

## Pest Control Programme Targets Myna Birds

**S**ometimes referred to as 'flying rats', mynas are aggressive birds which destroy the nests, eggs and nestlings of other birds, and deprive less-aggressive native birds of habitat and nesting sites. On Waiheke Island, near Auckland, the myna is now the target of a community-based programme to control its numbers so other birds can survive.

Introduced to both North and South islands during the 1870s, the Indian myna is now found largely in northern New Zealand. It vanished from the South Island around 1890, and the population gradually moved northward away from the southern North Island during the 20th century.

When native bird numbers appeared to be on the decline on Waiheke Island, near Auckland, a myna-bird control

programme was started about four years ago by the late Jacqui Barrington – a Forest and Bird field officer and local resident. With the help of a small grant from the Waiheke Community Board, Hauraki Islands Forest and Bird has been able to revive this programme.

The humane dispatching of the birds is an important concern and a meeting was held with local SPCA members to iron out any problems. Articles and advertisements have appeared in local newspapers and the branch is preparing a pamphlet about the myna pest problem and the local response to it.

Although under the auspices of Hauraki Islands Forest and Bird, the project has been set up as a total community initiative with more than 30 people volunteering to help. Though



GEOFF MOON

*The Indian myna is the subject of a control programme on Waiheke Island, near Auckland, initiated by Hauraki Islands branch of Forest and Bird. Myna have been blamed for killing native birds, destroying their nests, and taking over habitat.*

some people have had their reservations, the response from the community in general has been overwhelmingly positive.

The island has been divided up into areas and each of these has a chief 'myna bird control' person assigned to it. The chief control person in each area has a list of the names of suitable volunteers and receives reports of the sightings of flocking birds.

(While breeding pairs are strongly territorial, myna move in small flocks during autumn and winter. Communal roosts can be the gathering place of more than 1000 birds.)

The bait used is alphachlo-

ralose paste spread on bread, which has a narcotic effect on feeding birds. Only accredited people familiar with the correct methods are allowed access to the paste. If, as sometimes happens, non-target birds are drugged they can be revived by placing them in a warm box.

If the control programme is successful on Waiheke Island, the Hauraki Islands branch hopes other northern branches of Forest and Bird will be encouraged to follow suit. – *Brian Griffiths is ranger of Forest and Bird's Onetangi Reserve and deputy chair of Hauraki Islands branch.*

## Study a practical programme in Environmental Management



The unique features of Northland offer students an ideal environment to study Applied Ecology, Sustainable



Land Management and Marine Studies across our three campuses at



Whangarei, Bay of Islands and the Hokianga. This is a practical programme in one of the world's ideal locations.



## Certificate & Diploma in Environmental Management

**Northland Polytechnic**  
Tai Tokerau Wananga

Your way to Opportunity and Success

For further information call Pam or Jenny at the Information Centre. Phone 09 430 5830, ext 738/739. Fax 09 430 5834. Freephone 0800-808-856

031.1

## More Short-tailed Bats

**S**hort-tailed bats are much more widespread than was believed five or six years ago. Many of the locations have only been discovered as short-tailed bat habitat in the last three or four years. (*Forest & Bird*, August 2000 listed only the earlier habitats of the bats).

Recordings have now been made from Puketi Forest (including Omahuta Forest) and Waipoua Forest in Northland, Little Barrier Island, Te Urewera National Park, Kaimanawa Range, Rangataua Forest on Mount Ruapehu;

Waitaanga, near New Plymouth; Tararua Forest Park; Kahurangi National Park; Eglinton Valley, Fiordland National Park, and Codfish Island/Whenua Hou. There may be other areas where short-tailed bat recordings have been made recently but not yet reported in the general press — most recordings make their way into DoC publications, but no further.

Most DoC conservancies are now in possession of bat-monitoring equipment, and are surveying for both species. — *Alina Arkins.*