

# The Indian Myna problem

## Challenges and solutions



**Indian Mynas are considered one of the world's most invasive species and a threat to Australian native birds and wildlife.**

Indian Mynas, not to be confused with the native Noisy Mynas, first arrived in Australia in the late 1860s. They were introduced as a means to control insects in market gardens and have since spread to most urban and rural areas of Eastern Australia and New Zealand. Indian Mynas are aggressive birds that can congregate in large numbers, displace native wildlife, and pose a potential health threat.

### Why is this bird a pest?

Indian Mynas are opportunistic and aggressive birds that will eat almost anything. In urban areas, they flock to available food sources, and are frequently seen in large numbers near schools, shopping centres and sport fields. Particularly fond of pet food, Indian Mynas are a common inhabitant of household backyards and the urban landscape.

Indian Mynas congregate in roost trees. They make a loud chattering noise and foul the area with droppings. Notoriously messy birds, Indian Mynas play host to parasites, mites and avian disease.

Indian Mynas nest in tree hollows, palms, under roofs, and in sheds. They frequently evict other creatures from their nests and are considered a threat to native wildlife. Indian Mynas also eat the eggs of native birds. Frequently infested with parasites, Indian Mynas tend to leave tree hollows that are mite-ridden and unusable by other wildlife.

### Why is this bird becoming more common in the Blue Mountains

Developing bushland for housing typically results in more open spaces such as lawns and driveways, a loss of native shrubs and trees, and their replacement with exotic plants with denser foliage, including palms and conifers, which are a favourite with Indian Mynas. All these changes favour the establishment of the Indian Myna at the expense of native birds.

High densities of Indian Mynas are also encouraged by easy access to 'free food' in the urban environment such as leftover pet food in outdoor pet bowls, people feeding native birds with bird feeders, uncovered compost and garbage bins, feed spills while feeding chickens and livestock as well as human food scraps left around outdoor eating areas and fast food outlets.

Mynas and their nests are riddled with mites. They also carry avian diseases (some of which may be communicable to humans). If you choose to trap Indian Mynas on your property, ensure you wear gloves when handling the birds and their nests, then wash your hands thoroughly. Remember too that all animals—including pests—must be treated humanely at all times.



The Indian Myna (above) is an introduced pest species, unlike the Noisy Myna (below) which is a native bird.



A visible difference between the Indian Myna and the Noisy Myna is that the Indian Myna is mainly brown in colour, while the Noisy Myna is predominantly grey.



The Indian Myna is an aggressive birds, that frequently evicts native birds from their nests, like the Superb Fairy Wren (above).

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## A national issue - seeking local solutions

### What can you do to help?

Remove food sources to deter Indian Mynas from feeding on your property:

- Cover your compost and garbage bins.
- Do not leave out seed or other food for native birds. To attract native birds to your property, plant native trees instead.
- Feed pets inside to ensure Mynas aren't attracted to the leftover pet food or clean up leftovers after feeding outdoors.
- Feed chickens and ducks in a secure pen so Mynas can't get to the food.
- Clean up food-spills or leftovers from livestock feed-bins.
- Bag horse manure around stables to ensure Mynas don't feed on it.

### Maintain your property to deter Indian Mynas from nesting in your yard:

- Block potential nesting holes in roofs and eaves.
- Remove dense foliated exotics such as palms and conifers and replace with local native plant species.
- Keep palms well trimmed.
- Reduce the risk of bird mite infestations. If you discover an Indian Myna nest on your property, destroy it before the eggs hatch. Put the nest in a garbage bag in your garbage bin.
- Wear gloves whenever handling Myna birds and nests.

Passive methods of controlling access to easy food sources also help control other feral species, which can have negative impacts on biodiversity such as the feral cat, rat and fox as well as pest native bird species such as the Sulphur Crested White Cockatoo and the Noisy Minor.

### What are the options for Indian Myna Control?

- Passive control methods such as limiting access to easy food sources, modifying the environment to reduce nesting opportunities in buildings and removing roosting opportunities in thick foliated exotic vegetation such as palms and conifers, followed by replanting with more open foliated native vegetation can significantly reduce Indian Myna population densities and encourage the return of native birdlife to your backyard.
- Indian Myna trapping is labour intensive. While significant localised reductions in Indian Myna numbers have been achieved by intensive community volunteer trapping programs in several localities in NSW and the ACT, these programmes have only been economically feasible because of the substantial volunteer labour contributions by these community volunteer driven programs. In order to be successful, trapping programmes needs to be strategic and continuous—with an ongoing commitment of financial as well as significant human resources. Community volunteer driven programs are a key feature successful trapping programs. At this point in time there is no community driven Indian Myna trapping program in the Blue Mountains.



Indian Mynas evict wildlife from their nests and hollows. This includes, for example, the Feathertail Glider (above) who is no competition to the territorial and highly aggressive Indian Myna.



Indian Mynas thrive in areas with lots of free food such as bird feeders, uncovered compost bins or leftover pet food.



If you discover an Indian Myna nest, destroy the eggs (see above) before they hatch. Be sure to wear gloves when handling them to prevent irritation from mites.