

Yarra Indian Myna
Action Group Inc.



Indian Myna Information and Trapping Guidelines



Yarra Indian Myna Action Group Inc.
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1 Yarra Indian Myna Action Group

The Yarra Indian Myna Action Group (YIMAG) is a grass-roots community-based organisation which was first established in 2010.

The principal objective of YIMAG is to reduce the impact of Indian mynas on our native birds and animals.

The YIMAG seeks to achieve this objective by:

1. Increasing public awareness that Indian mynas are a serious environmental and health threat, not just a public nuisance.
2. Implementing a humane reduction program.
3. Coordinating the manufacture and supply of traps.



The YIMAG recognises that its endeavours are unlikely to totally eliminate Indian mynas from the local environment. However, with a concerted, coordinated and sustained effort, we believe a significant impact can be made on the Indian myna population in a region, thereby helping to protect our native birds and small mammals.

1.1 YIMAG Membership

A membership fee of \$5.00 entitles you to become a member of YIMAG for two years. YIMAG members can seek advice and assistance with myna trapping and will receive a newsletter 2-3 times per year.

It is requested that all members:

- Record (as accurately as possible) the number of Indian mynas trapped and enter this information onto the YIMAG website on a monthly basis, and
- Do a 'Garden survey' of Indian myna numbers on a weekly (or monthly) basis and also provide this information to YIMAG. The Garden survey or count method is based on counting the maximum number of Indian mynas seen within a 100 metre radius of your house (area of around 3 hectares) at any one time during a week.

We also request other trappers who purchase a trap from YIMAG record the above information as well.

2 Indian or Common Myna

In Australia, the Indian or Common myna thrives in habitats created by humans, such as urban, industrial and agricultural areas and areas of open woodland.

Indian mynas are native to the Indian sub-continent (Iran-Sri Lanka). They were brought to Melbourne market gardens in the 1860's to control the insect population. They were then taken to Cairns and other places in the far north Queensland to control insects in the cane fields. They failed to control insect pests!



2.1 Why are Mynas a problem?

Mynas have become a huge problem in cities and urban areas where they have been able to effectively adapt to a range of conditions and exploit a wide variety of food types.

2.1.1 Reduced biodiversity

Mynas are extremely aggressive, competing with native wildlife for scarce resources. They evict animals and birds from their nests, attack chicks of other species and breed in tree hollows rendering them un-useable by other wildlife. This is of particular concern, as approximately 15% of our land-dwelling vertebrate species depend on tree hollows for shelter or breeding throughout some stage of their life.

2.1.2 Reduced aesthetics

Indian mynas form communal roosts which can consist of hundreds of birds. The noise and fouling around nesting and roost sites can be considerable and in public places such as schools and shopping centres, also pose a health risk.

2.1.3 Damage to Homes

Myna nests can block rain water drains on roofs and gutters, often causing internal water damage and blockage to buildings. The Indian myna can also infest your roof and insulation with mites.

2.1.4 Damage to crops

Common mynas can be an economic problem because they damage fruit and grain crops and their noise and smell can be annoying where they are in large numbers

2.1.5 Disease vector

Mynas are carriers of bird mite which can cause severe itching and dermatitis. They also carry other avian diseases such as psittacosis and salmonellosis which can potentially impact on human health.

2.2 Legislative control

Indian mynas are an introduced species and are not protected in Victoria or any other state in Australia. As they are feral birds, no permission is required to trap or dispose of them. However obligations exist through relevant animal welfare legislation to treat and dispose of the birds humanely. In Victoria, Indian mynas are not listed as a pest species under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and so there is no legislative requirement to control them.

2.3 Identification of Indian Myna - Introduced versus Native

The Indian myna is very similar in appearance to the native Noisy Miner, and they are often confused.

- Both the Indian myna and Noisy miner have yellow beaks and a yellow patch around their eyes.
- Indian Mynas are predominantly chocolate brown with a black head.
- In flight the Indian mynas white wing patches are clearly visible.
- Noisy Miners are native birds that are predominantly grey. They are protected and must be released if trapped.



2.4 Behaviours and Habits of the Indian Myna



The Indian Myna's behaviour is seasonal. As they start their breeding cycle earlier than native birds forming breeding pairs from September to March and can raise multiple clutches per year, with 4-5 chicks per clutch.

When the juveniles are ready to fly they join larger groups and move to communal roosts where they can number in the hundreds.

They split up in the mornings, travelling in small family groups to look for food and often visit regular feeding sites.

Mynas are well adapted to urban areas where feeding sites are plentiful.

They are often seen resting on power lines and prowling shops and schools. They nest in the gaps in city buildings and petrol stations, air conditioners, and in house roofs and gutters. They take over nest boxes and displace native birds and animals. They invade back yard gardens, feeding from grevilleas and seed put out to attract native birds. They particularly like left-over pet food.



2.5 Stopping the Invasion

Trapping alone will not keep the Indian mynas under control. Mynas thrive where there is easy access to food. You can reduce their available food source in the following ways:

- Seed for native birds will attract Indian Mynas and they will quickly dominate your garden. If you see Mynas at your bird feeder or in your garden, stop putting out birdseed immediately.
- Feed pets inside, or if that is not possible, put pet food inside during the day.
- Feed chickens and ducks in a secure pen so Mynas can't get to the food.
- If you feed goats or horses, it is best to stay with the animals while they are feeding and clean up spilled or leftover pellets or grain.
- Cover your compost heaps and close rubbish bins so that food is not available

2.6 Breaking the cycle:

Mynas nest in tree hollows, roofs, exotic trees and the dead fronds of palms. To break the cycle:

- Block holes in roofs and eaves.
- Keep palms well trimmed
- Avoid planting clumps of exotic species such as Cocos Palm (*Cocos plumosa*), Slash Pine (*Pinus elliotii*), Radiata Pine (*Pinus radiata*) and Umbrella Tree (*Schefflera actinophylla*), as these are all preferred Indian Myna roosting trees.



If you have a Myna nest in your roof, gutters, a backyard tree or a bird box in your garden, you should destroy it before the eggs hatch. Put the nest in a garbage bag in your garbage bin.

Always wear gloves when handling Myna nests.



Planting a wide range of local native plant species in your garden will provide a diversity of habitats for native birds. Indian mynas prefer foraging in area with a clear understorey. Gardens with a reduced lawn area containing a mixture of native trees, shrubs and herbs, especially with a dense understorey, will attract a variety of birdlife without providing suitable habitats for Mynas.

3 Trapping

You can help reduce the impact of Indian mynas by trapping them in your garden or local area. The aim of trapping is to reduce the Indian myna population, thereby reducing the threat to native birds and animals. Reducing the existing Indian Myna population by trapping requires the humane handling of captured birds.

3.1 The Pee Gee Trap

YIMAG coordinates the manufacture and sale of the Pee Gee Myna Trap.



Figure 1: Pee Gee Myna Trap

3.2 Trapping Instructions

- a. Place the trap in a relatively open area or where birds already feed, or areas they overlook from vantage points (eg power lines, trees etc)
- b. Put feed and water in the trapping chamber for the captured birds
- c. Put a plate of food in the feeding chamber with dried cat food or other suitable food. Use a white plate, or the food can be placed directly on the ground if placing the trap on a hard surface such as concrete or tin.

- d. Free food (food placed inside the walk-ins and outside the trap) can be useful to attract birds, especially when introducing a trap to a new location.
- e. Do not approach the trap in daylight hours.
- f. Check the trap daily.
- g. Remove trapped Indian mynas after dusk and reset the trap ready for the next day.
- h. A call bird left in the trap can help to attract more birds. Call birds cannot be left in the trap for longer than 24 hours.
- i. Location is important - so if you are not successful in catching Indian mynas in one location, it might be worth trying a different one.

3.3 Location, location, location

The location and positioning of your trap can spell the success or failure of any trapping program. If you aren't having any success trapping mynas it might be as easy as moving the trap to another spot.

- Place the trap in a relatively open area or where birds already feed, or areas they overlook from vantage points (eg power lines, trees etc)
- Place the trap where there are minimal people or animal traffic (eg behind shed or carport). Under powerlines can be good as they often perch on powerlines where they have good access and views.

3.4 Baiting and feeding

- a. The trap can be baited with any food the Indian mynas are accustomed to feeding on.
- b. For ongoing trapping, dried cat food is recommended as it is simple to use, the right size, and has plenty of red bits (eg Friskies or Whiskas dry cat food), which the Indian Mynas are attracted to first.
- c. Chook food and grain is not recommended as this will attract native birds (e.g. crested pigeons and parrots).
- d. Place clean fresh water and cat food in the trapping chamber – the idea being the trapped birds will be happy and will call other birds to the area (to be trapped!).
- e. It is recommended that food is placed on a white plate. Other coloured plates are acceptable but it has been suggested white plates may help the birds to see the food.
- f. For the first few days put a small amount of loose feed outside the funnel entrances to attract mynas to the trap area. Also place food in the tunnel, and inside the feeding chamber where the mynas can see the food directly in front of them when they are in the tunnel.
- g. Do not overfeed the birds outside the trap!

- h. Do not attend to the trap in daylight if possible. Removing birds, or baiting the trap should be done after dusk or at night so the birds don't associate the trap with danger.
- i. It is recommended that the trap is baited ready for trapping first thing in the morning as birds start searching for food on the crack of dawn.
- j. If crows and/or magpies are attracted to the site, funnels can be placed over the entrance to the trapping chamber to prevent them taking any free food in the walk-ins or in the feeding chamber. They are too big to fit through the walk-ins and get into the trap.
- k. If foxes or other animals attend to the trap, it may need to be secured with pegs. Placing bricks in the holding cage may also prevent other animals over turning the trap and removing the bait.



3.5 General

- Keep pets (particularly cats and dogs) away from the trap and trap area.
- Do not be disappointed if you don't catch birds every day. They are spasmodic in their movements, so be persistent. If you keep feeding they will return.
- It can be useful to keep a call bird in the containment chamber of your trap, or in a bird cage placed near the trap, as this may encourage others to the trap. Avoid stressing the trapped bird(s).
- Check the trap regularly. Non target species are caught from time to time, and can be allowed to escape by opening the door of the trapping chamber. Do not throw birds in the air – let them find their own way out.

4 Euthanasia and Disposal

The method used for euthanasing birds must be quick, painless, and involve minimal stress. It should also be safe for the operator and simple to use and maintain. Birds must be destroyed within 24 hours of capture. Gloves should always be worn when handling live and dead birds.

The Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries advises that once captured, the recommended method for the humane euthanasia of Indian Mynas is the injection of barbiturates by a veterinarian. Another method supported by the Victorian Government is cervical dislocation, when undertaken by a person who is

trained and competent. Any euthanised birds must be disposed of appropriately, according to local regulations for waste disposal.

There has been research into euthanasia by carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide, however the Victorian Government and National Office of the RSPCA want further investigations before they can be considered humane methods of euthanasia.

4.1 Cervical dislocation

Cervical dislocation is the recommended method for disposal of small birds by the Victorian government. This involves separation of the skull and the brain from the spinal cord by pressure applied posterior to the base of the skull. The brain stem - which controls respiration and heart activity – is consequently damaged, stopping breathing and reducing blood flow to the brain, leading to death.

This technique requires skill to ensure that loss of consciousness is induced rapidly.

1. Remove bird from the trap by hand or using a hand held net.
2. Dislocate the neck by taking the birds legs in the left hand (if right handed) and the head between the first two fingers of the right hand with the thumb under the beak. A sharp jerk with each hand, pulling the head backward over the neck will break the spinal cord and carotid arteries.
3. An alternative is to combine cervical dislocation and cranial trauma (the method recommended to wildlife carers as a humane method of euthanasia).

4.2 Euthanasia assistance

Some veterinarians may be willing to assist in the human euthanasia of captured birds. Details of veterinarians who are willing to assist are available at www.yimag.org.au alternatively you can contact your local veterinary provider.

4.3 Carbon monoxide & Carbon dioxide

In Victoria the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and the RSPCA do not currently support euthanasia using carbon monoxide or carbon dioxide. However these methods are supported in other states and territories including Canberra. It is best to check in our local area what methods of euthanasia are supported.

4.4 Animal welfare

- In Victoria, trapping and disposal of mynas must be in accordance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008.
- Trappers must comply with relevant State and Federal legislation on health, safety and animal welfare.
- Trapped birds are likely to suffer from distress when confined and they can sometimes be injured while trying to escape from the trap or during capture or restraint prior to euthanasia.
- Trapped birds must only be killed by humane methods with minimal delay, i.e. within 24 hours of capture.

- Traps must have sufficient height, length, and breadth to permit the bird to stretch its wings freely.
- When the trap is in use, it must be inspected on a regular basis, preferably daily. At each inspection any birds caught in the trap must be removed from it and killed quickly and humanely. Regular inspections will help to prevent captured birds from being harmed by other captured birds or by predators outside of the trap (eg corvids, currawongs).
- When the cage traps are left in the open but not in use, they must be rendered incapable of holding or catching birds (eg door secured in open position). Food should be removed when the trap is not in use.
- Adequate shade is essential for the humane operation of the trap. Shade material (eg shadecloth, tarpaulin, plywood etc) can be incorporated into the trap during construction or added during trap setup. Waterproof material will also provide protection during extremes of weather.
- Where possible, trapping should be avoided in adverse weather conditions.

4.5 Disposal

Once destroyed, the birds bodies may be wrapped well in plastic or paper and put in the rubbish bin or buried

5 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring is an important part of a control program so that the success or otherwise of the program can be verified and demonstrated to others. There are a number of methods of monitoring but the simplest and probably most useful for most trappers is the Garden Count.

This method has been used for a number of years by the Canberra Ornithologists Group over many years in their Garden Bird Survey. The method is based on counting the maximum number of birds seen within a 100 metre radius of your house (an area of around 3 hectares) at any one time during a week. The first three hours of daylight are usually when you see most birds, but if you see a big flock in your garden at some other time of day – record it as your maximum for the week.

You can also record your captured myna information on our website www.yimag.org.au. We request that information relating to capture mynas be entered into the database on a monthly basis.