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Whitsunday  
Catchment  
**Landcare**

**Newsletter**  
Dec 24-Jan 25



**Coming up this month:**

### Reefclean 9th & 10th December

Come and help to collect data on marine debris and keep local beaches clean.

**Conway & Wilson Beaches:**

Mon 9th December with counting/ sorting  
finishing on the 10th Dec

**Bowen (Don River Mouth & Queens Beach):**

Tuesday 10th December with counting/  
sorting finishing on the 11th Dec



Please bring sun-safe clothing, closed shoes, a water bottle and a hat. RSVP below to Christine, spaces may be available in the ute if you need to car-pool, please ask when you email.

[RSVP by email](#)

### Landcare nursery open Saturday 7th ...& Saturday 14th December.

**Where:** 33 Kelsey Creek Rd Proserpine

**When:** 9 am to 12 noon Tuesday & Thursday, & 1st & 2nd Saturday each month. EFTPOS available.

**What:** A huge range of local native plants grown from locally collected seed, at great prices from \$3.50. Gift vouchers available for a gardener you know. Knowledgeable staff & volunteers are on hand for friendly advice.

We're opening 2 Saturdays each month for a few months, to see if it allows more people to access the community nursery. Come along and take a look!



**Community Nursery activities:**

**Christmas break: The last day the nursery will be open this year will be Thursday 19th December. It will reopen on Thursday 2nd January.**

**Where:** 33 Kelsey Creek Rd Proserpine

**When:** Tuesday & Thursday mornings 9am to 12 noon.

**What:** Plant propagation, native seed sowing & preparation, nursery maintenance tasks, plant propagation and a great morning tea with a fantastic bunch of volunteers. Please wear sun protection and closed-in shoes.



## What's showing:

### *Eugenia reinwardtiana*

**Family:** Myrtaceae

**Common name:** Beach Cherry, Cedar Bay Cherry

**Scientific name:** *Eugenia reinwardtiana*

**Description:** Bushy shrub 1-4m high.

**Distribution:** Eastern Queensland from Cape York to Bundaberg, in coastal scrub, rainforest and inland vine thickets. Also in PNG and other tropical areas.

**Leaves:** Opposite, egg-shaped or oval, thick textured, with a blunt tip, dark green above and paler beneath, new growth bronze-red and shortly hairy.

**Bark:** Smooth flaky bark.

**Flowers:** White, 1.2cm diameter, 4-petalled, in groups of 1-3 in the leaf axils.

**Fruit:** A globular to egg-shaped red berry around 1.5-2cm in size.

**Notes:** The only native *Eugenia* in Australia, it is a better choice to grow here than the Brazilian Cherry which is an invasive weed. The fruits are edible, juicy and sweet but with a resinous overtone: it can vary a lot between individual plants. Slow growing but hardy, it needs well-drained soil, but can grow in full shade to full sun.

**Food for:** People, birds, and host to the *Eugenia* Caterpillar, *Targalla delatrix* which will also feed on the introduced Brazilian Cherry, *Eugenia uniflora*.

#### What's in a Name?

***Eugenia*,** named for Prince Eugene of Savoy (1163-1736), a general of the Habsburg Empire.

***reinwardtiana*,** for Caspar Georg Carl Reinwardt, Dutch botanist 1773-1854.



Form. PHOTO: JS



Ripening fruit. PHOTO: JS



Leaves and ripe fruit. PHOTO: Steve Pearson



Flower and buds. PHOTO: Steve Pearson

## References:

Dictionary of Botanical Names, Don Perrin  
[Australian Native Plants Society: \*Eugenia reinwardtiana\*](#)  
[Australian lepidoptera, \*Targalla delatrix\*](#)

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## At the nursery this month: potted native Christmas trees

If you would like to try a Christmas tree with a difference this year, these potted local natives are available at the Landcare Nursery. Left to right, they are:

### *Drypetes deplanchi*, Yellow Tulipwood

A compact, hardy, very slow growing evergreen shrub of dry rainforests to 1-6m. Holly-like leaves when young, becoming smooth margined as it matures; this takes a few years.

### *Graptophyllum ilicifolium*, Mt Blackwood Holly

3-5m shrub of drier rainforest, Endemic to Eungella and listed as Vulnerable. Dark-green, glossy, holly-like leaves. Scarlet, tubular flowers. Can be pruned, needs semi-shade.

### *Casuarina equisetifolia*, Beach She-oak

Coastal tree to 5-10m, with long delicate 'needles' (actually modified stems). Likes well drained soil and a sunny position.



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## *Pongamia pinnata* flower galls

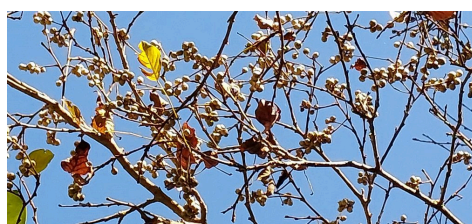
This spring, out of 3 *Pongamia pinnata* trees in my garden, one appeared to be covered in round 'fruits'. No big deal you might think, except that *Pongamia* pods are not round! Christine could also recall seeing and being puzzled by, these on a tree locally. What has happened? well a clever insect parasite has hijacked the normal seed capsule growth and harnessed it to produce a home and food for *its* young.

Since these trees are grown in monocultural plantations as an oil crop in India (and here too soon, I understand) there have been a few studies on their parasites in India. Generally, these are very host-specific relationships, the parasite species will target nutritious new growth (leaves, flowers or fruits) and modify it into structures which the parasite can use to shelter, feed and reproduce inside, safe from predators. These insects had hijacked the development of flower buds, turning them into neat little woody homes for their larvae, with a built-in food supply in the form of the starches that were intended to be in the seed.

Overseas, the species involved is a midge called the Flower Gall Inducer (*Asphondylia pongamiae Mani*) which lays its eggs in the developing flower buds; as they develop they cause the petals and sepals to drop, and the remainder of the bud forms a globular, nut shaped brown gall, housing and feeding the developing midge. Since the plantations are using the seeds to produce biodiesel, this is disastrous as no seeds are produced. The midges produce just one generation per year, so removing (and carefully disposing of) or treating the galls will reduce the risk of re-infestation. This might be a similar species.



Real *Pongamia pinnata* capsules and seed  
PHOTO: JS



Flower gall midge round 'fruits'. PHOTO: JS



Flower galls close-up. PHOTO: JS

## REFERENCES:

[Pongamia Gall Midge study.](#)

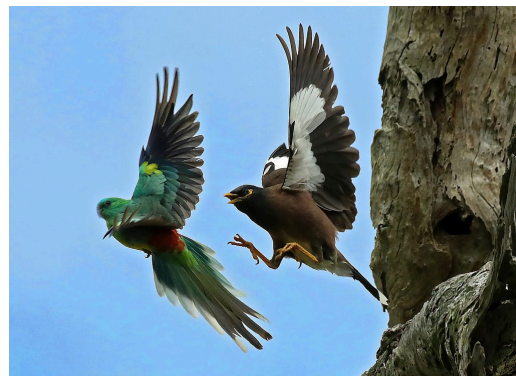
## Indian Mynas in the Whitsundays

by Debra Burns, Whitsunday Indian Myna Action Group (WIMAG)

*ED: Common or Indian Mynas are native to India and southern Asia. Elsewhere, they are listed among the top 100 of the world's worst invasive species by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Introduced to Australia from Asia in 1862 to control insects in market gardens around Melbourne, in 1883 they were also introduced to Townsville and neighbouring sugarcane-growing areas to control locusts and cane beetles. Now they are found all the way from western Victoria to Cairns. Although present in Mackay & Townsville, they were absent from the Whitsundays until around 2015-2016, when a small flock arrived in Proserpine. In the devastation following Tropical Cyclone Debbie (March 2017), they became established. Outside breeding season, they roost communally on buildings, where they can impact human health: they can carry diseases such as avian influenza and salmonellosis, and parasites such as mites, which can cause dermatitis. Environmentally, they are a threat to native biodiversity due to their aggressively territorial behaviour and fierce competition for already scarce nesting hollows.*

Those who associate with nature lovers will recognise that glazed look they get in their eye when they see something they like, or something that upsets them. When I go out, I scan the horizon for feral Indian (Common) Myna birds (*Acridotheres tristis*), making mental notes about their habits, or recording them on Mynascan, an app used to track their spread.

One time in 2023 I was at an apartment complex at the Port of Airlie, at around sunset. The entire complex had been



*Indian Mynas outcompete our native species for scarce nesting hollows.*  
PHOTO: Jim Thompson

taken over by roosting Indian Myna birds. The screeching was deafening, and the impact on the facilities from the filth they left, and the scarcity of local wildlife was visible. Weeks later, professional pest controllers from Brisbane used low power air rifles to remove about 300 birds roosting around the complex. The change was instantly noticeable, as native birds returned to their rightful place, and the complex owners set about the expensive task of bird-proofing their infrastructure.

Despite being declared an extreme risk by Biosecurity Queensland, little scientific work has been done on their impact on native wildlife in Australia, so most information is anecdotal; either through my own observations or those of others.

Some local examples:

- A local in Jubilee Pocket enjoyed relaxing on her patio watching the native birds in her large tree. Indian Mynas moved in, and she heard the terrible sound of the native birds being attacked. Now Indian Mynas are the dominant bird in her area.
- The owner of a popular bar in Airlie Beach had the birds roosting directly above his bar, creating an unhygienic mess.
- In Bowen, a local noticed Indian Mynas were going into the roof of a shopping centre to nest.
- A Bowen resident was euthanising trapped birds, when one let out a squawk. He was shocked to see '100s' ascend into the tree above him. After that they never returned to his yard; trapping there had to be abandoned.
- A Proserpine local has single handedly caught about 200 Indian Mynas and probably prevented an explosion in numbers there, although they are still common around the mill and tip.

Stories like these reinforce my determination to continue to work with Whitsunday locals to try to reduce their numbers.

Indian Mynas are aggressive and communal, using their numbers to gang-up on other species and dominate resources. They take over nest hollows of arboreal mammals and birds, and kill their young. The filthy debris left behind prevents native animals from using the nest site again. They can carry avian malaria (*Plasmodium* and *Haemoproteus* spp.), which can be lethal to some native birds. Some birds, such as the blue faced honeyeater, are feisty enough to put up a fight, but large flocks will displace most native species. Most vulnerable are species needing hollows, such as parrots, owls, possums and gliders. This video([WIMAG facebook page video](#)) shows Indian Mynas at Cannonvale foreshore evicting a possum in daylight, forcing it out of its tree hollow, fleeing for its life.

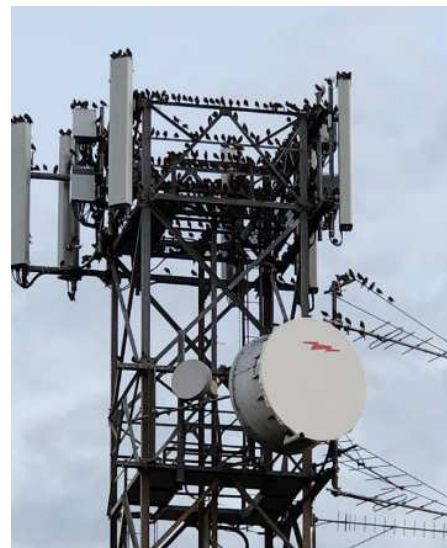


*Even larger native birds such as Kookaburras can be attacked and driven from their nest hollows. PHOTO: Jim Thompson*

It's breeding season now (from August to April), and the large flocks of around 300 birds seen in Cannon Valley have retreated into their nesting pairs. One pair raises up to three clutches of up to eight chicks per year. Despite seeing very few, recently, they will start to appear again. I know that breeding pairs, who mate for life, are raising the next generation to cause mayhem for our native wildlife. When the inexperienced chicks surface, hopefully our dedicated and experienced trappers will catch and humanely euthanise them, or take them to participating vets to euthanise. Some trappers who have been unsuccessful using food as bait, have used recorded mating calls to entice the birds, and we're following this with great interest as it has been used successfully as reported by a local on our facebook page.

Whitsunday Indian Myna Action Group (WIMAG) now has about 38 traps available for loan, about 15 provided by myself, some donated, and the rest provided by Whitsunday Regional Council (WRC). WRC have also provided two larger aviary traps, which can be set up with food and water and left unattended longer than the smaller Pee Gee traps. The Men's Shed in Bowen have made most of the traps, and now sell them, Airlie Beach Men's Shed and Proserpine Men's Group have also made 3 traps each.

I set up Whitsunday Indian Myna Action Group in 2020, because WRC had tried trapping them unsuccessfully, and lacked the staff and resources to do more. It had to be driven by the community with Council support. WRC already have many feral animals and weeds that rank higher when rated in terms of their impact on agriculture, the environment and society. Controlling ferals such as pigs, deer and now yellow crazy ants takes up most of their time and resources. As Indian Mynas do not negatively affect agriculture here (they do affect some fruit crops), they score less points and are pushed down the long list of priority species. Despite this, WRC have done more than many other councils in Queensland.



*Flocks roosting on the Telstra Tower at Proserpine Mill. PHOTO: provided by Debra Burns.*

With the human population increasing in the Whitsundays, large urban developments are replacing native vegetation. Urban areas with wide open lawns and very few trees provide the perfect habitat for Indian Mynas, which thrive in open areas around buildings.

At WIMAG, like most people who work to protect the environment, we're optimistic enough to keep going in the face of all obstacles! Our Facebook page has nearly 800 followers and the GoFundMe called '[Whitsunday Wildlife S.O.S.](#)' has so far raised nearly \$3000, which is being spent on a local professional pest controller to cull the birds. WIMAG is the first effort like this that I know of and it's still work in progress.

Without volunteers, to monitor traps and help to educate others, and the support of other local environmental groups, WIMAG would not exist. The Landcare Public Fund

donated funds for brochures, and Whitsunday Conservation Council have promoted WIMAG. Lots of local volunteers have been quietly trapping these birds for years, giving wildlife a chance to survive. We don't know what the Whitsundays would look like if we had not done any culling, but I am certain there would be a lot more Indian Mynas and a lot less beautiful native birds and arboreal mammals.



*A successful Myna trap set up.  
PHOTO: Irene Wynne.*

### What can you do to help

- Plant local native species and retain a tree canopy: Indian Mynas prefer open 'parkland' areas and avoid areas with a closed tree canopy.
- Clean and secure lids on rubbish bins, cover your compost and remove leftover pet food: Indian Mynas are scavengers and eat waste that we leave around.
- Consider taking part in the trapping program. You can borrow or buy a trap, or make your own: [Clarence Valley Landcare Video: build your own Myna trap](#)
- If you have nest boxes for wildlife, add a 'Myna baffle' or a backward-facing entry so small gliders, possums, bats and native birds can enter but Indian Mynas cannot. Check un-baffled boxes regularly and remove Myna nests/debris. [Birdlife Australia: Myna baffle design for nest boxes.](#)
- Maintain a longer lawn: approximately 50 millimetres deep, as Indian Mynas prefer feeding on shorter lawns.
- Block any openings or ledges on structures where Mynas could nest. Check under your solar panels: nests will increase heat, greatly reducing output; they can also cause fires.
- Remove Myna nests, which are messy piles of vegetation and rubbish with clutches of 6 small bright blue eggs. They often nest on buildings or in street trees.

### References:

[Feralscan: Mynascan app](#)

[PestsScan: Indian Myna](#)

[Sean Dooley: Myna vs Miner Birdlife Australia](#)

<https://australian.museum/learn/animals/birds/common-myna/>

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**Weed Hall of Fame: *Eugenia uniflora***

**Common names:** Barbados Cherry, Brazil Cherry, Brazilian Cherry, Cayenne Cherry, French Cherry, Pitanga Cherry, Surinam Cherry

**Family:** Myrtaceae

**Form:** Shrub or small tree to 7m height

**Origin:** Northern Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay

**Leaves:** Young leaves are pink to bronze/ dark red, maturing to glossy dark green with paler undersides. Oval shaped, with a narrower, rounded tip. Edges smooth or slightly wavy.

**Flowers:** Whitish, 4 petals with many protruding stamens. Fragrant.

**Fruit:** Fleshy, spherical or ribbed berries 2-4 cm across. Starting green, they ripen to orange and then dark red.

**Spread by:** Birds, wildlife, garden waste

**Invades:** Rainforests, open woodlands, forest margins, urban bushland, gardens, roadsides and riparian vegetation.

**Notes:** Grown for its edible fruits. Seedlings rapidly form dense thickets around the parent plant, preventing germination of native plants.

Already an environmental weed in south-eastern Queensland, it is now naturalising in northern Queensland.

Gardeners who wish to grow these should keep the fruits covered with wildlife-safe tree netting (mesh size <5mm> Native Beach Cherries have better flavour!

**References:**

[Weeds of Australia: \*Eugenia uniflora\* Factsheet, Bundaberg Regional Council](#)

Weeds of the Mackay Whitsunday Region, Mackay Regional Pest Management Group, 2013



Ripe fruit. PHOTO: Steve Pearson



Glossy, thin textured leaves. PHOTO: Steve Pearson

**Manual control:** Can be hand pulled when <40cm high>

**Herbicide control:** For larger plants, cut stem and paint stump immediately with neat Glyphosate.

All parts of the plant should be bagged and disposed of in landfill.

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**The Old Man** By Unknown; adapted from The Bridge Builder by Will Allen Dromgoole.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52702/the-bridge-builder>

"Old man" cried the fellow passing near,  
You are wasting your strength by planting there,  
Your journey will end with the ending day  
And you never again will pass this way.  
You have crossed a chasm deep and wide –  
Why plant a tree at eventide?  
And the planter raised his old gray head,  
"Good friend, on the path that I have come",  
he said,  
"There followeth after me today  
Two youths, whose feet will pass this way.  
They have not come to twilight dim.  
Good friend, I am planting a tree for them".



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[Go to Newsletters on the WCL webpage](#)

## How you can help:

### VOLUNTEER:

If you're interested in doing your bit for the local environment and socialising with like-minded people, we have volunteer activities on Tuesday & Thursday mornings and more. Contact us!



### MAKE A DONATION:

WCL is a community not-for-profit. We rely on donations to assist with our projects such as revegetation.

WCL is registered charity; donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

To donate, please contact us or go to the

[GiveNow Donations Portal](#)



## WCL TEAM

Coordinator & secretary: Christine Peterson

Admin/finance: Leigh Donkers

Field Staff: Kayla Simpson & Rory Richards

Nursery Volunteer Manager: Nicole Murphy

Management Committee:

Jacque Sheils, Chair & newsletter editor

Jim Dickens, Treasurer

Dale Mengel

Canegrowers rep. John Casey

One Committee position vacant

## CONTACT

[coordinator@whitsundaylandcare.org.au](mailto:coordinator@whitsundaylandcare.org.au)  
[0483 811 229](tel:0483811229)

### CONTACT US FOR INFORMATION ON

- Natural Resource Management
- Land Management Plans
- Native Plants
- Environmental Weeds
- Volunteer Activities



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