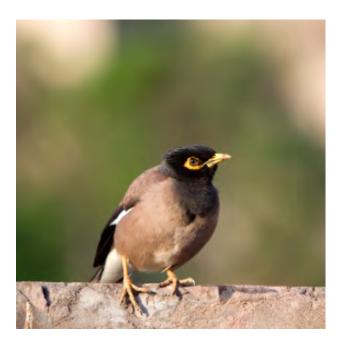## "The Birds"

Dr Ricky Spencer together with Dr Julie Old of the School of Science and Health is being supported by a grant from the Wollongong City Council to investigate the impact of Indian Mynas in Eastern Australia and the success of a community level trapping program in the Wollongong LGA.

'The myna bird, native to India, has been declared the second greatest threat to native birds after land clearing, and it is currently spreading through Eastern Australia', says Dr Ricky Spencer. 'The Indian Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) is an extremely aggressive bird that competes directly with native birds and small tree dwelling marsupials. Dubbed the "garbage bird" because of its unseemly habits, myna birds flourish wherever humans live, their populations booming around garbage tips, factories, schools, shopping centres and dumped cars. Their presence may also have health implications for humans. In urban environments, mynas love nesting in the roofs of houses and the accumulated droppings and mites are a breeding ground for disease. Much of the control effort has been left to local council and community groups. This study will assess the success of a community level trapping program in the Wollongong LGA.'

The project will utilise MynaScan, a website developed by Peter West of NSW DPI, which provides a new "citizen science" project for mapping sightings of myna birds, myna damage and control activities. The team will develop and create a reporting resource specific for members of the Wollongong trapping program to report captures directly to MynaScan. As well as community surveys, the researchers will also conduct detailed habitat assessments throughout the region that include the use of camera trap locations, and will also carry out the first tracking experiment of Indian Mynas, using radio transmitters glued onto some birds' back. This study will actually evaluate whether the birds are a true environmental pest.

All data collected will become part of a Spatial Geographic Information systems (GIS) model to enhance its predictive capabilities. The GIS modelling approach developed in this project will predict potential impact of trapping programs on the distribution of mynas. These models will be able to extend to wider areas to assess rates of trapping that will be required to significantly reduce myna numbers in other regions and lead to their eventual control.

Project Title: Assessing the distribution and impact of Indian Mynas in Wollongong LGA
Funding has been set at: $13,011
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June 2012