



Have you seen this bird? The Common (Indian) Myna

This introduced bird poses a serious threat to native birds in southern Queensland

The Common or Indian Myna was introduced into Australia (Melbourne) in 1862. These birds quickly established and became the core for releases into Queensland in 1883 (in an unsuccessful attempt to combat insect pests in cane fields) and later into Sydney and Brisbane. Mynas have since spread along suburban corridors and major roadways to most coastal cities and towns of south-eastern Australia.

The species is now well-established in farming areas across the Darling Downs and is rapidly spreading westward along the main highways and into many towns in the eastern half of the QMDB region.

Myna Facts

Scientific Name:

- *Acridotheres tristis*

Native to:

- Eastern and Southern Asia

Size:

- Approx 23-25 cm

Colour:

- Cocoa-brown body; darker head and wings; yellow feet, legs, beak and eye patch; white wing patch – most obvious during flight.

Voice:

- Loud “o-keek, o-keek” call is most noticeable.

Food:

- Scavenges for food scraps, fruits, vegetables, and grains; will also eat insects and nectar.

Behaviour:

- Spend a lot of time scavenging for food.
- Walk with an exaggerated bounce or hop.
- Generally seen in pairs, or small flocks.
- Aggressively compete with native birds.

Habitat:

- Suburban and semi rural areas, along major roadways and farming lands of the Darling Downs.
- Groups roost in tree hollows, in building crevices and under bridges.

Breeding:

- October – March
- Builds rough nest of twigs, grass, feathers, plastic and paper in building crevices, guttering, and tree hollows.
- 4 to 5 glossy, pale blue eggs; can produce multiple clutches in one season.

Similar species:

Do not confuse with the Noisy Miner – a native species that can be similarly aggressive towards other birds, but is smaller and more uniformly grey (pictured right).



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Why is the Common Myna a Problem?

- Aggressive, territorial bird that actively competes with and displaces native species.
- Competes with native birds (e.g. boobook owl and many parrots) and mammals (e.g. Sugar Glider) for food and nest hollows. Recent research and monitoring has shown devastating impacts on native bird populations in Canberra and Sydney due to Common Myna competition. Hollows abandoned by Mynas are avoided by native species for years.
- Preys on and evicts the eggs and young of native (especially hollow-nesting) birds.
- Carries mites and diseases that can affect humans.
- Blocks building ventilation systems (when nesting).
- Feeds on and fouls horticultural crops - particularly soft fruits.

What is being done?

Interstate action groups (Victoria and New South Wales) have formed to combat this species and keep it out of some areas in southern Australia (e.g. Albury-Wodonga). These groups include representation from local government, State agencies and Landcare and catchment management bodies.

Several local government areas in south-eastern Queensland, mainly coastal, have made it their business to control the spread of this pest in their shires/cities. However, no such concerted effort currently exists in inland southern Queensland.

Community Action

Birds Australia Southern Queensland has established a working group to raise community awareness of this pest problem and address control issues with various authorities and other community organisations.

Several Landcare groups on the eastern Darling Downs have recognised the serious threat posed by Indian Mynas to their local environment. The more people who get involved with Landcare and similar groups, and encourage other members to address the problem, the more chance we have of preventing disastrous declines in native species due to this pest.

You Can Help

- Raise awareness with friends and family about the Myna problem and control measures
- Lobby Local and State Government representatives to take a more pro-active stance on Myna control
- Actively preclude Mynas from nesting/roosting in houses, farm buildings & sheds eg cover gaps in buildings/eaves with bird-proof netting or wire mesh and block any active nest or roost entrances (when birds are not inside or ensure humanely killed beforehand)
- Resist deliberately feeding birds where Common Mynas are present (ensure Mynas can't access pet food)
- Control Mynas
 - Landholders in semi-rural & rural areas (with shooter's license and a registered firearm) may be able to shoot Mynas
 - Humane traps have been developed by researchers in Canberra and will soon be available for purchase and/or hire in the local region (contact Greg Ford, QMDC Ecologist, for details – phone 07 4637 6230)
- Report sightings of Mynas spreading into new areas to Birds Australia Southern Queensland, phone 1300 762 351

Sources:

Photographs copyright © Chris Cameron; from "Birds of the Darling Downs: a land manager's guide" (G. Ford & N. Thompson; North East Downs Landcare, Oakey).

This fact sheet based on a similar one produced by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (Government of Victoria) for the Albury-Wodonga region.

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For further information, contact QMDC on (07) 4637 6201 or visit www.qmdc.org.au

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