due to their habitation of urban areas. Specifically, they can spread avian flu, bird mites, and faeces dust.

¹ BirdLife International (2024) Species factsheet: *Acridotheres tristis*. Downloaded from <https://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/common-myna-acridotheres-tristis>

² Australian Government. State of Environment Report, 2021.

The Canberra community has recognised these risks and taken action. In 2006 The Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) was formed and has since been trapping and euthanising Common Mynas on private property, reducing their numbers from the 3rd most common bird in the ACT to the 24th. Their work was initially very successful as a partnership between the group and the ACT Government, with the Alexander Maconochie Centre, enabled the fast creation and proliferation of traps. Since this partnership ended, the efforts of the community initiative have been hindered as CIMAG are unable to match demand for traps. Furthermore, as trapping is only permissible on private property their efforts are often undermined by the lack of consistent action taken on public land. These factors are further exacerbated as recent conditions have resulted in the proliferation of Common Myna populations across the region. As the birds are continually expanding their range and are no longer confined to the city, for the first time they are having an impact on the rural communities surrounding Canberra.

Recommendations

The Conservation Council has heard differing views on Common Myna control efforts from the community and our Member Group base. We acknowledge this difference and defer to the expertise of our Member Groups.

Management of Common Mynas needs to consider impacts to all native species, not only impacts to threatened listed species. The Conservation Council is concerned about landscape scale woodland change which will result in reduced habitat for native species due to development, degradation and climate change. Therefore the management of invasive species needs to consider future landscape projections on a holistic scale.

Approaches also need to be proactive in mitigating impacts rather than allowing for the Common Myna, a highly invasive species, to proliferate to an unmanageable population size.

Once this species becomes widespread and abundant, total eradication is highly unlikely; population control and impact mitigation are then the best management strategies³. Culls of at least 25 birds per square kilometre per year are needed or alternative methods for controlling the Common Myna will be necessary. Therefore the support of community efforts is required now. Since there is no clear evidence that widespread trapping of the Common Myna has improved the conservation status of native species, enhanced research and data collection are essential.

³ Grarock K, Tidemann CR, Wood J and Lindenmayer DB (2012). Is it benign or is it a pariah? Empirical evidence for the impact of the Common Myna on Australian birds. [PLoS ONE 7\(7\): 1-12. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0040622](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0040622)

The Conservation Council recommends the following further steps that can be taken to minimise the environmental impact of the Common Myna:

Targeted measures in urban areas, including roosting areas

This includes selective trapping, which is safe, humane and effective in the control of Common Mynas and eliminates the risk to non-target wildlife⁴, as well as working with the community on:

- The investigation of traps suitable for catching large numbers of Common Mynas at once in their communal roosts.⁵
- Focus trapping on areas with a concentration of Common Mynas.
- The investigation of requirements or incentives for commercial and public buildings to include exclusion barriers into roof cavities to avoid entry by Common Mynas.

Clarity on the invasive species budget is required as it is spread across Parks and Conservation, City Services and Rural Services. Increased and recurring funding for pest animal species and aquatic and terrestrial invasive plants is urgently required.

Enhanced data collection and analysis and biodiversity measures

Community support is already very strong for Common Myna management in Canberra and greater use of science in community-led projects could further enhance management outcomes.⁶ This could be achieved by:

- The review and utilisation of the current nest box audit being undertaken by ACT Government to inform targeted control actions.
- The expansion of this project as well as undertaking more research projects like this.
- Research into the effectiveness of broad landscape trapping techniques (especially on public lands) for Common Mynas. Parks and Conservation need to be provided with sufficient resources to undertake trials of different trapping techniques, with community participation.
- Habitat restoration and tree planting which is a valuable tool to both control Common Myna abundance and to aid native bird species recovery.
- The formal protection of habitat for native bird species by bringing key habitat into the reserve system, such as Bluetts Block which is crucial habitat supporting over 130 bird species.

⁴ [Investigation into the potential for broad-scale control of Mynas by trapping at communal roosts – Final Report](#)

Chris Tidemann, Fenner School of Environment & Society, ANU. March 2010

⁵ Dr Chris Tidemann, *Urban Animal Management Conference Proceedings* pp.56

https://fennerschool-associated.anu.edu.au/myna/pdfs/Tidemann_UAM_2005.pdf

⁶ [Case Study on the impacts of common \(Indian\) mynas on other bird species and the effectiveness of community trapping in Canberra](#). PestSmart, Invasive Animals CRC. February 2014

Support the community to take action at the local level⁷

Build on the work of CIMAG and support the knowledge, expertise and action of this organisation.

- Work with CIMAG to undertake research to identify hotspots for targeted trapping.
- Reestablish the production of traps at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, so as to ensure that the good work of CIMAG, and the wider Canberra community, can be further advanced.
- Work collaboratively with CIMAG on advice for school management, businesses and community organisations. This could be funding CIMAG to produce education materials, undertake community talks or targeted trapping at hotspots. This could be achieved through an environment grant.

⁷ [Case Study on the impacts of common \(Indian\) mynas on other bird species and the effectiveness of community trapping in Canberra](#). PestSmart, Invasive Animals CRC February 2014