

# HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NOISY MINERS AND INDIAN MYNAS

A lot of people want to know how to tell a noisy miner from an Indian myna.

The Indian myna (also known as the common myna, common mynah or Indian mynah) has earned the reputation of being one of the worst feral animals in Australia. It's likely that if you live in Sydney, Melbourne, North Queensland or Brisbane, you're already familiar with it. This little brown bird might look harmless, but the World Conservation Union (IUCN) takes it very seriously. They put it on the list of the 100 most invasive species in the world and describe it as an extreme threat to Australia.

Humans don't get off easily either. Mynas carry bird mites and have the potential to carry avian-borne diseases that are dangerous to people, not to mention the huge amount of droppings they leave under their communal roosting trees. Often gathering at night in numbers more than a thousand, these raucous birds can take over clumps of trees, especially around areas where many people go (where they encounter fewer predators), such as shopping centres. In a short time, their droppings can cover 100 percent of the ground and public seating under the trees.

## How did Indian mynas get into Australia?

The amazing thing is that these pushy little birds were put here deliberately, just like the fox and rabbit (which



Noisy miner

probably take the role of being the worst introduced species in Australia). In the 1880s there was a locust plague, so Indian mynas were brought in to control them. Of course, the mynas didn't stop the locusts but became another pest themselves.

## Things that the noisy miner and the Indian myna have in common

They're about the same size. Both birds are known for their aggression – the noisy miner can be extremely territorial over an area with nectar-producing plants and the Indian myna can attack

other birds to get the best nesting holes.

You can discourage Indian mynas from your Australian garden by:

- keeping less open grassed areas in your garden;
- creating garden beds with dense planting, which will be a safe haven for smaller birds;
- planting native trees and flowering shrubs to attract native birds;
- providing small bird houses which only small birds can access;
- keeping a lid on your garbage and compost bins;
- feeding domestic pets inside if possible;
- ensuring that poultry pens are myna-proof;
- calling your local council to report sightings;
- obtaining a myna trap from your council;
- blocking holes in roofs and eaves;
- keeping palms well trimmed, and avoiding planting exotic species such as cocos palm, slash pine, radiata pine and umbrella tree as these are preferred Indian myna roosting trees.

If removing Indian myna birds from rosella nesting boxes is successful, within a few hours, some rosellas will already have settled back in to lay their eggs!



Indian myna

## IT'S EASY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TWO

<b>NOISY MINER (<i>MANORINA MELANOCEPHALA</i>)</b>	<b>INDIAN MYNA (<i>ACRIDOTHERES TRISTIS</i>)</b>
Indigenous to eastern Australia	Introduced species, part of the starling family from India.
Nectar-eating – enjoys nectar, fruit and the occasional insect.	Scavengers in urban parks, gardens and streets, they will eat almost anything surviving well on garbage, scraps, vegetable matter, other birds' eggs and even eating young hatchlings and small fledgling birds. They follow humans rather than natural vegetation and seasons.
Repetitive noisy chirping, especially when there are young miners around. They can also make a whole lot of noise when an intruder enters their territory. That intruder could be another type of bird, or a monitor lizard, a cat or even a person.	Calls include croaks, squawks, chirps, clicks, whistles and 'growls'. Often fluffs its feathers and bobs its head in singing. Screeches warnings to its mate or other birds in cases of predators in proximity or when it is about to take off flying.
Mostly grey body and black crown and cheeks. The bill is yellow, as are the legs and the bare skin behind the eye. Differ most significantly in their grey coloured plumage and slightly yellow-tinged wing feathers.	Mainly chocolate brown, with a black head and neck, a distinctive yellow beak, legs and bare eye skin. In flight, it shows large white wing patches.
Quite gregarious; they live in very territorial groups of around 6–30 birds combined into a loose colony of up to several hundred. They will unite to mob any predators becoming particularly noisy (hence the name) when ganging up on snakes and goannas and are very successful at driving other birds away.	Roost communally throughout the year, either in pure or mixed flocks. The roost population can range from less than one hundred to thousands. The time of arrival of mynas at the roost starts before and ends just after sunset. The mynas depart before sunrise. The function of communal roosting is to synchronise various social activities, avoid predators and exchange information about food sources.
Breeding season is from June to December when, up to 20 metres high in a tree and on her own, the female builds a cup-like nest of twigs and grasses soft lined with moth cocoons or wool and bound with animal hair and cobwebs. She lays 2–4 eggs a day apart for staggered hatching and incubates them for 15–16 days. When the chicks have emerged from the egg up to 10 males will come and join in their feeding exceeding up to 50 times an hour. The nestlings take about 16 days to leave the nest, and several broods may be laid in one season.	Breeding season: November to March. Believed to pair for life. The normal clutch size is 4–6 eggs. The incubation period is 17–18 days and fledging period is 22–24 days. Nesting material used by mynas includes twigs, roots and rubbish. Mynas have been known to use tissue paper, tin foil and sloughed-off snake skin. Use the nests of woodpeckers, parakeets etc. and easily take to nest boxes.
Hopping movement	Strutting movement