

Common Myna

(often referred to as Indian Mynas)

A local and global problem

Common Mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*) were introduced to Melbourne in 1862 to control insect pests in market gardens. Despite their ineffectiveness, the birds were then taken from Melbourne to other places in Australia, most notably to Northern Queensland for another failed attempt at removing pests from sugar cane crops.

Globally, Common Mynas are widely recognised as a serious threat to biodiversity. In 2000, the species was listed among 100 of the world's most invasive species by the World Conservation Union, alongside species such as the fox and cane toad.

What do Common Mynas look like?

The Common Myna can be identified by chocolate-brown body, darker head, and yellow beak and eye patch.

Common Mynas have similarities to one of our native birds, the Noisy Miner (*Manorina melanocephala*). It is important not to confuse the two as Noisy Miners are a protected species under Australian law and attempts to harm or kill these birds are illegal. They have a mostly grey body with a black crown and cheeks and a yellow bill.

The two birds are a similar size and are both known for their aggression toward other birds.



Common Myna



Noisy Miner

Impact on native animals

- During breeding season Common Mynas seek out hollows and force their way into these spaces that previously housed native birds and mammals. Approximately 42% of Australian mammals and numerous bird species utilise tree hollows as breeding sites.
- Common Mynas may kill chicks and eggs by various methods, such as smothering the existing nest by simply building their own nest on top. They have also been seen blocking the

entries to hollows, causing the inhabitants to die of starvation, after which they then lay their own eggs in the hollow.

- They congregate in flocks of up to 20 in which they use these superior numbers to forcibly take over and hold territory.
- They can raise two broods of young each year and can have a long life span enabling their population to expand relatively quickly.
- Common Mynas build and defend several nests during the breeding season, excluding native birds and animals from multiple nesting sites despite only laying eggs in one nest.

Impact on humans

Due to its close association with humans the Common Myna can spread disease by scavenging at outdoor eating areas. They are also known to harass pets in backyards and steal their food. Mynas build large untidy nests, using sticks, straw, feathers, and human generated rubbish like scraps of paper and plastic. When they create these nests in roof spaces and cavities, they are creating a breeding ground for disease. If bird mites enter a house and are inhaled by humans, they can cause asthma and hay fever, and their bites can cause itching and rashes.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) do not declare Common Mynas as pests and therefore do not control Common Myna populations. They are however not protected in Victoria or any state in Australia and no permission is required to trap and dispose of them.

Invasion of Common Mynas is assisted by the alteration of habitat that occurs with human urbanisation. Reduced vegetation with changed habitat types such as more open mown reserves with scattered trees suits Mynas

Common mynas nest in highly modified habitats, artificial structure's, and tree hollows. Common Mynas start their nesting before native birds and colonise tree hollows before native species have a chance. Additionally, they have repeat nesting's over a season.

Restoring habitat and making urban areas less suitable for common mynas is seen to be a more useful approach to their management.

What does Council do?

- Council currently has an extensive conservation program that aims to increase biodiversity that focuses on habitat protection and restoration. Council undertakes annual revegetation programs that help encourage native birds into our local areas. Native birds can help displace introduced species such as the Common Myna. Many Conservation Reserves within Hobsons Bay have been planted heavily which aids in reducing Common Myna activity due to their preference for open parklands. The Conservation Department within council also controls woody weeds in key environmental reserves. This helps reduce habitat for introduced species, including Common Mynas.
- Hobsons Bay City Council has erected nest boxes in some conservation reserves. However, these require active management, such as monitoring for feral bird establishment and eviction of nesting material from birds such as Common Mynas and Starlings. This requires trained staff undertaking this routine maintenance, as they work from heights whilst handling potentially contaminated nesting material. Conservation Rangers liaise with

schools, industry, and individual community members on biodiversity issues such as pest plant and animal management.

- We also undertake community planting days using indigenous plants. All community members are welcome to join our community activity days. See link below for activity calendar.

<https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Community/Conservation/Conservation-volunteering>

- Council has developed a sustainable gardening booklet and runs a Habitat Garden program that helps inform the community on habitat gardening and using appropriate indigenous plants.

<https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Community/Conservation/Habitat-gardens>

What can you do?

- It's important that we ensure all food scraps are discarded appropriately. Making sure any leftover food packaging is put in a secure bin where birds cannot access.
- Pet food should be cleaned up after pets have eaten or place food in areas inaccessible to pest animals. Leaving uneaten pet food in bowls outdoors only encourages pest animals into our community.
- Planting indigenous plants (dense or prickly native shrubs work well) in your garden will increase foraging areas for native birds whilst reducing foraging places for Common Mynas.
- Also, dense habit trees such as introduced pines, palms and cypress, should be avoided as they make great night-time roosting spots for Mynas, encouraging them to come into your backyard.
- Erecting nest boxes in your garden can further encourage native birds into your garden, but as mentioned above you need to commit time to regular maintenance to ensure that the box does not get overrun by Mynas.

http://birdlife.org.au/images/uploads/education_sheets/INFO-Nestboxes-nativebirds.pdf

Trapping and culling

Currently in Australia, the control of the Common Myna is mainly undertaken by community action groups. Canberra Indian Myna Action Group (CIMAG) has been in operation since year 2006 and supports other groups and research into Common Myna characteristics and behaviour. In Victoria there are a number of community based action groups which include environmental groups such as Landcare and the Yarra Indian Myna Action Group (YIMAG).

The council supports community led action. We encourage you to contact either of these groups if you would like more information, or would like to explore trapping of Common Myna birds in Hobsons Bay. Traps can be made from plans on both CIMAG and YIMAG sites or purchased from local suppliers such as Edendale Farm in North Eltham <https://www.edendale.vic.gov.au/Indigenous-nursery/Things-we-sell>.

Please visit <http://indianmynaaction.org.au/> or <http://www.yimag.org.au/> for more information.