



Animal Pest Alert

Common Myna

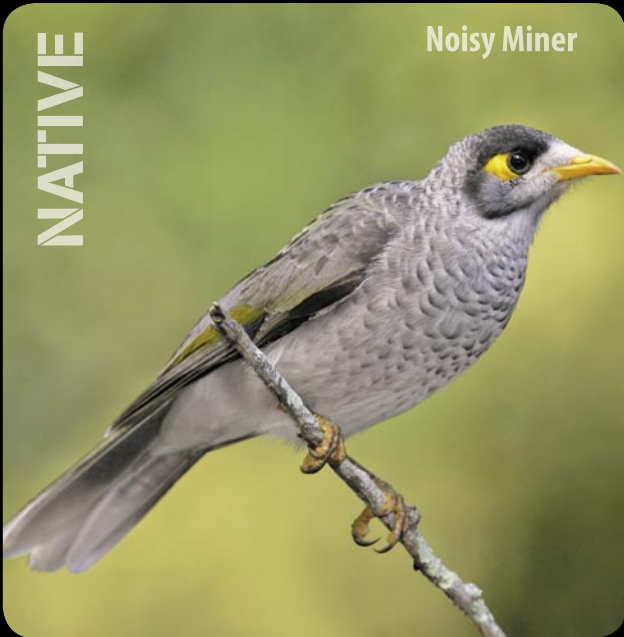
NOT NATIVE

The Common Myna or Mynah (*Acridotheres tristis*) is also known as the Indian, Calcutta or House Myna. It is not native to Australia but has established populations in eastern and south-eastern Australia, as well as other countries worldwide.

The Common Myna has significant potential to spread further in Australia as populations are expanding south in Queensland and westwards across western Victoria and New South Wales. It is important to immediately report any found in the wild in areas where the species has not been seen before.



PHOTO: CLEMENT FRANCIS M



Noisy Miner

NATIVE

PHOTO: NEVIL LAZARUS



Yellow-throated Miner

NATIVE

PHOTO: GREG HOLLAND & LEON REASEY

Please report Common Mynas when seen in new areas – Freecall 1800 084 881

Common Myna

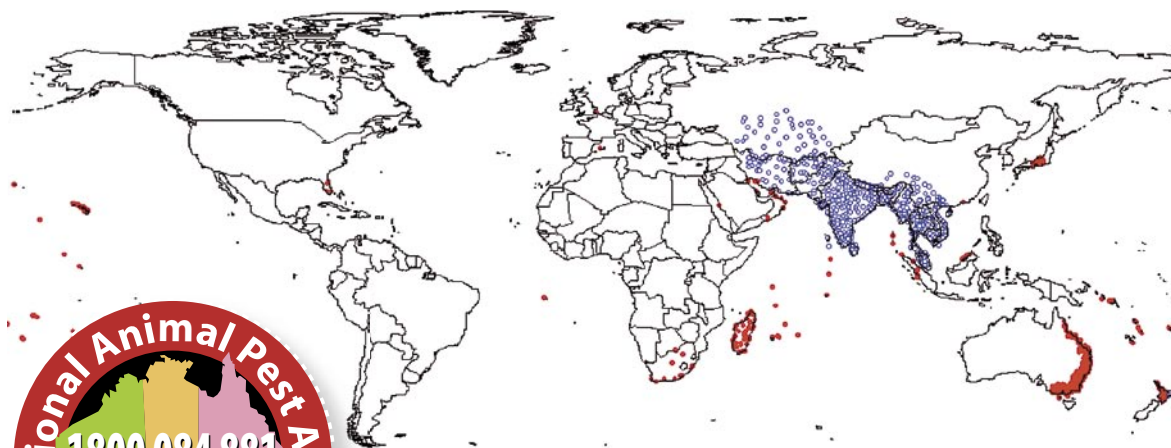


Figure 1. The distribution of the Common Myna including natural (blue) and introduced (red) populations.



Description

The Common Myna is 22 to 27 cm in length (body and tail). It has a brown body, dark brown to black head, yellow bill and bare yellow skin beneath and behind the eyes. Its dark wings have prominent white patches visible in flight (Figure 2), it has a black tail tipped with white and long yellow legs. Male, female and immature birds all look similar.

The Common Myna forages mostly on the ground and it has a distinctive walk or strut (Figure 3). The species is noisy and produces loud, raucous calls including scolding and chattering. Calls and chattering continue late into the night and begin before dawn.

Mistaken identity

There are some Australian native honeyeaters called miners that are not related to the Common Myna but look similar. Like the Common Myna, these native miners can sometimes

forage on the ground in towns and cities. However, the native miners look different in that they have light grey to grey-brown bodies. They include:

- Noisy Miner (eastern Australia including Tasmania)
- Yellow-throated Miner (all states except Tasmania).

Distribution

The Common Myna is well-known throughout its natural range. It occurs in central Asia from Iran and Afghanistan through the Indian sub-continent and Sri Lanka to southern China and South-East Asia as far south as Singapore (Figure 1).

Introduced populations occur worldwide in France, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, the Caucasus region, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the United States (Florida), South Africa, Madagascar, Sumatra, Brunei; as well as the islands of Hong Kong, Seychelles, Maldives, Laccadive, Vanuatu, Hawaii, Fiji and the North Island of New Zealand.

The Common Myna was deliberately introduced to eastern Australia in the 1860s with some birds being moved to new areas in an attempt to control insect pests.

The species is now well-established in many urban and rural centres of southern and central Victoria, eastern New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and north-eastern and south-eastern Queensland. The species is increasing its range in Australia, spreading out from established populations. It is also occasionally found elsewhere in the country.



Figure 2. Common Myna in flight showing the prominent white wing patches (photo: Toby Roscoe, Australian National University Myna Project).

Habitat

The Common Myna prefers modified habitats including urban areas and open country near human settlement, roadside vegetation and agricultural land, indicating that it gains some benefit from associating with people. Occasionally it colonises areas away from people such as open forests and forest edges, flood plains, coastal areas and offshore islands, but usually in low numbers.

Please report Common Mynas when see



Figure 3. The Common Myna has a distinctive strutting walk (photo: Lee Kip Yap).

Reproduction, food and behaviour

Common Mynas nest in tree hollows which could otherwise be used by native animals (Figure 5). However, in the absence of suitable tree hollows it will use holes or cavities under roofs, in walls, light fittings, nest boxes and occasionally in cliff hollows and thick vegetation.

The Common Myna is an adaptable, omnivorous scavenger, feeding on fruits, grains, nectar, insects, young birds and eggs. It takes food from rubbish bins and is often seen sorting through leaf litter in parks and gardens, at picnic areas, train stations and on roads in search of food.

This myna gathers at dusk forming noisy, squabbling groups at communal roosts in dense foliage such as palms and pines. Sometimes several thousand birds may gather, though smaller roosts of 40 to 80 birds are more typical in Australia. It often roosts with Common Starlings and House Sparrows.

The Common Myna remains in the same area throughout the year, but it can travel up to 12 km between roost and feeding areas. It is often seen in pairs, parties or small flocks and spends a lot of time feeding on the ground (Figure 6).

Individuals in the wild have been recorded living for 7 years and possibly up to 12 years.

Damage by the Common Myna

The species is listed by the IUCN (World Conservation Union) as one of 100 of the world's worst invasive alien species alongside Common Starlings, Red Foxes and Cane Toads.

The Common Myna is a moderate pest of agriculture causing damage to orchard fruits such as fig, apple, pear, strawberry, guava, mango and grape. It also damages standing cereal crops including maize, wheat and rice.

In several countries it is considered an environmental pest and is reported to eat eggs and young birds and mammals including endangered species.

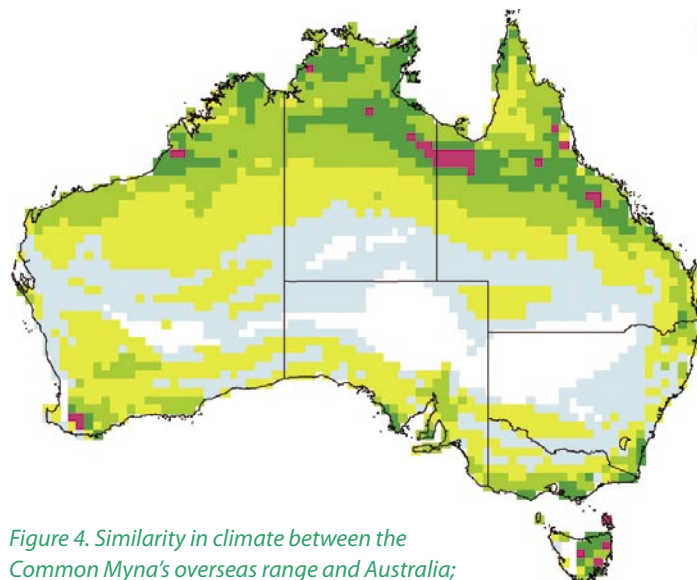


Figure 4. Similarity in climate between the Common Myna's overseas range and Australia; red and green areas are most similar.

The Common Myna aggressively competes for nest hollows and food, adversely affecting the breeding success of other birds and hollow-nesting mammals. It has been observed attacking terns on islands as well as taking the eggs of other seabirds, possibly interfering with those birds' breeding and general behaviour. The Common Myna is also known to spread avian malaria to other birds.



Figure 5. Common Myna at a tree hollow (photo: Andrew Tatnell).

Common Myna



Damage by the Common Myna cont...

The species is a major disperser of seeds from the pest plant lantana and is suspected of spreading other environmental weed seeds such as olive.

It has the potential to transmit diseases to humans and can carry blood-borne parasites such as plasmodia that cause malaria, as well as other parasites like mites, roundworm and threadworm. Mites from Common Myna nests built in urban dwellings can invade homes and cause dermatitis and allergies in susceptible people.

In Australia programs involving community groups and government authorities have been developed to reduce Common Myna populations. These programs have often been carried out in response to public concerns about the negative effects of the Common Myna on native birds.

A variety of lethal and non-lethal methods have been used to reduce damage caused by the Common Myna and include; shooting and scaring with firearms, baiting, trapping, chemical and sound repellents, habitat and nest box modification.



Figure 6. Common Mynas foraging on the ground (photo: blickwinkel/Alamy).

Important Disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Agriculture and Food and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

Potential to be a pest in Australia

The Common Myna is rated as being highly likely to establish more widespread populations in Australia and be a pest of agriculture, the environment and public amenity.

A scientific risk assessment conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Food in Western Australia and endorsed by the national Vertebrate Pests Committee indicates that the Common Myna poses an extreme threat (the highest of four categories) to Australia. Part of the assessment showed that the climates of the Common Myna's overseas range and Australia are very similar (Figure 4).

It is therefore important to quickly remove birds found in new areas. New populations would pose risks to hollow-nesting mammals and birds as well as native corvids (crows and ravens), magpies, pigeons and doves.

Many agricultural crops could be at risk from damage by the Common Myna and it could also add to the nuisance already caused in urban areas by other birds.

Birds in the wild

The Common Myna is prohibited in South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. Movement of the Common Myna to other areas can occur via shipping and road transport and/or possibly intentional release, and as a result it has been found most recently in Adelaide, South Australia; Launceston and Devonport, Tasmania; and Perth, Western Australia.

Risk management

To help prevent the Common Myna from establishing new populations and spreading in Australia please report this species if seen in new areas so that it can be removed humanely. Reports should be made to the nearest relevant government department or wildlife authority.

Acknowledgments

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