Corella 2 006, 30(1): 9-15

CITY SLICKERS: HABITAT USE AND FORAGING lN URBAN COMMON MYNAS *Acridotheres tristis*

HELEN CRISP' and ALAN LILLI'3

tWildlife Ecology Research Group, School of Biological Sciences, Monash University, Clayton Campus, Victoria, Australia 3800
2School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine, Monash University, Clayton Campus, Victoria, Australia 3800
Corresponding author. E-mail address: Alan.Lill@sci.monash.edu.au

Received l5 August 2005

The introduced Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, often considered a pest species in Australia, appears to compete with some native birds for nest sites and potentially could also compete with native birds for food resources. We documented its breeding season, habitat use and foraging behaviour in Melbourne to help promote a better understanding of its urban ecology, upon which future control efforts might draw. Myna density varied 5.7-fold among the five urban habitat types surveyed, but differed significantly only between streetscapes and open parkland and wooded parkland and open parkland. Mynas mainly foraged on the ground on grass and sealed surfaces; foraging behaviour was dominated by gleaning (7O% of records) and varied as a function of the substrate occupied by the bird and on which the food resource occurred, but not of habitat. The diet comprised insects, seeds, fruit and human food-refuse, but insects and/or seeds predominated. Mynas engaged in interspecific aggression infrequently (0.8 encounters observation). Most interactions were with native honeyeaters and the exotic Common Starling *Stumus vulgaris*, but they usually only resulted in displacement of either combatant by a few metres. In urban Melbourne in the breeding season, Common Mynas were thus habitat generalists, but specialized in ground feeding, mainly on insects and/or seeds and primarily by gleaning. They did not seem to be significant aggressive interference competitors with other bird species for food resources.