



MORNINGTON PENINSULA INDIAN MYNA CONTROL PROGRAM



Indian Myna Information and Trapping Guidelines

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1. Mornington Peninsula Landcare Indian Myna Control Project ('MP Myna Control')

The Mornington Peninsula Indian Myna Control Project is an initiative of Southwest Mornington Peninsula Landcare Group (SWAMP Landcare). This project began in early 2016 in response to community concerns about rising Myna numbers on the peninsula.

The principal objective of MP Myna Control is to reduce the impact of Indian Mynas on our native birds.

We seek to achieve this objective by:

1. Increasing public awareness of the serious impact of Indian Mynas on biodiversity.
2. Supporting residents of the peninsula to conduct their own humane reduction program.
3. Coordinating the manufacture and supply of traps through local Mens Sheds.

SWAMP Landcare recognises that although we are unlikely to completely eliminate Indian Mynas from the local environment, with coordinated and sustained effort, we can limit Myna numbers to a level that protects our native birds and small mammals.

1.1 Joining MP Myna Control

There are no fees associated with joining the MP Myna Control project. We do, however, encourage you to become a member of SWAMP Landcare at a cost of \$25 per family. Please go to: <https://mplandcare.org.au/join-a-group/> to register.

It is requested that all members sign the 'Animal Welfare Protocol' and email or post them back to: Chantal Morton, Landcare Facilitator Email: facilitator@mplandcare.org.au
Postal: C. Morton, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Private Bag 1000, Rosebud VIC 3950

There is now a Facebook page where you can share information. Go to Facebook and search "Mornington Peninsula Indian Myna Group". "Like" this page and choose to receive notifications from this page.

1. Background information on Indian Mynas

In Australia, the Indian or Common Myna thrives in areas modified 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 1860s in the mistaken belief they would control insect pests. They were subsequently also taken to far north Queensland to control insects in the cane fields.

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.

You can check out some videos taken by Darebin Creek MC of an Indian Myna taking Starling e.g.gs and a chick here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQKI7kzN0EE>

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 rainwater 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.

Residents participating in Indian Myna bird trapping programs need to be aware of their responsibilities under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (the POCTA Act). Any trapping and killing of Indian Mynas must be done humanely, otherwise those involved may be prosecuted for animal cruelty. The maximum penalties under the Act for cruelty are: 250 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months or, in the case of a body corporate, 600 penalty units. For aggravated cruelty, which is cruelty that

causes the death or serious disablement of an animal, the maximum penalties are penalty is 500 penalty units or imprisonment for 2 years or, in the case of a body corporate, 1200 penalty units. One penalty unit is currently \$151.67, so the maximum fines for a person committing cruelty are nearly \$38,000 for cruelty and over \$75,000 for aggravated cruelty.

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 cannot 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 e.g.s 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

You can make your own Indian Myna Trap using the Pee Gee Trap plans. Contact Chantal Morton: facilitator@mplandcare.org.au for a copy of the plans.



Figure 1: Pee Gee Myna Trap

3.2 Mens Shed Traps

SWAMP Landcare has liaised with two local Mens Sheds and supported them to make traps for community members, which can be purchased for a donation of \$75. If you would like to get a trap from a Mens Shed, please contact either:

Mornington Mens Shed
mensshedmornington@gmail.com

Main Ridge Mens Shed
rob.connor@iinet.net.au

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 (e.g., 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 (e.g. power lines, trees etc)
- Place the trap where there are minimal people or animal traffic (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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 do not 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 do not 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, Land, Water and Planning 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.

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 humane euthanasia of captured birds. Mt Martha Veterinary Clinic has indicated that they may be able to assist with this. Alternatively, you can contact your local veterinary provider.

4.3 Carbon monoxide

In Victoria, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and the RSPCA do not currently support euthanasia using carbon monoxide although this method is supported in other states and territories including Canberra.

4.4 Carbon dioxide

The Bureau of Animal Welfare has advised that the use of compressed CO in a cylinder is humane and that compressed carbon dioxide (CO₂) in cylinders is acceptable but must be done precisely. See information on flow rates, concentrations, etc. in the SOP. Carbon dioxide cylinders can be purchased online, e.g., <http://Mynamagnet.com.au/products/>

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 (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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 (e.g., 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.

If would like further advice on trapping, please contact Mal Legg from SW Mornington Peninsula Landcare Group Ph: 0438 898 325.