



# Indian Myna

## Control Project Handbook

Managing the invasion of Indian Mynas

Want to know more? Contact Sunshine Coast Council for more information on the trapping program or to report sightings of large numbers of Indian Myna birds.



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# The Indian Myna control project

Indian Mynas were introduced into Australia from South Asia in the late 1860s to control insects in market gardens. They have now become established in many parts of Australia including the Sunshine Coast.

In addition to being a nuisance to Sunshine Coast residents, the presence of Indian Mynas in ever-increasing numbers also threatens local native birds and hollow-dwelling animals.

Sunshine Coast Council's Indian Myna Control Program assists residents to reduce the impact of Indian Mynas.

This booklet will help you to:

- Identify the Indian Myna
- Understand the behaviour and habits of Indian Mynas
- Reduce the invasion in your own backyard

- Understand trapping techniques
- Humanely handle and euthanase captured birds
- Monitor and report bird feeding and roost sites

Sunshine Coast Council has traps available for loan to residents. Council's Pest Animal Officers can also help residents to identify trapping sites, operate Indian Myna traps and assist with the humane disposal of captured Indian Mynas.

# The problem with Indian Mynas

Indian Mynas are a highly invasive species and they can have a significant impact on communities and the environment.

## Community impacts

Indian Mynas congregate in large numbers in roost trees, making a loud chattering noise and leaving droppings everywhere. Apart from being smelly and untidy, clean-up costs can be quite significant.

Mynas can also impact on human health as they are carriers of bird mite, and mite infestations can cause severe itching and rashes.

Mynas may also harbour avian diseases such as psittacosis and salmonellosis.

## Environmental impacts

Indian Mynas are aggressive and will evict animals and birds from their nests, attack chicks of other species and breed in tree hollows rendering them unusable by other wildlife. This is of particular concern, as tree hollows have become an increasingly limited resource for many native animals.

# Identification

## INDIAN MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) Introduced pest



- Indian Mynas are predominantly chocolate brown with a black head. In flight, white wing patches are clearly visible.
- They have a yellow beak and yellow eye patch with long yellow legs.
- Mynas spend much of their time foraging on the ground, where they can often be observed moving about with a distinctive 'hopping gait'.

## NOISY MINER (*Manorina melanocephala*)

Native bird



- Indian Mynas are sometimes confused with the native Noisy Miner. Noisy Miners are a protected species and must be released if captured.
- The key difference between the two birds is the Indian Myna has a chocolate brown coloured body, whilst the Noisy Miner is mottled grey and white.
- The native Noisy Miner is a honeyeater with a much more limited diet. It forages for nectar and small insects.
- The Noisy Miner breeds rapidly, forming family groups which move around in search of food. They can exhibit aggressive and territorial behaviour, chirping boisterously and working together to chase other birds away.

## Behaviour and habits

Indian Mynas are opportunistic and eat almost anything, including pet and stock food, compost, animal manure and food scraps.

The Myna's behaviour is seasonal. They form pairs for breeding from September to March and go in search of a protected nesting site. They breed quickly and can raise multiple clutches per year, with 4-5 chicks per clutch. The fledgling period lasts for 20-30 days and, when the juveniles are ready to fly, they travel in small family groups.

After March, the Mynas join larger groups and move to communal roosts where they can number in the hundreds. They split up in the mornings, going off in different directions to find food in small groups. Hundreds of Mynas can roost in a single tree or building, especially near a regular food source like a racecourse.

By September, the Mynas form pairs and prepare to nest again.

Indian Mynas do not migrate, however resident populations display some local movement. They have been observed regularly moving between roost sites and foraging grounds, with additional seasonal movements between known habitats.

A new colony will be established when the Myna numbers become very high in a particular area and food becomes scarce. Through this process, Mynas will progressively invade new areas. Mynas follow major roads to spread into new areas.

### Rural areas

Mynas prefer open woodland and grassland and are unlikely to be found in forested areas. They particularly favour open grazing country.

Indian Mynas are attracted to animal food, especially horse, goat and pig feed, chicken pellets and fruit. Mynas will nest in house roofs, nest boxes and tree hollows, in paddocks and on the edge of bushland. Shooting can scare them off but they will return if food is available.

**Mynas can often be seen on power lines and in open grassy areas where they hunt for insects and worms.**

### Residential areas

Mynas are often seen resting on power lines, prowling schools, picnic areas and sports fields for food scraps. They nest in gaps in buildings, house roofs and gutters.

In backyard gardens, Mynas invade nest boxes and displace native birds and animals. They feed on nectar, seed that has been put out to attract native birds and particularly favour left-over pet food.



# Controlling the invasion

Myna bird activity can be effectively reduced by limiting available food sources and suitable habitat.

## Reducing access to food

You can help to reduce the availability of food sources in the following ways:

- If you see Mynas at your bird feeder or in your garden refrain from putting out bird seed until Mynas have left the area. Leaving out seed and other food for native birds will attract Indian Mynas and they will quickly dominate your garden. Mynas will totally exclude all other birds and in the long term you may be left with a garden full of Indian Mynas.

- Feed pets inside, or if that is not possible, put pet food inside during the day.
- Ensure chicken and duck pens are Myna proof. Feed poultry inside a secured area.
- When feeding goats or horses, it is best to stay with the animals while they are feeding and clean up spilled or leftover pellets or grain. Also bag manure around stables and cover compost heaps.

Planting a wide range of local native plant species in your garden will provide a diversity of habitats for native birds.

Image: Umbrella trees forming a typical Indian Myna roost site.



### Reducing nests sites and habitat

Mynas nest in tree hollows, roofs, exotic trees and the dead fronds of palms. You can reduce available habitat in the following ways:

- 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.
- Reduce lawn areas and plant a wide range of local native plant species. Indian Mynas prefer foraging in areas 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.
  - 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. Using gloves, remove the nest and put it in your garbage bin.





Planting a wide range of local native plant species in your garden will provide a diversity of habitats for native birds.

# Trapping program

Sunshine Coast Council has traps available for loan to residents who would like to participate in the Indian Myna bird trapping program. The aim of trapping is to reduce the Indian Myna population, thereby reducing the threat to native birds and animals.

## Trap design

Traps are designed to exploit Myna behaviour. One example is the double-chambered wire trap that is suitable for use in backyards and gardens. It has proven to be successful in Indian Myna trapping programs across eastern Australia.

Plans for the construction of an Indian Myna or Starling trap are available online via the Canberra Indian Myna Action Group website [www.indianmynaaction.org.au](http://www.indianmynaaction.org.au).





### One-way-walk in tunnels

Mynas walk about looking for food, therefore, all Myna traps have walk in one-way tunnels. Most traps have two tunnels but some experimental traps are circular and have four or five tunnels.



### Vertical Tunnel

Once inside the entrance chamber, the Mynas will go up the vertical tunnel into the holding chamber where there is less chance of escaping.

# How to trap successfully

## A guide to successfully using Indian Myna and Common Starling Traps

Indian Mynas and Starlings are very intelligent and wary birds.

For your trapping to be successful you will need to follow the trapping process consistently and methodically. You must be patient and persistent.

- No bird is to be treated cruelly or subjected to harsh conditions: please observe the requirements of the QLD Animal Care and Protection Act 2001 and the animal welfare requirements of your trapping agreement.

- Ensure that the birds you are aiming to trap are Indian Mynas or Starlings and not native Noisy Miners. Noisy Miners are protected by law and it is illegal to trap them without a licence.
- Ensure Myna birds are coming down onto the ground to feed on a regular basis (at least three times a week). If you have not yet had these birds feeding on the ground at your site, trapping is unlikely to be successful.

Ensure that the birds you are aiming to trap are Indian Mynas or Starlings and not native Noisy Miners.

- Do not approach the trap during daylight hours. Even if you can't see the Indian Mynas they can see you. If un-trapped Indian Mynas see you handling a trap, particularly once you have a trapped bird, they will avoid entering the trap.
- Only ever set up the trap when you are able to check it morning and evening.
- Keep the trap and trap area clean. Myna birds will avoid their own excrement and will not enter a dirty or smelly trap.
- Keep pets and children away from the trap as Indian Mynas and Starlings are extremely wary birds and are sensitive to disturbance. Pets may also eat the bait intended for the birds.
- If you trap any non-target species, you must release them.
- Provide shade, food and fresh water in the larger chamber (holding chamber) at all times for captured birds.
- If crows or ibis start to hang around the trap, put your trap away until they have been absent from the site for a couple of days. These birds can get a taste for the bait and stake out the trap even if they can't reach the bait and consequently ruin your trapping effort if not discouraged in the first instance.



# Trapping process

To maximise trapping results make sure that you have completed each step before moving to the next. Duration of trapping can vary widely from site to site and can take anywhere from weeks to a few months.

## Step 1: Get your bait

You will need to use suitable bait. Small pieces of dry pet food appear to be the most effective bait. Mynas are particularly attracted to food that is beef based and red in colour. Do not use grain-based foods (birdseed and bread etc) as this attracts non-target birds such as crested pigeons and parrots.

## Step 2: Choose a spot to undertake trapping

This should be a site that you have seen the Indian Mynas come down on to the ground. If possible, the site should be flat and open with short grass, however residents have had

success trapping in various other settings including on the roof of carports, or on verandahs. Keep children and pets away from the trap.

## Step 3: Restrict access to food sources you need the birds to be hungry to lure them into a trap.

Make sure that any food the Mynas have been accessing at your place (scraps, pet food, chicken feed etc) is no longer available to them. If the birds are feeding at a neighbours place, it may be worth approaching them and asking if they would mind restricting available food for the time in which you are trapping.



#### Step 4: 'Free-feed' the birds at the site you have chosen.

This is done in order to teach the Indian Mynas that there is a safe and regular source of food at this site. Place a flat white plate or plastic lid at your site and keep this topped up with bait. Avoid going near the plate when there are Mynas around. Other birds such as magpies and Pee Wees, may steal some of the bait, but do not chase them away as Indian Mynas will learn to eat from the plate by watching these less wary birds. Make sure you actually sight the Mynas eating the bait off the plate before moving to the next step.

#### Step 5: Put the trap next to the plate.

By placing the trap near the plate of food Mynas will perceive the trap as being a harmless object.

#### Step 6: Bait the trap and take away the 'free-feeding' plate.

Place a small white plate inside the smaller (entrance) chamber of the trap. Put a handful of bait on the plate. Ensure the birds can see the feed in the entrance chamber from the tunnel, but will not be able to reach it until they have entered the trap. Additionally, put a small amount of bait inside and around the tunnel entrances of the small chamber to attract the Mynas. Ensure that only small amounts of bait are used in this manner as excess bait will deter them from entering the trap.

#### Step 7: Retain trapped birds as decoys.

Decoy birds attract the other Indian Mynas down to the trap, then the bait guides them into the entrance tunnels and into the trap. Decoy birds must have shelter, food and water.

# Euthanasing procedures

Trapped Myna birds or Starlings must be handled and euthanased humanely to minimise stress on the animals.

- Leave trapped Mynas in the holding cage (with water and shade) until evening.
- Mynas can be transported in the holding cage with a towel covering the cage to keep the birds calm. Alternatively the birds can be transferred to a pillow case or smaller bird cage.
- Mynas are easy birds to handle. If you pin the wings to their bodies and grasp firmly they will not peck or fight.
- Use gloves when handling live or dead birds as wild birds may carry disease. When removing the birds through the trap door be careful of the sharp edges.



Image: Starling.

## Euthanasing

The preferred options for euthanasing Mynas are:

- **Cervical dislocation (breaking neck)**

If you use cervical dislocation or decapitation, you must be able to kill the Myna instantly. Council's Pest Animal Officers can show you how to do this humanely.

- **Inhalation of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)**

With Council assistance, Mynas can be euthanased with carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). The Mynas are placed in a container and put to sleep with a small dose of CO<sub>2</sub>. The container is sealed for three minutes to retain the gas and the Mynas die quickly without stress.

## Carcass disposal and clean up

- Wrap dead Mynas in newspaper and place them in your garbage bin or dispose of them in your compost.
- Clean the trap. You may need to hose it down, or if badly fouled, use some vinegar and scrub it down. Relocate the trap if the area becomes soiled from captured birds. Mynas like to be clean and will avoid being around their own excrement.



# Handling of native birds

Whilst traps are designed specifically to target Indian Mynas, some native birds may also be caught.

The use of a decoy bird, a meat based dry pet food and a purpose built trap are the best ways to minimise trapping native birds.

Ensure the trap's holding chamber contains plenty of food and clean water for all trapped birds. If you find a native bird in the trap open the appropriate door provided to release it. Do not handle native birds unless they are injured. If they are dehydrated or lethargic, keep them in a box in a dark and quiet place to allow them to recover. Do not force food or water into the beak of an injured or stressed bird.

Volunteers in the past have also encountered juvenile natives such as Crimson Rosella chicks, which have been evicted from their nest hollows by Indian Mynas. If chicks are still alive, carefully place them in a cardboard box lined with leaf litter or cloth and place the box in a dark, quiet spot. If chicks are unfeathered, provide immediate warmth by placing a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel inside the box. Immediately contact your nearest wildlife rescue organisation for further care instructions.

# Reporting

Reporting Indian Mynas helps council to identify where the birds are and measure the effectiveness of trapping.

## Reporting

### Roost Sites

Report property locations, type of tree or building the Mynas occupy and estimate the size of the colony. The roost site will be mapped.

### Feeding or nesting sites

Report property location, number of Mynas seen regularly, and preferred food source.

## Trapping

Please report and keep records of how many birds are trapped and what techniques have worked best. Any trapping issues or unusual Indian Myna behaviour should also be reported.

Please report Myna activity to council's Customer Service Center or the Pest Animal Officer in your locality.





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