



BirdLife South Africa

Position Statement on invasive birds

- Next to habitat loss, biological invasions are now recognized as one of the most significant threats to modern biodiversity.
- BirdLife South Africa (BLSA) opposes the release of any plant or animal into an area outside its original distribution/range.
 - BLSA agrees that not all introduced species cause problems, but disapproves of all non-native introductions of birds into the wild, due to the difficult nature of predicting the consequences.
 - The introduction of insects to be used for the biological control of an alien plant is supported, after sufficient research has been undertaken to determine possible threats posed to native animals and plants by the introduction.
- BLSA supports the removal (translocation to another place or eradication) of invasive birds before they become naturalised. Where lethal control is necessary, BLSA favours the most humane method possible.
- Although BLSA opposes the introduction of non-native birds, when non-native species are already introduced and not a threat to indigenous wildlife, BLSA supports sustainable management of such feral populations, e.g. Common Peacock and Chukar Partridge on Robben Island.
- BLSA supports the eradication of House Crow populations in South Africa.
- BLSA supports the strategy to eradicate non-captive Mallards due to the threat of hybridisation with native Yellow-billed Duck, Cape Shovelers and possibly African Black Duck.

- Both Common Myna and European Starling have been declared two of the three birds among the world's 100 most invasive species listed by the IUCN and they are currently undergoing a rapid and extensive range expansion in South Africa. BLSA supports the eradication of both Common Myna and European Starling in South Africa.

- The following is a summary of current knowledge on Common Myna in South Africa:
 - A recent study conducted in South Africa has shown that, although Common Myna distribution is not explicitly tied to the distribution of protected areas, the species does not avoid such areas.
 - Despite severe public persecution, the adverse effects of introduced Common Mynas on indigenous biodiversity in South Africa have not been well documented, and most descriptions are of an anecdotal nature.
 - Common Myna, along with European Starling, thrives in urban and suburban areas where it causes problems to city buildings blocking gutters and drainage pipes with nesting material.
 - Due to their aggressive behaviour towards other birds, both Common Myna and European Starling are known to displace nests or roosts of indigenous birds.
 - Elsewhere, Mynas are often criticized for competing with indigenous birds and mammals for nesting cavities, which has been shown to act as a limiting resource for many species throughout the world. Interspecific aggression between Common Mynas and indigenous urban birds e.g. Laughing Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*), Crested Barbet (*Trachyphonus vaillantii*), Red-throated Wryneck (*Jynx ruficollis*), Karoo Thrush (*Turdus smithi*), Cape Sparrow (*Passer melanurus*), and Southern-Masked-weaver (*Ploceus velatus*), are occasionally witnessed, but potential displacement of indigenous species is believed to be limited to the local scale.
 - The largest proportion of the Common Myna's diet consists of insects and other invertebrates; ironically, Mynas are now believed to destroy beneficial insects in some of the areas where they were originally introduced to reduce the numbers of pest insects.
 - When in flocks, Common Mynas can cause damage to crops and it has been documented to spread alien plant species in other countries.
 - When insects are scarce, fruits and seeds make up a more important component of their diet. At such times, Common Mynas can become agricultural pests.
 - Mynas have also been implicated in the spread of invasive alien plants in some parts of the world (e.g. *Lantana camara* in Hawaii) by acting as seed dispersal agents.

- Mynas can potentially contribute to the spread of parasites (e.g. the mite *Ornithonyssus bursa*, which can cause dermatitis in humans) and diseases (e.g. avian malaria *Plasmodium circumflexum*), especially in areas where they congregate in close proximity to humans, e.g. communal roost sites.
- Such communal roosts (which can be up to several thousand individuals strong) are also exceedingly noisy, and cause damage to trees by limb-breaking and accumulation of droppings-which have unpleasant odours.
- BLSA is opposed to the release of pet birds into the wild, such as Red-necked Parakeets, African Grey Parrots, and Macaws.