

OUR ENVIRONMENT OUR HERITAGE



THIEVING, NOISY BULLIES ON THE INCREASE



A significant rise in thefts, attacks on esi and banana crops, and large groups of noisy bullies flocking together at night have been cause for great concern over recent months.

The culprits appear to be disguised as strange-looking creatures with black heads and yellow beaks and legs, and there have been some reports of a yellow eye-patch.

HAVE YOU SEEN THEM?

In actual fact, it is two different species of bird, and neither of them are native to Samoa. The jungle myna (*Maina vao*; *Acridotheres fuscus*), which has been in Samoa since 1965, and the common myna (*Maina fanua*; *A. tristis*), introduced in 1988 to control agricultural pests, are both native to India. The common myna has a chocolate-brown body and a yellow eye-patch. The jungle myna has a grey-brownish body with a short tuft of feathers (crest) at the base of its beak.



Photo by Andrew Tarnell, Big Island Photographic
Common myna *Acridotheres tristis*



© 2000 Lauri
Jungle myna *Acridotheres fuscus*

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

If you know of any:

■ Feeding sites - areas where you frequently see large numbers of myna birds feeding during the day; and/or

■ Roost sites - usually large trees where myna birds gather together in large numbers at sunset and roost overnight. You often hear the roost site before you see it!;

please contact the Division of Environment and Conservation on 23800.

HOW WILL THIS HELP?

There are now so many myna birds in Samoa that eradication is not feasible. However, reducing the numbers of myna birds may be possible. The first important step is knowing where they are and how many there are!

So, how do we reduce the number of myna birds? This question is the focus of the Myna Bird Control Working Group, which includes representatives of:

- Animal Protection Society
- Ministry of Agriculture - Crops and Livestock Divisions
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment - Division of Environment and Conservation (DEC), and Capacity Building Section;
- South Pacific Regional Environment Programme; and
- Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations

Work is already under way through the support of the Government of Samoa. The Terrestrial Conservation staffs are testing the feasibility of a humane trap that was designed and tested in Australia to reduce the number of common myna birds in Canberra.

Preliminary testing of the trap in Samoa has been done previously in 2005 and results were unstable because there was only one trap that was tested. However, during the implementation phase of this project which just began early this year provided 40 traps which 24 are now operated by volunteers in support of this program and the rest are tested by the staff to provide the needed data.

Successful operation of these traps really seeks the support of the public to stay as far away as possible from these traps to avoid disturbances as myna birds won't go near these traps if people or other animals are approaching them especially during daylight.

A bountie system is also opened to the interested public to bring in dead myna birds for .20 sene each. Contact the Division of Environment and Conservation (ph.23800) on this system if you need more information.

Information on the location of myna bird feeding sites is absolutely critical to this project.

WHY SHOULD WE DO ANYTHING?

Both species are **invasive species** - these are species that do not occur naturally in Samoa and which threaten environmental or economic resources, or human health, due to the damage they cause, or are likely to cause.

The impact most obvious to many people is the massive amount of noise they produce at their communal roost sites at sunrise and sunset. The recent lopping of pulu trees along Beach Road led to the relocation of several roost sites to other areas of Apia. However, it is expected they will return to their original roost sites as the pulu trees regrow, wreaking havoc on even more businesses.

Not only are they a major nuisance to people, they are also a huge threat to biodiversity. Common mynas were recently declared by the World Conservation Union as among the top "100 of the World's Worst Invasive Species". They are aggressive and territorial birds which bully other native species. Mynas compete for nesting sites and food, and steal eggs and prey on the chicks of other bird species. Reports from New Zealand, Australia, Tahiti, Reunion Island, and French Polynesia have all indicated that mynas are the cause of declining numbers of some native bird species.

They are also becoming a growing problem for farmers, with reports of mynas attacking banana and esi crops. As populations expand, and if they should face a food shortage, there are many other crops which may prove very tempting to mynas in the future!

The continuing expansion of myna bird populations is of huge concern. They are now two of the most common birds seen in the lowlands of Upolu, and appear to be spreading in Savaii. As their populations expand, the impacts of myna birds will increase. The reversal of these effects is unlikely, or at a minimum costly.

Myna birds are not a minor problem, but we are searching for a solution.



For more information contact our Environment & Conservation Division - DBS building - Level 5 - ph 23800

OUR ENVIRONMENT OUR HERITAGE



CHILDREN'S CORNER



Children aged 9-15 are invited to answer the following corner. The name of 3 students with top scores at the end of every month will be posted under the "Children's Corner" for special prizes. "2008 Young Environmentalist Star Awards" will be given to 10 students with top total scores at the end of the year.

CAN YOU FIND THE 6 DIFFERENCES?



Word Find

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Acridotheres tristis | Noisy |
| Common myna | Aggressive |
| Jungle myna | Attack crops |
| Maina fanua | Threaten biodiversity |
| Maina vao | Roost |
| Invasive alien species | Negative impact |

A	C	R	I	D	O	T	H	E	R	E	S	T	R	I	S	T	I	S	S
G	M	A	I	N	A	F	A	U	N	A	N	O	O	Z	O	N	E	A	
G	H	M	I	O	A	T	T	A	C	K	C	R	O	P	S	J	H	E	M
R	Y	A	T	R	A	A	P	N	L	P	K	N	S	D	E	C	B	V	O
E	S	I	E	N	V	I	R	O	N	M	E	N	T	M	N	R	E	N	A
S	I	N	Z	N	E	G	A	T	I	V	E	I	M	P	A	C	T	B	T
S	O	A	C	O	M	M	O	N	M	Y	N	A	S	A	M	O	S	A	O
I	N	V	A	S	I	V	E	A	L	I	E	N	S	P	E	C	I	E	S
V	X	A	B	I	O	L	O	G	I	C	A	L	N	A	T	U	R	E	E
E	V	O	J	U	N	G	L	E	M	Y	N	A	X	M	E	N	F	T	X
T	H	R	E	A	T	E	N	B	I	O	D	I	V	E	R	S	I	T	Y

Join the Numbers



True or False

- The myna bird is native to Samoa.
- There is only one species of myna bird in Samoa.
- Myna birds have blue feet and a red beak.
- Myna birds mostly live in urban and heavily disturbed native habitat.
- Myna birds are not considered invasive species in Samoa.
- Myna birds are a major threat to biodiversity.
- Myna birds steal eggs and kill the chicks of other bird species.
- Myna birds are only a problem in Samoa.
- The population of myna birds in Samoa is expanding.
- You can help by reporting feeding and roosting sites.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge and thank the following companies for sponsoring our children's corner prizes

- STRICKLAND BROS
- DIGICEL 
The Bigger. Better Network.
- McDONALD'S RESTAURANT
- BUSINESS SYSTEM

Produced by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

