



Common (Indian) Myna

A Guide to controlling and trapping Common Myna Birds in the Southern Highlands

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Symbols used in this guide:



IMPORTANT INFORMATION – please take special note



WARNING – STOP! Do not do this.

This is the second version of this guide and has been produced to assist you in understanding Common Myna birds, the need for control, identification, trapping techniques and disposal of trapped birds.

As with the first version, Wingecarribee Shire Council gratefully acknowledges the work of Dr Chris Tidemann, Senior Lecturer (Wildlife Management) at the Australian National University, and Bill Handke (Canberra Indian Myna Action Group) as sources for much of the information in this brochure.



About Common Mynas

Common Mynas or Indian Mynas are native to India and surrounding regions of Asia. They were first released in Australia in 1862 to combat pests in Melbourne market gardens, and then released in other states.

They are intelligent and highly adaptable birds which have become serious pests in urban areas of NSW, ACT, Victoria and Queensland and are starting to spread into rural areas.

They are communal birds that can reduce biodiversity through predation and aggressive competition with native wildlife, particularly hollow-nesting birds and mammals. The Common Myna specialises in the colonisation of woodlands, particularly in areas modified by humans.

In addition to growing concerns about biodiversity, Common Mynas also reduce public amenity through noise at communal roosts. There is also concern, especially where Common Mynas are at high densities, of risk to human and livestock health from fouling; the tendency of Common Mynas to steal food from domestic animals and from humans at outdoor eating areas means that there is a high likelihood of pathogen transmission.

Identification

Appearance **Brown** with black head; yellow beak and eye skin, yellow legs. Large white wing patches and under tail feathers best seen in flight. Common Mynas are distinctive, because unlike most birds, they move with a jaunty walk rather than a hop. European Starlings also walk rather than hop.

Size 23-25cm. Upright 12 cm tall.

Activity Active by day and sleeps by night in large communal roosts.

Common Mynas have been confused with Noisy Miners, (*Manorina melanocephala*), a native Australian species that is also aggressive, often moves around in groups, and looks superficially similar to Common Mynas. Aside from the similarity in size and behaviour, Noisy Miners also have a yellow beak and eye patch. However, they are grey brown with a white forehead and black crown. They have an olive tinge near their wings edge, a white belly and flesh coloured legs rather than the yellow of the Common Myna.

The pictures on the following page will help you to identify Common Myna birds.

Indian Myna Bird (Introduced Pest)



Noisy Miner (Native Honeyeater)



Pest

Can be trapped

Common (Indian) Myna - easily identified by its yellow feet and beak, chocolate brown body and black head, and white patch under wings (visible in flight).

Native

DO NOT TRAP

Noisy Miner - an Australian native that can be differentiated from the Common Myna by its grey body, olive wing tips and flesh coloured legs.

Methods of Control

1. Modifying the local habitat

Common Mynas prefer open and urbanised areas, where they can outcompete native birds. A diverse garden provides living spaces for our native birds to shelter, nest and hide from predators, and provides a more sustainable long-term solution to the impacts of introduced species such as the Common Myna.

To encourage native birds, try to maximise the diversity of plants and habitat features in your garden, ensuring that you plant a variety of native groundcovers, shrubs and trees.

2. Restricting access to food

Common Mynas are an opportunistic feeder/ scavenger and will congregate in areas where food sources are easily accessible. Actions that can be undertaken at home to restrict Common Myna access to food include:

- If you see Common Mynas using your bird feeder, remove it immediately.
- If possible, feed pets inside or bring pet food and food bowls inside during the day.
- If you have ducks or chickens, make sure their pen is secure or make sure Common Mynas cannot access their food.
- Similarly, if feeding larger animals like goats and horses, try to keep their feed areas clean and bag their manure.

3. Biological control, poisoning and shooting

Biological control is impractical due to very high development costs and risks to non-target species. Poisoning and shooting are also ineffective and problematic.

4. Trapping

Selective trapping can provide an effective, safe and humane way of controlling Common Mynas, and greatly reduces or eliminates the risk to non-target wildlife.

Traps that selectively catch Common Mynas at feeding areas use special entrance valves that restrict access to most species, except Common Mynas. European Starlings, another pest bird species, can also be humanely captured using traps. Trapping was selected as the most appropriate method of control as it was considered to be humane and given deployment of enough traps, appears to have the potential to substantially reduce Myna numbers on a broader scale.



Trapping alone will not keep Common Myna populations under control. It is also important to undertake other approaches, like restricting access to food, to help control their numbers.

Trapping Common Mynas

The 'Pee Gee' Myna traps were developed to be a humane and selective trap for Common Mynas. The traps are designed to help minimise the stress of captured birds. This is not only important for the humane removal of Common Mynas but improves capture rates as distressed birds will warn other Common Mynas to stay away from the trap.

As Common Mynas are a highly observant and adaptable species, the more they are hassled the warier they will become and can make them harder to trap.

The Pee Gee trap

The 'Pee Gee' trap has been used extensively throughout Australia for the trapping of Common Mynas. It consists of two main components 1) a feeding chamber and 2) a containment chamber. The feeding chamber is equipped with two entrance tunnels. A valve assembly allows the birds to pass from the feeding chamber to the containment chamber. Panel doors are provided for each chamber. The containment chamber must include a water supply and perch for the trapped birds.



Pee Gee's Common Myna Trap set up.

Wire hooks connect the two chambers, which can be separated for ease of transport.

Photo courtesy of: Canberra Indian Myna Action Group.

Where should I place my trap?

It is critically important to select an appropriate trapping site. Below are a few site selection tips;

1. An ideal site is near where birds are already feeding. Once identified, restrict access to what they are eating and wean them onto the food provided in the trap.
2. If point 1 is not possible then select a site in full sunshine that has at least a radius of 3 m clear of cover around it. This is important because Common Mynas are not comfortable feeding near where predators may be lurking. Shade cloth may be attached to the containment chamber to provide shade for trapped birds – remember you do not wish to distress them.
3. Keep pets away from trapped birds as the stress caused by the proximity of cats and dogs will lead trapped birds to warn other birds from entering the trap. Traps should be placed in areas where pets are excluded.
4. Other considerations for trap placement are the possibility of theft or vandalism, public safety, public perception, dog or cat disturbance, and availability of shade for trapped birds.



**Traps must be placed on private land where they cannot be seen by the public.
Please be aware of the sensitivity of others when trapping birds.**

When is the best time of year for trapping?

During the breeding season Common Mynas (and Starlings) are territorial – at other times of the year, particularly during autumn/winter – they are short of food and form large flocks, making this the most successful trapping period.



Autumn and Winter is the best time for trapping Common Mynas

Baiting and feeding

Common Mynas and Starlings will eat a variety of foods, but experience has shown that dog and cat foods work best. This is probably due to Common Mynas scavenging pet food that has been left out by pet owners.



Dog and cat foods work best for attracting Common Mynas.



Don't use cereal or grain (such as birdseed or chook food) as this attracts non-target birds such as native parrots and pigeons.

Lulling Mynas with free-feeding

It is recommended that you allow a few days of free-feeding prior to trapping for one day, followed by another few days of free-feeding and so on. During free-feeding, birds should be able enter and leave the trap at will. So the birds can escape easily, disconnect the containment chamber from the feeding chamber. This means the containment chamber should be separated from the feeding chamber.

Loose feeding near tunnel entrance

When you are ready to begin trapping, put a little loose feed;

1. Outside the tunnel entrances to attract Mynas to the area,
2. In the tunnel, and
3. Inside the feeding chamber. This should be placed where the Mynas can see the food directly in front of them when they are in the tunnel.

You should not over-feed outside the trap, as this will not encourage the birds to enter the trap.

Cleaning your trap

- The feed dishes should be washed in warm soapy water and dried with a soft cloth or allowed to air dry.
- The perch should be cleaned with a soft moist cloth and allowed to air dry.
- The trap floor should be hosed out and either dried with a soft cloth or allowed to air dry.
- Do not use steel wool or other harsh scrubbers on the trap as this will accelerate rusting.



Prior to re-trapping, it is important that the trap is thoroughly cleaned.

Bird Handling

Caring for trapped birds is an important responsibility.

Please ensure you follow the guidelines below:

- If you keep a 'call' bird (a captured Common Myna) in the containment chamber of your trap, this will likely encourage other Common Mynas to the trap. Caller birds must be cared for in accordance with the NSW Department of Primary Industries – Standard Operating Procedures for Trapping Pest Birds (BIR002).
- Make sure that the trap contains food, a perch and clean water for all trapped birds. Put food in the larger containment chamber for captured birds and provide fresh water in a small drinking container.
- Try to provide adequate shade for the trapped birds (e.g. a shade cloth).
- You may need to tie the trap down in windy situations - if it blows over with birds inside all your efforts may be wasted.
- Always approach traps slowly, particularly when there are birds inside.
- Ideally remove trapped birds at night, or at least when you are sure there are no other birds that can see or hear you at the trap.
- In the rare event that non-target species are trapped - simply release them by removing the base valves.
- Only use traps designed specifically for Common Mynas (e.g. Pee Gee traps).
- Use recommended baits (e.g. dog and cat food).
- Do not use seed as it attracts non-target species such as native birds.
- Check the trap every morning and evening. Release all native birds that are trapped.
- Do not expose trapped birds to undue stress.
- Only approach the trap when you are ready to euthanise the birds.
- Do not treat trapped birds cruelly or leave them in harsh conditions.
- Avoid setting traps on hot days.

Handling and transporting birds

The feeding chamber may be removed for ease of transport though it is recommended that covering the trap with a large towel helps prevent undue stress to captured birds.



When transporting the birds, it is not necessary to remove them from the trap. Always wear gloves when handling Common Mynas as they may carry disease or bird mites.

If you wish to remove birds from the trap be careful of the sharp edges; wear long sleeves and gloves. When removing Common Mynas from a trap, grasp the bird from the top and hold both wings firmly so that they cannot move. Put them into a breathable bag (e.g. a pillow case or hessian sack) and roll them securely so they cannot move and injure themselves.

Be careful to do this in a dark place where other birds will not be watching.

Euthanising Common Mynas

Euthanasia of Common Mynas should be regarded as an act of humane killing with the minimum of pain, fear and distress.

Carbon dioxide kits are available for purchase from companies such as Myna Magnet (<http://mynamagnet.com.au/>).

Do not use car exhaust fumes to euthanise the birds. This is not a humane method of euthanasia and is **not** recommended.

Most cars are now fitted with catalytic converters which are very effective at removing carbon monoxide from the exhaust fumes. Although carbon monoxide levels are higher at 'cold start-up' they quickly drop to low levels. Once the engine has warmed up the hot fumes can cause significant distress and pain. Exhaust fumes may also contain other gases, such as nitric oxides, which can cause distress and pain when inhaled.

Bird carcasses may be disposed of in a standard domestic garbage bin provided that the birds are first wrapped in newspaper and placed in a bag.

For more information, trappers should read PestSMART's Standard Operating Procedure – Methods of Euthanasia – https://www.pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/180220_SOP_GEN001_web.pdf



Trapped Common Myna birds must be euthanised in a humane manner. Trap operators must be willing to accept that humane killing is an important responsibility. It is recommended that trapped birds be gassed with carbon dioxide (CO₂).



The NSW Department of Primary Industries does not consider it humane to euthanise birds with exhaust gas from a car.

Recording and Reporting

It is recommended that trapping information be recorded online at MynaScan - www.feralscan.org.au



Recording and reporting the number of Common Mynas as well as their roost and feeding sites, provides researchers with very important information that can be used to help manage the Common Myna problem. If you do not have access to the internet, data sheets are provided in the information pack and can be returned to the Bowral Men's Shed.



It is important to record and report information when it comes to pest management.

Contacts and Further Information

Bowral Men's Shed - www.mensshed.com

Open Tuesday and Thursday from around 9-3pm

Tel: (02) 4862 5285

Mobile: 0420 299 444

Email: bowral.mens.shed@gmail.com

Bowral Uniting Church, 28 Bendooley Street,

Bowral, NSW 2576.

Wingecarribee Shire Council - <https://www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/common-Myna-birds>

Tel: (02) 4868 0888

Useful links

1. Common Myna website
www.fennerschool-associated.anu.edu.au/Myna/index.html
2. Myna Birds
<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/vertebrate-pests/pest-animals-in-nsw/pest-birds/Myna-birds>
3. Feral Scan
www.feralscan.org.au
4. PestSMART – Common (Indian) Myna fact sheet
<https://www.pestsmart.org.au/pestsmart-common-indian-Myna/>
5. PestSMART's Standard Operating Procedure – Methods of Euthanasia
https://www.pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/180220_SOP_GEN001_web.pdf
6. Myna Magnet (carbon dioxide cannisters)
<http://mynamagnet.com.au/>