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Partnership means major trouble for Indian Mynas

MAFFRA and District Landcare Network has joined forces with the Fulham Correctional Centre in an effort to eradicate Indian Myna birds.

Indian Mynas are a serious pest and pose a major threat to native birds and small mammals.

They can also pose a threat to human health.

After 12 months of experimenting with traps specifically designed to capture the birds, Avon Landcare secretary Harry Hof developed a trap design which is cheap to manufacture, transportable and very effective in catching large numbers of Mynas.

The initial expectation was 50 to 100 traps might be sold; however when Myna traps were first mentioned on local radio during an interview about Landcare, phones ran hot with people seeking to get hold of one.

A display at the East Gippsland Field Day in 2012 resulted in orders for more than 100 traps.

Fulham Correctional Centre Industry manager Ian Riley and Landcare already had a long standing working relationship. Fulham inmates have been involved in many Landcare projects since the centre's establishment in 1997.

Harry's prototype trap design was provided to Ian and a production line was set up at the Fulham Correctional Centre.

In just over 12 months, more than 600 traps have been manufactured and sold throughout Gippsland and beyond.

Projects to control Indian Myna numbers using the traps have also recently started in south and east Gippsland and in the Latrobe Valley.

According to Ian Riley, the trap building program has significant benefits to FCC.

"The inmates are able to learn new skills by building the traps as part of their manual skills training



Avon Landcare secretary Harry Hof and Fulham Correctional Centre industry manager Ian Riley have established a partnership to help eradicate Indian Myna birds. Photo: Contributed

and perhaps more importantly, they appreciate that their work is making a significant contribution to the community and the environment," he said.

Harry believes that the success of the project clearly hinges on the low cost of the traps.

"At \$35, the response from the public has been nothing short of amazing," he said.

"To effectively reduce Myna numbers, we need broad participation, something the FCC partnership has enabled us to achieve.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ian and the FCC people for their great work," he said.

"We would also like to thank Raglan Nursery in Sale and the Woolenook Nursery in Maffra for their wonderful support in the distribution of the traps and of course the many people who have bought and used the traps."

Twelve months on, it is estimated that around 1500-2000 Indian Mynas have been trapped in the Stratford area alone.

The Indian Myna population has

declined to the point where many people are putting their trap into storage, or lending them to friends and family who still have Myna problems.

And with the decline in Myna numbers around the Stratford area, there has been an observed increase in native birds.

So, while the partnership between Landcare and the Fulham Correctional Facility is a major problem for Indian Mynas, it continues to provide a good news story for local birdlife.

The Indian Myna is an introduced pest bird and its population is spreading rapidly.

Indian Mynas are aggressive birds that compete with native wildlife for habitat, forcing birds, bats and possums out of nests and tree hollows.

They breed faster than native birds and will destroy their eggs, kill their chicks and attack adult birds in order to take over their nesting spots.

Indian Mynas also compete with native wildlife for food.

Indian Mynas can pose a risk to human health, especially when they flock in large numbers in public places such as schools and shopping centres.

Their noise can also be a nuisance when they congregate in large numbers. Trapping Indian Mynas is one way to control their population.

You can also take the following steps to limit opportunities for the bird to feed and to breed:

- Don't leave uneaten food scraps around outdoor eating areas
- Remove uneaten pet food from outdoor areas or feed your pet indoors
- Plant native shrubs to reduce open spaces frequented by Indian Mynas and to provide more habitat for native birds and animals.

More information go to <http://fennerschool-associated.anu.edu.au/myna/index.htm> or phone Maffra and Districts Landcare Network on 1300 094 262