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The species biology of the Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) in Bulawayo: Distribution and range expansion in Zimbabwe.

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ABSTRACT

Human activities have led to the deliberate and accidental spread of avian species. Introduced wildlife adapt to the ecosystem, and in most instances develop superiority edge over the natives. An epitome of successful invasion is the Common Myna, a passerine bird regarded an invasive challenge globally after establishment in non-native habitats upon introduction. The species adapts and invades ecosystems upon introduction hence quickly spreading in southern Africa after successful introduction in Durban, South Africa in 1902. Since the initial sighting in Zimbabwe's southern region in 2001, there has been no synthesis of information on the movement and behavioural patterns of the bird in the country. This study maps the current distribution of the Common Myna in Zimbabwe and providing information on its spread pattern since occupation in Zimbabwe. The bird has spread from the southern to the northern axis of the country. Observations to date show the bird's populations are concentrated along the major highways in human inhabited areas. High numbers of sightings have been recorded in the country's towns and cities and this adaptation to urbanised ecosystem, **synurbization**, has become one of the Common Myna's key ecological factors. An analysis of its biology in an urban and peri-urban setup was carried out to create an information pool necessary in managing bird's population in Zimbabwe and the prevention of successful colonization. The Common Myna was found to frequent the peri-urban area than the urban area. Similarities were observed in the breeding biology in the two areas. However, variations were observed in the feeding site preferences and feeding duration in the two areas. The call type and associated context did not change with the area while the urban area was the preferred roosting site. Minimal inter-specific agonistic behaviour observed as a result concluding that the Common Myna may only aggressively defend a particular resource in its use and where there is a need, rather than actively excluding other birds from the use of resources within a wider area or territory. The study discusses the factors associated with the behavioural observations made and concludes that the Common Myna does not currently pose any potential danger to humans' infrastructural resources and native birds alike in Zimbabwe. There is however a need to invest resources towards ensuring an amicable coexistence between the species, humanity and the Zimbabwe's native bird species. This involves, providing the species access to breeding habitats such as nest boxes thus reducing interference with infrastructure and ensuring the bird is harmoniously constrained within its current habitat range using consumptive harvesting programmes.