

# OUR ENVIRONMENT OUR HERITAGE



## SAMOA ON ALERT FROM INVASIVE BIRDS



It is alarming and with much concern how the invasive bird species are behaving and impacting our environment. The facade of Apia civic is becoming to know as a place for **myna birds** as well as the **red vented bulbuls** because they favorably choose this area as their roosting and feeding site. It is also known to be a place dominant by these birds in the early mornings and in the dusk evenings causing annoyance and nuisance to people traveling within town; as well as making unbelievable scene to tourists wondering for a sight of the *cardinal honeyeater*, *Samoan starling*, *wattle honeyeater* and other native birds common to lowland.

### INVASIVE BIRD SPECIES

Three species of invasive birds found in Samoa, the two species of myna birds; *Acridotheres tristis* (**Common Myna**), *Acridotheres fuscus* (**Jungle Myna**) and the *red vented bulbul* (***Pycnonotus cafer bengalensis***). All these birds are exotic and their aggressive behavior may well affect native birds (*Watling, 2001*) Their impacts have been known to groups of farmers causing massive damages to farm crops such as pawpaws, bananas, vegetable gardens (tomatoes, cabbages) and others which reduces income to most of these people and families.

The myna bird specifically is a real problem now in Samoa because these birds can eat almost anything and the only birds that are able to approach family homes and nest on open ceilings and roost on roofs. Because they already caused a lot of problems and is a predicted potential impact to little children (attacking the undefended) from the last household survey respondents, preventative measures are on the look by the Ministry and its relevant stakeholders to find actions to address the problem.

It is a difficult and subtle issue to deal with regarding the smart behavior of the myna birds and their aggressiveness but the Ministry is trying its very best to acquire the best methods to control these alien predators.

The selective bird species humane trap from Australia is one method which is now employed by the Ministry to carry out the controlling activities for the mynas as well as the red vented bulbuls.

Other methods such as the use of chemical as poison feed, netting, and destruction of nestlings are still on research making sure that these would be safe to use before applying to these invasive birds. Apia town areas is the target area of the project which is now implementing by the Ministry considering the high proportion of the myna birds found disturbing the nature of the town and the problems occurring which are spreading from building to building and from tree to tree

Killing myna birds is a story to be continued....as in other parts of the world trying to rid off these pests from their natural land, however, conducting a feasibility study to observe the behavior of these birds, their habitats, breeding seasons, and all the information needed about these invasive birds in Samoa would

would adopt the right method to capture and kill these birds in a successful manner.

Trapping method conducted by the Ministry works in catching a minimal numbers of these invasive birds whereas it would not be done in a short period but nevertheless a long phase activity. Information collected from the Volunteers operating these traps showed their enthusiastic on doing this activity moreover demonstrated other ideas created from understanding the behavior of these birds. Most of these people are now looking forward to the Trap Technique Competition coordinated by the Ministry that will soon be opened to the public.

### PUBLIC SUPPORT IS NEEDED FOR TRAPPING MYNAS

*The public is strongly advice to please cooperate with the trapping routine by the Ministry that are placed within located sites to stay away as far as possible from these traps. These traps cannot be approached by anyone especially dogs and cats. It is hard to prevent these pets from getting to the traps but the support and assistance from the communities in keeping away these disturbers would the trap works perfectly. Please do not hesitate to contact the Division of Environment and Conservation regarding information of these traps.*

*The public is welcomed to suggest and recommend effective ideas moreover approaches and techniques in catching these invasive birds. This is a collaborative work and all Samoans should be proud and protect their natural biodiversity with doing such; we need to get rid of these invasive animals from destroying nature and its beauty.*

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT AND WE MUST TAKE STEPS TO MAINTAIN OUR HERITAGE!**

### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE MYNA BIRDS

Body length ranges from 22 to 26 cm, weigh anywhere from 82 to 143 grams, and have a wingspan of 120 to 142 mm. Common myna are dark brown with a black head. They have white undertail coverts, tail tips, patches at the base of their primaries, and wing linings that are distinctive in flight. Juveniles have more brownish heads than adults. *Acridotheres fuscus* is a grey-brownish myna with a short crest, black head, greyish-brown upperparts, dark ashy-grey chin, breast and belly, buffish-white lower belly and undertail coverts, white bases to primaries, forming a white wing patch, a white-tipped tail, orange bill, with a blue base and yellow legs and feet (Feare & Craig 1998). The only distinct features that

differentiate jungle from common are those jungle mynas don't have yellow skin around the eye point, slimmer and darker than common myna.

### DIET

Mynas are omnivorous. They prey on eggs and young of other birds, such as akepas (*Loxops coccineus*). They sometimes even wade in shallow waters to catch fish. Common mynas feed mostly on the ground. In residential areas they eat anything from garbage to kitchen scraps. Common mynas eat small mammals, such as mice, as well as lizards and small snakes. They also eat spiders, earthworms, and crabs. Common mynas eat mostly grains and fruit, but also feed on flower nectar and petals.

### CLASSIFICATION

- **Kindom:** Animalia
- **Phylum:** Chordata
- **Subphylum:** Vertebrata
- **Class:** Aves
- **Order:** Passeriformes
- **Family:** Sturnidae
- **Genus:** *Acridotheres*
- **Species:** *Acridotheres fuscus*

### GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Native range: India, South-east Asia.  
Known introduced range: Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa. *A. fuscus* are established in many Pacific Islands.



Jungle Myna



Common Myna

For more information contact our:  
- Environment and Conservation Division  
- DBS building - Floor 5 - ph: 23800

# OUR ENVIRONMENT OUR HERITAGE



## Children's Corner

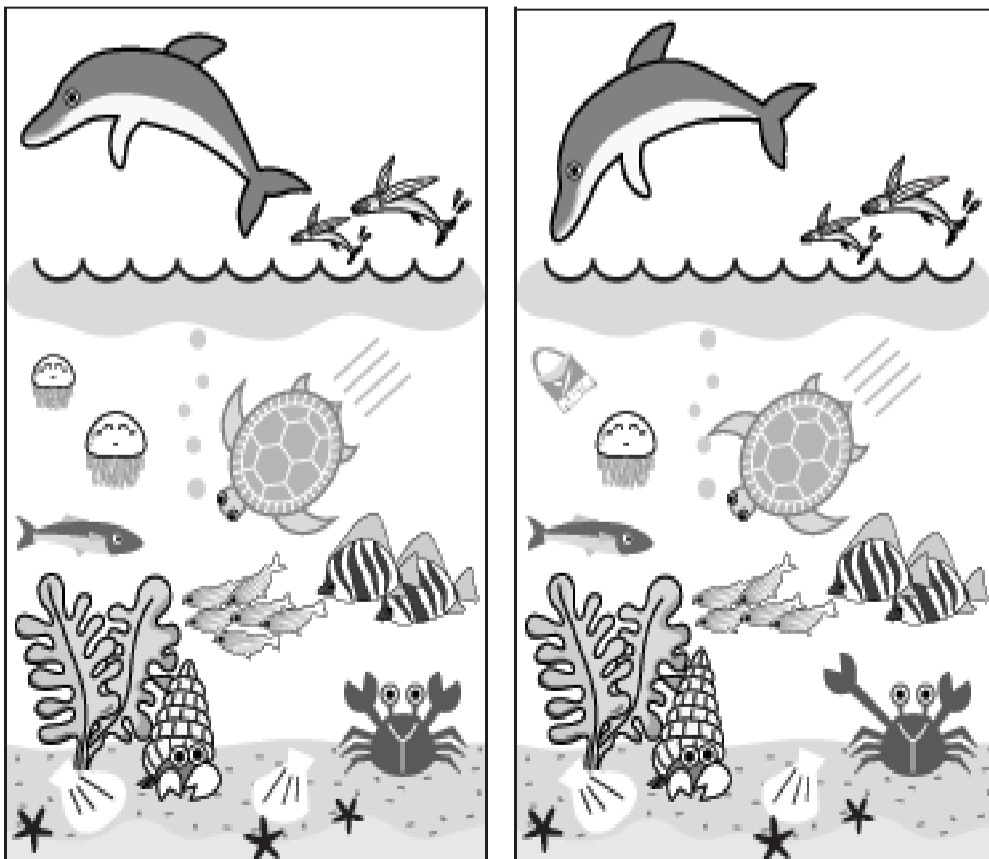


Children aged 9-15 are invited to answer the following corner. The name of 3 students with top scores at the end of every month will be posted under the "Children's Corner" for special prizes. "2008 Young Environmentalist Star Awards" will be given to 10 students with top total scores at the end of the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

### CONNECT THE NUMBERS



### CAN YOU FIND THE 6 DIFFERENCES?



### ANSWER TRUE OR FALSE

1. Myna birds and Red vented bulbuls are invasive birds found in Samoa
2. Invasive birds in Samoa help protect the native birds
3. There are two species of myna birds found in Samoa
4. The scientific name for the Red vented bulbul is *Pycnonotus cafer bengalensis*.
5. Trapping is the only method currently adopted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to capture the myna birds
6. Chemical is safe to use straight away to kill the myna birds
7. Red vented bulbul is a native bird to Samoa
8. Farmers are happy to feed the myna birds because they are lovely birds
9. Cardinal honeyeater is an invasive bird
10. Every Samoan is encourage and advised by the Ministry to kill all the native birds of Samoa they see
11. Apia town area is the project site targeted to control the myna population
12. Netting is a very useful method to kill mynas but it is still investigate by the Ministry for its safety and proper use.
13. Trapping myna birds is helping the myna population grow
14. Trapping technique competition that will soon open will allow people of Samoa to construct traps to kill pigeons.
15. Samoa biodiversity is important to all Samoans and we need to protect it.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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