

Myna birds the bane of local biodiversity



Marion Hare used to see many native birds in her Balmain garden but is now only visited by Mynas

Ashlee Betteridge

Residents living on the Balmain peninsula are concerned about the increasing number of Indian Myna birds in the local area.

The territorial birds take over the hollows of native Australian species such as Corellas and Rainbow Lorikeets, as well as small possums such as sugar gliders.

They mark out their territory and then work in a militaristic fashion to clear the area of natives by taking over their hollows for their own nests and filling empty hollows with rubbish.

Balmain resident Marion Hare has lived in the area for 18 years and has been noticing a steady increase in Myna bird numbers.

"I hardly ever see any of the nice little native birds anymore," she said.

"My neighbours talk about it too. I work in Mascot, which is all indus-

trial, and over there I still hear and see native birds, but not here at all in Balmain."

Garry Cunich heads the Indian Myna Eradication Program.

"Native birds are a major tourist attraction here in Sydney, but every day we have to go through and clean up the dead bodies of the native birds that the Mynas have killed," Garry said.

"They not only throw the young ones out of their nests, but they also attack [natives] and peck them through the head, it's pretty vicious," he said.

"In the Balmain area there are a lot of outdoor cafes and dining. The Mynas present a health hazard because they go through rubbish or sewers and then hop all over the tables where people are eating."

Leichhardt Council does not have a specific policy regarding Myna birds but discourages residents from

feeding them and encourages planting of flora to attract more native birds.

Marion believes that council should be doing more about the Myna situation by setting traps in local parkland.

Garry said that residents can purchase traps themselves to catch the birds, and they can be legally exterminated humanely using carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide gases.

He hopes to make the Eradication Program an incorporated group, with volunteers to help those residents who may want to catch birds, but don't wish to euthanise them.

"It's not really about killing, but saving Australian species so that people in Balmain don't have to go to a wildlife park to see these creatures," Garry said. For details visit www.indianmynaeradication.com.