

**Indian Myna Control Project**

# **Indian Myna Handbook**

Information about Indian Myna Birds



# Indian Myna Control Project

*managing the invasion of  
Indian Mynas on  
the NSW mid north coast*

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# The Indian Myna Control Project

Indian Mynas were introduced into Australia in the late 1860s to control insects in market gardens. They have now spread to most of Eastern Australia and New Zealand.

They have become a huge problem in cities and urban centres where they have congregated and thrived. Mynas have also invaded regional areas, threatening native birds and hollow-dwelling animals.

The Indian Myna Control Project provides education, coordination support and traps to local communities on the mid north coast to help combat the Indian Myna Bird invasion.

The Project is funded by Hunter Central Rivers CMA and is kindly supported by Great Lakes Council, Greater Taree City Council, Landcare, NSW Parks and Wildlife, and local communities.

This booklet will help you to:

- Identify the Indian Myna
- Understand the behaviours and habits of Indian Mynas
- Stop the invasion in your own backyard
- Use Myna traps
- Ensure humane handling of captured birds
- Monitor and report bird feeding and roost sites

Your local coordinator can help identify trapping sites, train volunteers to use the traps and organise the humane disposal of captured Indian Mynas.

If you would like to report where Indian Mynas feed or roost contact your Local Council, Landcare Group, or Indian Myna Action Group.

For more information on the Indian Myna Control Project, trap plans, and project news, please visit our website at: [www.indianmyna.org](http://www.indianmyna.org)

## The Problem with Indian Mynas

Indian Mynas are pest birds. They are opportunistic and eat almost anything. In cities and regional centres, Mynas congregate around available food scraps, usually near schools, shopping centres and sport fields. The Mynas also scavenge pet food from backyards in residential areas.

In Rural areas, they feed on stock food, grain, pellets and compost. Mynas can often be seen on powerlines and in open grassy areas where they hunt for insects and worms.

They congregate in large numbers in roost trees, making a loud chattering noise and leaving droppings everywhere. The clean-up can be costly and mind numbingly repetitive.

Indian Mynas are messy birds and nest in tree hollows, palms and under roofs, in sheds. They evict animals and birds from their nests and leave tree hollows that are mite-ridden and unusable by other wildlife.

Mynas are well adapted to Australian conditions and breed quickly.



## Identification

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

### The Indian Myna is an introduced pest



### The Noisy Miner is a native bird



# Behaviour and Habits

## Behaviour

The Myna's behaviour is seasonal. They form pairs for breeding from September to March and find a protected nesting site. They have 4-5 chicks and when the juveniles are ready to fly they travel in small family groups. They are usually seen in groups of 2, 6 or 12.

After March, the Mynas join larger groups and move to communal roosts. They split up in the mornings, going off in different directions to find food. These groups are usually 20 or more birds. By September, the Mynas form pairs and prepare to nest again.

Hundreds of Mynas can roost in a single tree or building, especially near a regular food source like a racecourse. When the Myna numbers get so great, food becomes scarce and a new colony is established.

## Rural areas

Mynas prefer open woodland and grassland to forested areas. They are attracted to animal food, especially horse food, chicken pellets, goat and pig food, and fruit. Mynas will also feed on animal manure.

They will nest in out-buildings, house roofs, nest boxes, and tree hollows in paddocks and the edge of bushland. Shooting scares them off but they will return if food is available. Mynas pose potential health risks in dairies and stables.

## Residential areas

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 grevillias and seed put out to attract native birds. They particularly like left-over pet food.

## Stop the Invasion

### Trapping alone will not keep the Indian Myna under control

Mynas thrive where there is easy access to food:

- 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 or bag horse manure around stables.

### Break 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.
- Bird mite infestations can cause severe itching and rashes – 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.
- Wear gloves when handling Myna nests.

## Trapping Program

The aim of trapping is to control the Indian Myna population to reduce the threat to native birds and animals. Reducing the existing Indian Myna population by trapping requires the humane handling of all captured birds. Everyone who participates in trapping must adopt the animal welfare protocol.

### Trap Management

- Only use traps designed specifically for Indian Mynas.
- Use recommended baits. Do not use seed as it attracts native birds.
- Check the trap every morning and evening.
- Release all native birds that are trapped.
- Make sure that the trap contains food and clean water for all trapped birds.
- Don't 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.
- Wear gloves when handling Myna.



## Myna Traps

The size of the trap depends on the number of Mynas you want to catch. Backyard traps are suitable for 6-12 birds. Larger holding cages can be attached to fit more birds and the larger Myna Magnet Trap is suitable for forty birds.

Traps are designed to exploit Myna behaviour:

### 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 feeding cage, the Mynas will go up the tunnel into the holding cage where there is no chance of escaping.

**PeeGee's Myna Trap  
Horizontal Tunnel**



**PeeGee Myna Trap  
Vertical Tunnel**



## Trap Preparation

### Prepare for trapping

- Clean up any birdseed, pet food, chook, goat and horse food or scraps in the trapping area. The Mynas are less likely to go for the bait if there is other food to eat.
- Secure the trap with pegs on an open, grassy area, where the Mynas visit regularly. Put the trap where you can see it from your house but not so close you will disturb the Mynas. Keep children and pets away from the trap.
- Mynas begin searching for food in the morning before it is light and again in the afternoon so it is best to have the trap baited the night before. Put out bait as recommended for your trap and in 5 to 10 days start setting the trap.
- Mynas learn quickly and will avoid a trap if they think there is any danger. Once you set the trap, don't go near it. Wait until the Mynas are gone before re-baiting the trap. You can bait the trap as often as you like, but you must not let the Mynas associate the trap with humans. You must be observant and patient.

### Baiting the trap

- Many trappers use dry cat or dog food. Some trappers have used wet dog food and bread successfully. Others have experimented with pastries and scraps. It is best to use the food that first attracted the Mynas. Birdseed is not recommended as seed eating native birds are easily trapped. Different situations need different approaches to trapping and you must be patient. In areas where there is a high density of Mynas, free feeding is not necessary. In other more sparsely populated areas free feeding will be needed to entice the Mynas into the trap, waiting to set the trap until the Mynas are confident the trap poses no danger. Observing the Myna's confidence around the trap will help you know when to move to the next stage of trapping. The more patient you are the more Mynas you will catch.

## Trapping Hints

Mynas are scavengers and will congregate in nearby trees or on a roof until the coast is clear. One Myna usually stays to watch for danger - one call and all the Mynas will disappear.

Bait the trap with a food the birds are accustomed to eating. Mynas will eat small dry dog and cat biscuits and wet pet food, birdseed and bread. Mynas also love rubbish food like left over bakery products and food scraps.

Use big pieces of bait inside the trap as the Mynas will pick up and take the food outside the trap.

Watch for danger while the Mynas go to the ground for food.

Don't leave the Mynas in the small traps very long or they will learn to get out the walk in tunnels.

Food also attracts native birds into your garden. If gangs of aggressive birds like Magpies or Currawongs start to feed from the bait, stop putting out food, and give the trap to someone else.

### PeeGee's Backyard Trap



## PeeGee's Backyard Trap

PeeGee's Backyard trap is a home constructed two-cage trap that uses food to lure the Mynas into the trap. If the trapping process is interrupted, start again from the beginning. Attach the cages securely and put in a grassy open area in your backyard, where the Mynas walk around.

### Step 1: Free feeding

Put food on the ground nearby and water in the feeder dishes inside the open door of the small cage. Use water dishes that hook onto the walls or a shallow dish.

### Step 2: Set the trap

After a few days, or when the Mynas are confident moving in and around the trap, close the doors. Put food and water in both cages . The Mynas will enter the trap through the tunnels, moving through the vertical tunnel into the holding cage when they find there is no other escape.

### Step 4: What to do with captured Mynas

When removing the birds through the trap door be careful of the sharp edges. Wear long sleeves and gloves. If you are gassing the Mynas put them directly into a hessian bag or cover the holding cage with a large towel.

If you are removing the Mynas from the cage do it in a dark place where other Mynas cannot see you handling the birds.

### PeeGee's Trap Plans

Plans for the PeeGee's Trap have been adapted for easy construction and are available on a separate brochure or at the Indian Myna Bird Project's website: [www.indianmyna.org](http://www.indianmyna.org)

## **Myna Magnet Trap**

The Myna Magnet is a two-chamber commercial trap that uses dog food and food scraps as bait. It is a staged process to lure the birds into the trap.

### **Step 1: Free feeding**

Assemble the bottom brown cage of the trap, including two of the perches. Put the bait about one metre from the trap and inside the bottom cage, as close to the centre as you can. Do this for about five days. The Mynas should be confident, in and around the cage, before moving on to the next stage.

### **Step 2: Set the trap**

Assemble the top green cage of the trap, install one perch and the two one-way wire tunnels. Place the top green cage over the brown bottom cage so that it is offset 45 degrees and the Mynas can escape through the gap between the corners of the two cages. Secure the green roof with cable ties so it does not blow off. Make sure that there is water in the top cage at all times. Leave the trap in this position until you are sure that the Mynas are confident in the trap.

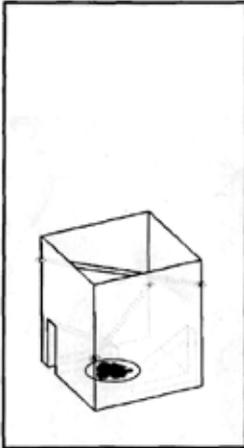
### **Step 3: Close the trap**

Put bait in the bottom cage, put the “walk-in” tunnels in position, and square up the two cages. Secure with ockie straps. Make sure that the perch is directly in line with the two vertical wire tunnels. The Mynas will enter the bottom cage through the walk-in tunnels, and will then move through the vertical wire tunnels into the top holding cage when they try to escape.

### **Step 4: What to do with captured Mynas**

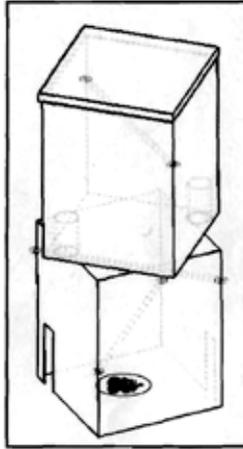
If you are gassing the birds cover the top trap with a vinyl bag or put the birds directly into a hessian bag. You may need two people, as it can be hard to reach into the back of the cage.

Free feeding



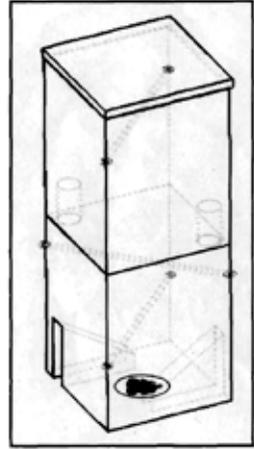
Base cage only placed over the food source, not walk-ins

Set the trap



Base cage and top cage at 45 degrees only, no walk-ins

Close the trap



Base cage and top cage aligned, walk-ins in place

## Stress-free handling of birds

- When removing Mynas from a cage, grasp the bird from the top and hold both wings firmly so that they cannot move. Put them into a breathable bag (a pillow case is OK) and roll them securely so they cannot move and injure themselves
- Mynas should not be handled unnecessarily. Put them directly into a small breathable bag for transport.

## Handling of Indian Mynas

Mynas and their nests are riddled with mites and they also carry avian diseases, some of which may be communicable to humans. It is important to wear gloves when handling Mynas and their nests and to wash hands thoroughly after contact.

Mynas are easy birds to handle. If you pin the wings to their bodies and grasp firmly they will not peck or fight.

Mynas should be transported either in a breathable bag or in a covered cage.

## Handling of Native Birds

Some native birds may be caught in the trap. Make sure that the trap contains food and clean water for all trapped birds. Open the door to release trapped native birds, do not handle them 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. Provide water and food, but do not force food or water into the beak of an injured or stressed bird.

For assistance with injured native birds on the mid north coast, you can contact the F.A.W.N.A Hotline on 0050 861 405.



## Euthanising Trapped Mynas

The aim of euthanasia is to minimise or eliminate stress the birds will experience prior to becoming unconscious.

Trap operators must be willing to accept that humane killing of trapped birds is an important responsibility. If you feel unable to euthanise the birds in a humane manner, or cannot arrange for humane euthanasia to be performed by someone else, then you should not be involved in a trapping program.

The preferred options for euthanising Mynas are:

- Cervical dislocation (breaking neck)
- Inhalation of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)
- Injection of a barbiturate

## Euthanising with Carbon Dioxide

Euthanasia of Mynas by carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) must be arranged beforehand with your Area Coordinator.

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.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries does not consider it humane to euthanise birds with exhaust gas from a car. This can vary in other states, so it is best to check you local rules.

## Humane Euthanasia of Trapped Birds

- Kill trapped Mynas and Starlings quickly, painlessly, and with minimal handling.
- If transporting Mynas, the cage must be covered or the Mynas should be secured in a breathable bag.
- Organise gassing with carbon dioxide with your Area Coordinator beforehand. The birds must be delivered for gassing in a sealed hessian bag, or in the covered holding cage of the trap. Avoid handling the birds more than once.
- If you use cervical dislocation (breaking neck) or decapitation, you must be able to kill the Myna instantly.
- Wrap dead Mynas in newspaper and put them in your household garbage bin or put them in your compost to decompose.



## Reporting & Monitoring

Reporting and monitoring of Indian Mynas enables us to track where the birds are and helps us to gather information about the effectiveness of trapping.

### 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 and monitored.

### Feeding sites

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

### Trapping

We need feedback from all trappers. Please report trapping results twice yearly for October/March and April/September. We would also like to know what bait you used and what problems you had.

### Monitoring

Volunteers can do regular Myna counts at roost sites, schools, parks and reserves, or in urban areas.

### Forms

Reporting and monitoring forms are available from Councils and Landcare offices.



## Contacts

### Indian Myna Control Project - Coordinator

- Alana Parkins (02) 6559 2979

### Organisations/Local Councils

Please contact your local council for the contact details of the Area Coordinators for the Indian Myna Bird Project.

- Greater Taree City Council Environmental Health (02) 6592 5399
- Port Macquarie - Hastings Council (02) 6581 8111
- Great Lakes Council (02) 6591 7313
- Hallidays Point Tidy Towns (02) 6559 2979
- Manning Landcare (02) 6557 0244
- Hastings Landcare (02) 6586 4465
- F.A.W.N.A Hotline 0500 861 405
- National Parks and Wildlife Service, Taree (02) 6552 4097

### Websites

- **Indian Myna Control Project**  
[www.indianmyna.org](http://www.indianmyna.org)
- **Birds in Backyards**  
[www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)
- **Canberra Indian Myna Action Group**  
[www.indianmynaaction.org.au](http://www.indianmynaaction.org.au)
- **Central Coast Indian Myna Action Group**  
[www.ccimag.asn.au](http://www.ccimag.asn.au)

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