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THE INDIAN MYNAH

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THE Common or Indian Mynah (Acridotheres tristis) inhabits Afghanistan, Baluchistan, southern Russian Turkestan, India, Ceylon and the Andaman Islands.

As a result of extensions of range, or of introductions, it now inhabits the Indo-Chinese countries generally and Hainan, Taiwan and Malaya. It has been widely introduced and established in different parts of the world including eastern Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ascension Island, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Fiji, Hawaiian Islands, Madagascar, Seychelles, Reunion, Mauritius, Rodriguez and Comoro Islands.

Two other closely related species have also been introduced and established as exotics; the Crested Mynah (A. cristatellus) in North America, Japan and the Philippines; and the Jungle Mynah (A. fuscus) on Sumatra and Christmas Island.

Description

The Indian Mynah is a well groomed brown bird, nine or ten inches in length with a bright yellow bill, legs and bare skin around the eye. The head and tail are black, the tail however is tipped with white. On the wing is a white patch which is conspicuous when the bird is in flight. The sexes are alike.

This Mynah is usually found in pairs or more often in flocks around human habitation and stock. A noisy and aggressive species which is able to compete with birds of equal size for food and nesting places. Although it usually nests in trees, this bird is also known to build in the walls and ceilings of buildings. Because of its communal nesting and roosting habits, this species often causes much fouling of buildings. From three to five blue eggs are laid and often two broods may be raised in succession.

Damage

Because of its fruit eating habits, the Indian Mynah has become a nuisance in eastern Australia and in most other places where it has been introduced. It can be extremely destructive in orchards, damaging apricots, apples, pears, strawberries, gooseberries, figs and other fruits. In New Zealand, besides damaging fruit, it has caused some damage by eating sprouting grain and is a nuisance around poultry runs, consuming food laid out for poultry.

In its native habitat the Indian Mynah eats insects and fruit and is a commensal of man, often eating kitchen scraps. Said by some to be largely beneficial because of its insect eating qualities, this bird damages fruits and must be considered a dangerous introduction.

Although established in eastern Australia—in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia—the Indian Mynah has never been recorded in the wild in Western Australia.

Introduction

The introduction to Australia occurred probably in the period 1867 to 1872 as several introductions are recorded. By 1883, it was fairly well established as specimens were obtained from Melbourne for introduction to Queensland. The reasons for
the original liberations are not known, but it appears certain that they were introduced into Queensland to combat insect pests, particularly plague locusts. Their role in this regard however, is debatable.

The Indian Mynah is declared vermin throughout the State of Western Australia under the Vermin Act 1918 to 1964 because of the danger of birds becoming established in our fruit growing areas.