

Tuesday, April 18, 2017

## Whitsunday's Witnessing Avian Invasion

*Indian Myna birds have been sighted in the Whitsunday and Mackay Regions.*

**PROSERPINE** // Reports of an unwelcome avian invader have increased across the Whitsundays over the last six months. Sightings of Indian Mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*) have been reported in Proserpine, Cannonvale, Bredalbane, Blacks Beach and at other sites around Mackay and the Pioneer Valley.

Dale Mengel, a resident of Proserpine, who reported a sighting of more than 20 birds flying over Proserpine in February, has again witnessed more than 30 birds in Proserpine in March. "Indian Mynas are moving into the region. Now is the time to take action. They reproduce quickly so the population can explode and impact smaller native birds" Dale said.

Daryl Barnes, President of Bird Life Mackay describes Indian Mynas as "aggressive, pompous, domineering, adaptable, unafraid, smart and noisy". Bird Life Mackay have joined the Mackay Regional Pest Management Group in seeking to collate reports of sightings across the Mackay and Whitsunday Region.

Sometimes confused with native species, including the mostly grey Noisy Myna, the Indian Myna can be distinguished by its distinct chocolate brown body, black head and neck, yellow eye patches, yellow feet and legs. A distinct white patch is also exposed on each wing when the bird is in flight. Indian Mynas are not fussy eaters and will opportunistically forage for food, competing with native species for fruit, flower nectar, insects and seeds.

The species has established in many cities around Australia, including just North of the Whitsundays in Townsville. Indian Myna populations have the capacity to increase rapidly, laying between two and seven eggs per clutch. One breeding pair can explode to a population of 13,000 birds within 5 years.

The arrival of Indian mynas to the region is also bad news for some mammal species. Aggressive nesting Indian Mynas have been known to evict nesting possums and gliders from tree hollows.

Peter Alden, Chair of the Mackay Regional Pest Management Group, is encouraging the Mackay Whitsunday community to work together and tackle Indian Mynas before they become a problem here.

"If you were around when cane toads were first introduced to this area, and you knew what a huge environmental problem they would become, would you have done something to stop them? Of course you would!" Peter said.

"We would like you to do something towards stopping the invasion of Indian Mynas into the Mackay Whitsundays. All you have to do is to tell us when you see an Indian Myna".

Whitsunday Regional Council has two traps available. If you see an Indian Myna, or if you are interesting in deploying a trap, please report your sighting to [emily.wood@reefcatchments.com](mailto:emily.wood@reefcatchments.com) or 0419 778 402.

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